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E X AMICIS DIVI AUGUSTI: P. VEDIUS POLLIO

Abstract

The present article attempts a comprehensive overview of the career of P. Vedius Pollio, an equestrian and a close associate of Augustus at a time of the constitutional transformation of the Roman Republic. The issues under discussion include Pollio's political career in the years immediately following the battle of Actium, not least the mission to Asia Minor that Augustus entrusted him with, as well as his business activities, which are better known to us after Pollio's withdrawal from politics. Much space is devoted to his relationship with the princeps and the birth of the so-called black legend of Pollio, which disparaged him as a cruel and psychopathic.

Keywords

Publius Vedius Pollio; Augustus; late Roman Republic; early Principate; equestrians.

Invenit in hoc animali documenta saevitiae Vedius Pollio eques Romanus ex amicis divi Augusti vivariis earum immergens damnata mancipia, non tamquam ad hoc feris terrarum non sufficientibus, sed quia in alio genere totum pariter hominem distrahi spectare non poterat (Plin. *HN* 9.77).

Vedius Pollio, a Roman equestrian, and a friend of the divine Augustus, found in this animal a means of displaying his cruelty when he threw slaves sentenced to death into ponds of morays – not that the wild animals on land were not sufficient for this purpose, but because with any other kind of creature he was not able to have the spectacle of a man being torn entirely to pieces at one moment.¹

¹ Translation by H. Rackham (*Loeb Classical Library*, 353) with minor emendation. In the Loeb edition *murena* is given as 'lamprey', which is unfounded. Pliny must be talking of an aggressive moray known to Romans *murena ferox*. See Saint-Denis 1947: vol. 2, s.v. *murena*. I wish to thank Adam Ziółkowski, Andrew Stiles and Tobias Busen for reading the article and for their valuable suggestions. Any errors are of course to be blamed solely on me. I would also like to

Pliny the Elder in Book IX of *Historia Naturalis*, which is wholly devoted to sealife, mentions, in the chapter on moray eel behaviour, the macabre penchant of a certain Vedius Pollio, an equestrian and a friend of Augustus.² He was allegedly in the habit of punishing his slaves by throwing them into a pool full of predatory fish which would tear his victims to pieces. The theme of Pollio's cruelty is also found in other ancient writers, Seneca and Cassius Dio in particular. If the former is credited with cementing the reputation of the psychopathic equestrian, the latter notes with some reticence Pollio's membership of the small circle of Augustus' confidants.

The one-sided picture that emerges from narrative texts can fortunately be supplemented with what we know of Pollio from other sources: inscriptions, coins and archaeology. These allow a fuller picture of Pollio to emerge. Thanks to the variety of sources, a man comes to light who enjoyed the emperor's trust (at least in the key years when the state's new constitution was formed), who was an enterprising businessman, and wealthy, if eccentric – in short, without a doubt one of the most original characters of the so-called Second Triumvirate period and early years of Augustan rule. The present article attempts to collect all possible sources relating to Vedius Pollio in the hope of building a fuller picture of this intriguing and, in a sense, mysterious character.³

thank Tobias Busen, Joan Freed, Peter Scherrer, and Ivan Varriale for making their publications available to me. The plan and the photographs of Pausilypon are used by courtesy of Tobias Busen (2016: 140–141). The article was translated by Aleksander Nowacki.

² Since the article is concerned primarily with the years following the battle of Actium in 31 BCE, it would be impractical to differentiate between the names of Caesar's successor used before and after 27 BCE (when he was granted the title of Augustus). For that reason I use 'Augustus' throughout the article with the reservation that in some cases it may be strictly speaking an anachronism.

³ The literature on Vedius Pollio is surprisingly modest. For the list of sources, see *PIR* III, p. 390–391 and *PIR2* V, p. 321. The only works to undertake an exhaustive discussion of this character are articles by J. Keil in *RE* VIIIA (1955), kol. 568–570 and by Ronald Syme 1961: 23–30. Other works discuss specific aspects of his activity, eg. Kathleen Atkinson (1962) for an analysis of an edict from Asia Minor. Pollio's work in Asia was also studied by Peter Scherrer (1990: 87–101) while André Tchernia (1969: 145–148) and Gerald Finkielsztein (2006: 123–139) focused on Pollio's business activities. Articles in newer compendia (*DKP*, *OCD* 3rd ed. and *DNP*) fail to develop on Keil in *RE*. The exception is François Kirbilher's (2012: 1206–1210) detailed entry in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*. Vedius Pollio crops up occasionally in other publications *en passant*, on the sidelines of other discussions. Such works are cited below. See also *Addendum*.

Sources

Were it not for the macabre tastes of our protagonist, literary evidence might have been limited to a mention by Ovid, who seems ignorant of slaves thrown into fishponds, in his *Fasti* (6.637–648). The remaining surviving literature focusses on Pollio's cruelty. Seneca finds a place for him in two dialogues, *De ira* (3.40) and *De clementia* (1.18). In the most extensive surviving account, Cassius Dio (54.23) shows traces of familiarity with these works. Dio relates in detail the same incident to which Pliny alludes in the aforementioned passage of *Historia Naturalis*. It was to take place at Pollio's villa in Pausilypon in the Naples area. At the centre of Dio's story, however, is Augustus, Pollio's guest at the time. According to this account he prevented the execution of Pollio's order. The historian also explains why following Pollio's death in 15 BCE, Augustus decided on the spectacular gesture of knocking down the house at Rome, which the equestrian had bequeathed him in his will and building the *Porticus of Livia* on the site – a fact also mentioned by Ovid in the *Fasti* (6.637–648). In addition to these sources we have the aforementioned account by Pliny the Elder (*HN* 9.77) and a brief remark by Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.60). A mention in Cicero (*Att.* 6.1.25) deserves separate treatment since, if it does indeed relate to Pollio (and that is not beyond doubt), it is the only one to refer to the initial stages of his career in the 50s.

This collection of literary texts makes up the first category of sources; coins and inscriptions constitute a second. We have three brief honorific inscriptions for Pollio (from Miletus, Illion and Athens). All three were erected in his lifetime. Two later inscriptions also belong here, namely the edict by Fabius Paullus Persicus, a consul during the reign of Claudius and the so-called *Monumentum Ephesenum* from the time of Nero, both of which refer to Pollio's work in the province of Asia⁴. When it comes to coins, we have four types of bronze issues with Pollio's image from Tralles in Asia Minor.

The third category of evidence includes archaeological materials. On the one hand, we have portable artefacts such as amphorae with stamps and bricks or tiles; on the other, permanent structures found at Pollio's luxury villa at Pausilypon.

Nomina

Literary sources, coins, and official inscriptions only provide us with Pollio's *nomen gentile* and *cognomen*. The former features in inscriptions as both *Vedius* and

⁴ All epigraphic sources are enlisted in Kirbihler 2012: 1206–1210.

Veidius. Stamps on amphorae from Kos on the other hand also give Pollio's *prae-nomen*. The surviving text takes the form of: P(ublius) Ve(dius) Pol(lio).⁵ There is no reason to question the identification of the winemaker attested at Kos as Augustus' friend hence we can safely use his *tria nomina*. If it is accepted that Cicero's letter to Atticus (*Att.* 6.1) refers to the equestrian, then we have additional evidence for his *prae-nomen*.⁶

Beginnings of career

We know little of the beginnings of Vedius Pollio's career. Dio (54.23), with evident disdain, calls him a man unworthy of memory (ἀνὴρ ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν μνήμης ἄξιον παρασχόμενος). He stresses that he was the son of a freedman, an equestrian and that he had done nothing of note (ἐξ ἀπελευθέρων ἐγεγόνει καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἱππεύσιν ἐξητάζετο καὶ λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν εἰργάσατο).⁷ Dio's claim that Pollio was the son of a freedman is not corroborated by other sources which may inspire some scepticism, though on the other hand there are no compelling grounds for rejecting it.⁸ Pollio's family probably came from Beneventum where he financed the construction of a *Caesareum* in honour of Augustus and the city out of his own coffers.⁹ We do not know if the monument was erected in the 30s or towards the end of Pollio's life. His presumed links to Beneventum seem to be borne out by the mention of P. Veidius P. I. Philocles, most likely a freedman of Pollio's in an inscription from the city.¹⁰ Philocles may have inherited some of Pollio's fortune;

⁵ Finkielstejn 2006: 129. Tiles from Pollio's *figlinae* feature the letters: P(ublius) Vei(dius) Pollio. See Gualtieri 2000: 332–333.

⁶ The Vedius of Cicero's letter to P. Cornelius Dolabella (*Fam.* 9.10) may also be one and the same person. See Syme 1961: 23–30.

⁷ There are no grounds for thinking (like Romuald Szramkiewicz 1976, vol. 2: 169) that Vedius Pollio was a freedman. His father is also mentioned in *IG* II2 4125.

⁸ Examples of equestrian careers of known sons of freedmen are sparse under Augustus (the best known example is that of the father of Horace). See Demougin 1988: 654; Eck 1999: 27. That does not, however, render Dio's statement on Pollio automatically wrong. An attempt has recently been made to identify Pollio's father. François Kirbihler proposed that it was a certain P. Vedius Rufus, mentioned by Servius in his commentary to Horace's *Fourth Epode*. The identification remains, however, controversial. See Kirbihler 2007: 261–271.

⁹ *ILS* 109: P. Veidius P.f. Pollio | *Caesareum imp(eratori) Caesari Augusto | et coloniae Beneventanae*. Por. Torelli 2002: 172–173. The connection of an amphora found at Esquiline and inscribed BENEV (*CIL* XV 4544), with Pollio (Tchernia 1969: 145; Torelli 2002: 172–173) as the basis for inferring his links to Beneventum is mere wishful thinking. Other scholars have sought Pollio's native city elsewhere with R. Syme claiming an origin from Picenum on the basis of his *gentilicium*. See Syme 1961: 30. Even less convincing is the hypothesis of his origins at *Vedii* in Asia Minor. See Szramkiewicz 1975: vol. 1, 220; Szramkiewicz 1976: vol. 2, 17.

¹⁰ *CIL* IX 1703; Syme 1961: 30.

he must in any case have been fabulously wealthy if he could afford to fund games with 500 gladiators.

It is not until about 40 BCE that we learn with certainty anything of Pollio's activities. Ronald Syme has suggested that Augustus' friend and a certain P. Vedius, known to us from Cicero's letter to Atticus, is one and the same person (Att. 6.1.25).¹¹ The letter, dated to February 50 BCE, is of exceptional interest.

Cicero, at the time the governor of Cilicia, was preparing for his return to Rome, as he did mid-year. The letter sent to Atticus from Laodikeia concerned – as was often the case with Cicero's correspondence – varied subject matter: commentary on current affairs in Rome, the situation in his province, his own family matters etc. Cicero concluded the letter with – as he put it himself – a bit of gossip (*sumus enim ambo belle curiosi* 'we are both fond of a piece of scandal'¹²) concerning a certain close friend of Pompeius, P. Vedius whom Cicero had met personally on the latter's voyage from Tarsus to Laodicea. P. Vedius came to meet him with an odd entourage: two carts (one containing a baboon and wild asses), a horse-drawn carriage, a litter and a mob of slaves. Cicero writes he had never seen a more depraved man (*numquam vidi hominem nequiores*). He also refers to him as a great rascal (*magnus nebulo*). He thus made a terrible first impression. The best, however, Cicero leaves for the last. And thus P. Vedius stopped at Laodikeia at the house of a certain Vindylus and leaving his luggage there went to see Cicero. Meanwhile, however, Vindylus died and his property as Pompeius' freedman, reverted in the absence of a will to his former master. The executor, an otherwise unknown C. Vononius, found in the course of his legally prescribed work at the Vindylus' house the belongings of his guest, Vedius, including five miniature portraits of Roman matrons (*inventae sunt quinque imagunculae matronarum*), one of them being the sister of Brutus and wife of M. Aemilius Lepidus. To what ends Vedius needed these portraits is left unexplained by Cicero. However perverse P. Vedius' intentions and perhaps actions, Cicero did not fail to share his amusement at the whole situation with Atticus.

Is this P. Vedius of Cicero's anecdote and Vedius Pollio, the friend of Augustus one and the same person? If so, Pollio must be assumed to have lived to an advanced age. On the assumption that he was 30 in 50 BCE, his age at death (in 15 BCE) would have been 65¹³. It is also possible that Augustus' friend merits another mention in Cicero's letters, namely in the one addressed to P. Cornelius Dolabella in the last days of 46 or the first days of 45 BCE (*Fam.* 9.10). Here Cicero writes of his role as arbiter between Nicias of Kos, a grammarian and a friend of

¹¹ Syme 1961: 23–30.

¹² All translations of Cicero's letters by D.R. Shackleton Bailey (*Loeb Classical Library*).

¹³ An alternate interpretation is that Cicero met Pollio's father. See Kirbihler 2012: 1207.

Cicero who would later become the island's tyrant, and a certain Vidius (Syme proposes a correction of *Vedius* or *Veidius*): *nihil enim Romae geritur quod te putem scire curare, nisi forte scire vis me inter Nicias nostrum et Vidium iudicem esse* ('nothing is afoot in Rome which I judge you would care to know, unless perhaps you wish to know that I am appointed arbiter between our friend Nicias and Vidius').¹⁴ The conflict concerned a loan allegedly given to Nicias by Vidius, which the former then denied. The character of Nicias is interesting in itself. He arrived at Rome in 62 BCE, together with Pompeius, whose protection he enjoyed. He quickly abused his patron's trust, playing the role of messenger in C. Memmius' indecent proposal to Pompeius' wife (probably in 58 BCE) which led Pompeius to ban him from his house (Suet. *De grammat.* 14).¹⁵ Despite this *faux pas*, Nicias did not lose all ground in Rome. He was supported by Dolabella among others. Nicias could also count on favours of C. Cassius Longinus and M. Iunius Brutus, as well as Cicero himself, who considered him an appropriate partner in literary disputes.¹⁶

Some sort of a relationship between Nicias and Vedius Pollio seems quite likely, especially in the light of a link between them that Syme missed, namely Pollio's extensive business interests at Kos. We have evidence of amphorae stamped with his name (see below). It is highly likely that Pollio on Kos and Chios was not a mere producer of pottery but also of wine.¹⁷ If his business interests in Kos predate 31 BCE (that is the death of Nicias), their paths must have crossed.

Mission in Asia Minor

The year 31 BCE constitutes an important turning point, not just in the history of the war-weary Republic but also in the life of our protagonist. It is widely believed that it was the moment right after the battle of Actium that Augustus

¹⁴ On Nicias' Roman milieu, see Rawson 1985: 71–72. The character of Nicias' rule on Kos and the mechanism of his ascent to it in 43 BCE is fascinating. For more, see Buraselis 2000: 30–65. Some scholars doubt that Nicias from Cicero's letters is the same Nicias who was later the tyrant of Kos though these doubts were not shared by Ronald Syme (1961: 25) and more recently by Liv M. Yarrow (2006: 33–34). The sceptics focus on the *nomen* Curtius, which for Nicias is attested solely in Suetonius (*De grammat.* 14). Syme (1961: 25) thought Nicias was on assumption of Roman citizenship adopted by C. Curtius Postumus who for some time managed the finances of Egypt. That would explain the *nomen* Curtius, although Suetonius may also have made a mistake.

¹⁵ The dating of the incident is uncertain hence it is unclear which of Pompeius' wives was concerned. Some point to Mucia (see Ellis 1889: 31, n. 3). In that case the incident would have taken place no later than 62 BCE when Pompeius sent Mucia his divorce letter (Suet. *DI* 50.1; Plut. *Pomp.* 42.7). Another possibility is Iulia, Pompeius' fourth wife (59–54 BCE).

¹⁶ See Syme 1961: 34–35.

¹⁷ See p. 109.

entrusted the enterprising equestrian with a special mission in Asia Minor and perhaps also in Greece. Following Antonius' infamous retreat to Egypt, Augustus faced a number of challenges, with the organisation of the province of Asia one of the most pressing. It was a province of enormous political significance and economic potential.¹⁸ At this stage, restitution of proconsular power does not appear to have been Augustus' priority. That changed most likely only in 27 BCE, and the details of the process remain obscure.¹⁹ More pressing needs included restoring order to public finances, including improvements in tax collection. In the eyes of Augustus the person to tackle these tasks had no need for the traditional *cursus honorum*, if he possessed ability and, most of all, his trust. The latter was an absolutely key consideration.²⁰ It would appear that Pollio met these criteria since Augustus entrusted him with a series of jobs in Asia, armed with appropriate prerogatives.

The surviving evidence (inscriptions and coins) provides no direct information on Pollio's powers and decisions, so we have to rely on our inference. The debate focusses on three issues: the character and legitimacy of Pollio's power in *Asia*, the dating and the scope of his activities. There is a considerable disagreement between scholars on all three.

The key document in all three areas under discussion is the edict by the proconsul of Asia, Paullus Fabius Persicus (cos. CE 34) of CE 44, found at the theatre of Ephesus. Both a Latin and a (much better preserved) Greek version of the inscription have been found.²¹ Thanks to the Greek text we know that Persicus aimed to curtail administrative abuses, in the recruitment of the temple personnel at Ephesus in particular. For it was an everyday practice to sell priestly offices to people purely for financial motives. Recruitment of temple personnel via public auction brought money to officials of the state. Persicus ruled that the city pay out to the priests no more than 1% of the price they had paid for their office. The ruling was in accordance with an earlier decision by Vedius Pollio confirmed by the 'divine Augustus' (Οὐηδίου Παλλίωνος διάταξις ἢ καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ συνφυλαχθεῖσα/ *constitutio Vedit Pollionis confirmata a divo Augusto*). All this implies the problem of abuses at the Ephesian temple to Artemis was not a new one in the age of Claudius, and similar incidents took place under Augustus. Scholars give varying interpretations of the term *constitutio*/ *διάταξις* mentioned in the inscrip-

¹⁸ Fiscal burdens imposed on Asia by Brutus and Cassius and later by Antonius must have weighed on the provincial economy significantly (see Macro 1980: 659–660; Levick 1996: 645–646), but its potential remained impressive. See Sartre 1997: 282–291.

¹⁹ See p. 104.

²⁰ See Brunt 1983: 44–52. See p. 105, n. 53.

²¹ *CIL* III 7124; *IEphesos* 1a, 18b. For English translation, see Braund 1985: 213–218, no 586 (= Smallwood 1967, no 380). Interpretation of the inscription, see Atkinson 1962: 262–289; Loś 1988: 70–71; Dignas 2002, *passim* (especially 150–156).

tion. Some stress it lacked the status of an official edict. Kathleen Atkinson says that '*diataxis* (or *constitutio*) of Vedius Pollio was not any form of edict, but private monetary endowment'.²² Nothing, however, supports this conclusion. There are no grounds for denying an official status to Pollio's ruling. The formal backing he received from Augustus makes each of his decisions *ex definitione* official.²³

Persicus refers to Pollio's decisions on two other occasions with the latter shown to have regulated spending on prizes for winners of 'holy games' (ἱπονίκαι) and cap at 4,500 denarii the subsidies given to quinquennial games held locally in honour of the emperor (so-called *Caesarea*).²⁴

The edict of Persicus, for all the valuable information it provides, is unclear and ambiguous, as pointed out by W.J. Slater in his (critical) review of B. Dignas' book.²⁵ Hence, when it comes to the character of Pollio's power and the scope of his activities, interpretations diverge in two different directions. Some researchers think Pollio was sent to *Asia* to set up imperial cult. This idea turns up in an article by K.M.T. Atkinson, who thought Pollio had set up a private foundation for the Ephesian *polis* and linked imperial cult to the temple of Artemis.²⁶ Pollio's presence in Asia Minor is also linked to the imperial cult by S.R.F. Price, although this scholar believes that Pollio did no more than put an official stamp on initiatives by Greek *poleis*.²⁷ Of yet another mind is Peter Scherrer, who thinks that Pollio had no official role in Asia, and his task was to organise the cult of Augustus, not only in Ephesus but also in other cities of Asia and even Greece.²⁸ Aside from the *Edict of Persicus*, this is believed to find confirmation in the inscriptions from Ilion, Didyma (Miletus) and Athens. They are uniform in both their form and contents.²⁹ It is, however, difficult to establish any connection of the aforementioned honorific

²² Atkinson 1962: 261–289. For criticism, see Łoś 1988: 71; Millar 2002: 284–285, n. 88 (= *JRS* 56 [1966]: 156–166).

²³ Millar 2002: 284–285; Price 1984: 69; Dignas 2002: 152.

²⁴ Atkinson 1962: 264; Dignas 2002: 153–154.

²⁵ See *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2003.06.41: <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2003/2003-06-41.html>.

²⁶ Atkinson 1962: 261–289; Łoś 1988: 70–71. Cf. also Dmitriev 2005: 268–269.

²⁷ Price 1984: 69.

²⁸ Scherrer 1990: 87–101.

²⁹ The inscription found in the vicinity of the temple of Athene at Ilion was on the base of a lost statue: Ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος Πόλιον Οὐήδιον Πωλλίωνα. See *IK3 Ilion* 101 (= *IGRRP* IV 215 = Dörpfeld 1902: vol. 2, 471). The second inscription comes from the temple of Apollo of Didyma near Miletus: ὁ δῆμος ὁ Μιλησίων Πόπλιον Οὐήδιον Πωλλίωνα τὸν αὐτοῦ εὐεργέτην. See *IDidyma* 146 (= *AE* [1903], 212). There was supposedly a *Sebasteion* (*Augusteion*) there, its exact location remains unclear. See Scherrer 1990: 90. The third honorific inscription, also from the base of a statue comes from the Athenian Acropolis and was found near the temple of Nike: ὁ δῆμος Πόλιον Οὐήδιον Ποπλίου ὕδν Πωλλίωνα. See *IG* II2 4125. Near the temple there was a *Sebasteion*. See Cottier et al. 2008: 1–13. Discussion on the *Sebasteion*, see *SEG* 40 (1990), no 1001.

inscriptions with the imperial cult at the temples of Artemis at Ephesus, Apollo at Didyma or Athene at Ilion.³⁰ In these documents Pollio features merely as an *euergetes*. The emphasis these scholars place on the organisation of the imperial cult remains debatable. It may well be that the point of Pollio's *constitutio* regarding the Ephesian temple was a reorganisation of its finances and reining in of abuses.³¹

Pollio's activities in Asia Minor were not limited to Ephesus, as seen from coins struck at Tralles between 31 and 27 BCE. We know at least three series of bronze coins that can be linked to the equestrian:

1. obverse: Vedius Pollio's bust, an unidentified object (axe?) behind his head; legend: ΠΩΛΛΙΩΝ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ. Reverse: an eight-columned, eagle-fronted temple, a caduceus to the right; legend: ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΠΑΡΡΑΣΙΟΥ (fig. 1),³²



Fig. 1. Bronze coin of Tralles, 31–27 BCE (RPC I 2634, photo credit: Yale University Art Gallery).

2. obverse: Vedius Pollio's bust, no legend. Reverse: an eight-columned, eagle-fronted temple, a caduceus to the right; legend: ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΠΑΡΡΑΣΙΟΥ (fig. 2),³³



Fig. 2. Bronze coin of Tralles, 31–27 BCE (RPC I 2633, photo credit: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <https://www.cngcoins.com>).

³⁰ Scherrer 1990: 90.

³¹ In the context of Pollio at Ephesus, one more inscription must not be neglected, namely the *Monumentum Ephesenum*, but since it concerns tax affairs, it is discussed in the section on Pollio's business interests. See p. 112.

³² RPC I 2634; Grant 1969: 382.

³³ RPC I 2633; Grant 1969: 382.

3. obverse: Vedius Pollio's bust, an unidentified object (axe?) behind his head; legend: ΟΥΗΙΔΙΟΣ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ. Reverse: the head of Zeus with laurels; legend: ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΠΑΡΡΑΣΙΟΥ (fig. 3).³⁴



Fig. 3. Bronze coin of Tralles, 31–27 BCE (*RPC I* 2635, photo credit: Classical Numismatic Group, Inc. <https://www.cngcoins.com>).

While the identification of the bust as Vedius Pollio, rather than Augustus, has been debated, no grounds exist to argue for the latter.³⁵ Types 1 and 3 are certain to represent Pollio. Not only do facial features differ significantly from the head of Augustus as known from other surviving coins, but the equestrian's *nomina* are given in the nominative case. It may safely be assumed that type 2, where the head is unaccompanied by writing, also represents Pollio.³⁶ The legend ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ refers to the re-foundation of Tralles under the name of *Καيسάρεια*. Some think this followed the earthquake of 26 BCE, when Augustus gave massive amounts of money to support reconstruction of public buildings. Such a late date for the city's new foundation is, however, in doubt, not least because of its inconsistency with the dating of the coins: it is unlikely that Tralles struck asses after 26 BCE. It is much more convincing that Pollio's coins were circulated after Actium and before the restitution of the proconsular power in *Asia*, that is in the years 31–27 BCE³⁷.

Types 1 and 2 feature on the reverse a temple with eight columns and an eagle at the front (type 1 coin also features a chariot above the temple), suggestive of a temple of Zeus. The meaning of the caduceus remains unclear. Type 3 features on the reverse the head of Zeus in laurels. It may be safely assumed that all these coins reference Zeus Larasios. Around the temple and bust of Zeus there is the name and patronymicon of the moneyer: ΜΕΝΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΠΑΡΡΑΣΙΟΥ (types 1 and 3; type 2 also features the name of the city). Menandros is also

³⁴ *RPC I* 2635; Grant 1969: 382.

³⁵ Von Sallet 1876: 136–139.

³⁶ Although in *RPC I* 2633 it is taken to be the head of Augustus. If type 2 is taken to be Augustus, then it would be consistent to see him on types 1 and 3 since they also show the same physiognomy. For literature on the identification of the figure depicted, see *RIC I*, p. 439.

³⁷ Kirbihler 2012: 1207.

found on the coins with Hermes and Apollo and a bull or eagle, on the obverse and reverse, respectively,³⁸ as well as on two issues that feature on the obverse busts identified in *RPC* as Augustus.³⁹ The coins differ by the location of the legend, both feature joined hands and a caduceus on the reverse. The crux of the matter is that they do not necessarily represent Augustus. This has been called into question from the beginning.⁴⁰ Grant seemed to think that all these are representations of Vedius Pollio,⁴¹ which in my view seems more likely than its identification with Augustus. It thus seems necessary to recognise a new issue of coins linked to Pollio, a type 4.

Grant considered all issues linked to Pollio to have been minted on the occasion of the new founding of the city as Kaisareia, which he saw as the equestrian's personal responsibility. Such an interpretation has been called into question on the grounds that the coins fail to allude to the new foundation act in any way,⁴² which is hardly true since the very name *ΚΑΙΣΑΡΕΩΝ* refers to the new foundation. Grant's interpretation is not impossible, although it is just as likely that Pollio could have played some kind of a role on a smaller scale, for example renovating the temple of Zeus which may be the event to which the coins of types 1 and 2, as well as 3, are referring. Pollio's involvement in temple restoration and the setting up of the imperial cult is also seen at Ephesus, as attested by the aforementioned inscription of Persicus. Pollio's activity as *euergetes* has also been brought up (von Sallet), a view supported by the honorific inscriptions from Ephesus, Ilion and Athens.

There can be no doubt that Pollio held a special position in Asia, as the coins struck at Tralles emphatically show. The honouring of an equestrian by a local coin issue was not, however, a unique occurrence. We know of analogous cases from Africa, Spain and Greece, where bronze coins were issued in honour of proconsuls but also (though admittedly seldom) of equestrians. The term 'honouring' is appropriate to the extent that the portrait of a proconsul or governor on local coins (those of a colony or a *municipium*) does not imply a legal right to mint coins (*Prägerecht*), according to Mommsen's attempted legalistic formula.⁴³

³⁸ *RPC* I 2636, 2639.

³⁹ *RPC* I 2637–2638. More recent publications follow *RPC*. See Sear 1998: 286–287.

⁴⁰ Von Sallet 1876: 136–139; Bernoulli 1882: 265; Imhoof-Blumer 1897: 174, no. 24–25.

⁴¹ Grant 1969: 382.

⁴² *RPC* I, p. 439.

⁴³ Grant 1969: 328–329. In most cases the official featured on a coin has demonstrable connections to Augustus' inner circle. In some cases it was a family connection, in others – membership of the *amici principis*. The question of the extent to which the local (municipal) initiative to honour an official required the emperor's *placet* and the extent to which it reflected a spontaneous will remains impossible to decide.

The coins of Tralles, in common with the epigraphic evidence discussed above, reinforce the picture of Pollio as enjoying a privileged position with the full trust of Augustus. They also confirm that his tasks were diverse and his powers wide. It remains an open question whether Pollio operated in *Asia* as *pro consul*.⁴⁴ It seems most likely that his powers were defined by the *mandata* issued by Augustus or the Senate.⁴⁵

In addition to the scope of Pollio's activities, their dating is also debated. Syme thought he was sent to Asia right after the battle of Actium, that is in 31 BCE and remained there only until the restitution of the proconsular power (Syme gives no date for this, but it is usually dated to 27 BCE).⁴⁶ Grant, on the other hand, proposed 29–28 BCE, tying Pollio's 'mission' to Augustus' stay in the East in 30–29 BCE.⁴⁷ Arguments for 27 BCE as the *terminus ante quem* make sense (especially as nothing points to a later date than 27 BCE for Pollio's Tralles coins) so a later date ought to be rejected.⁴⁸

The months and years immediately following the battle of Actium marked a turning point in the history of the empire. It was a time when Augustus was frequently called on to make quick and unconventional decisions (he oversaw personally how the organisation of the administration of the East in 31/30 and 30/29 BCE).⁴⁹ It was thus no accident that in this early period Augustus would entrust important tasks to people of expert knowledge, if not always of spotless reputation. When the situation of the empire stabilised and Augustus laid the groundwork for the constitutional and administrative system of the new state in

⁴⁴ Grant (1969: 383) believes he acted as *procurator et praeses*.

⁴⁵ On *mandata* see Millar 2002: 274–275; Lintott 1993: 122; Bowman 1996: 348. As rightly emphasised by A. Łoś (1988: 73), Vedius Pollio held his office not on the basis of an *imperium proconsulare*, but rather Augustus' *imperium maius*.

⁴⁶ Syme 1961: 28. Similarly Szramkiewicz (1976: vol. 2, 519) gives dates of 31 to 27 BCE.

⁴⁷ Grant 1969: 383–385. Grant suggests that Pollio may have left the province as early as 29/28 BCE, before Augustus restored proconsular power in the province in 27 BCE when he appointed M. Herennius Picens to the office (cos. suff. 34 BCE). The proconsuls were then L. Vinicius M.f. (27/26 BCE), L. Volcarius Tullus (26/25 BCE) and the younger M. Tullius Cicero (24/23 BCE?) whose bust is found on coins from Magnesia. Grant (1969: 385) sees Cicero in Asia as early as 29/28 BCE. On governors of *Asia* under Augustus, see Atkinson 1958: 300–333. Atkinson's results are accepted by Szramkiewicz 1976: vol. 2, 517–519. Atkinson links the restoration of the proconsulate to M. Herennius Picens (cos. suff. 34 BCE) and dates it (unlike Magie) to 28/27 BCE. See Atkinson 1958: 324–325. It may of course be imagined that Pollio carried out his mission (especially if it is assumed to be of a limited nature) side by side with a proconsul or *legatus Augusti pro praetore* but it seems much less likely. It is worth noting, however, that *fasti proconsulares* for Asia under Augustus are far from complete. See Atkinson 1958: 300–330.

⁴⁸ Atkinson (1962: 284–285) proposes 20–19 BCE, while Scherrer (1990: 101), 27–25. He is followed by Burrell 2004: 370.

⁴⁹ The entire Augustan period is characterised by a very elastic policy on the organisation of provincial administration. See Millar 2002: 271–291; Bowman 1996: 346.

27 BCE, many of the *amici Caesaris* were removed by the princeps from positions of prominence. Some in any case sealed their own fate (as was the case with Cornelius Gallus).⁵⁰

Businessman

Starting in the early 2nd century BCE, Roman conquest of the Mediterranean created conditions for economic development on an unprecedented scale.⁵¹ Trade created fortunes for many who had placed their bets on it. Earlier literature tended to emphasise that this section of the economy was dominated by the newly formed equestrian order.⁵² On the one hand, this was thought to result from the equestrians' exceptional competence in business and finance; on the other, from the restrictions on senators, placed in particular by *lex Claudia* of 218 BCE.⁵³ Also in the sights of the members of the *ordo equester* were various types of financial operations. The organisation and exploitation of the newly conquered provinces created virtually unlimited opportunities for accumulating fortunes (for example through tax collection).⁵⁴ In the first century BCE the wealthiest senators and equestrians enjoyed fortunes of hitherto unseen proportions.⁵⁵ Pollio was not one to miss out on the opportunities open to enterprising individuals in this age of conquest and then (for all their setbacks) civil wars.

⁵⁰ On Gallus, see Flower 2006: 125–132. The most spectacular move was the alleged removal of Maecenas after 23 BCE. See Syme 1939: 342. Syme's authority has cast a shadow on the view of Maecenas' conflict with Augustus and the theory has gained wide acceptance despite an absence of evidence in its favour. See Williams 1990: 258–275; White 1991: 130–138.

⁵¹ Nicolet 1992: 599–643; Paterson 1998: 149–167. In general on the late Republican economy, see Harris 2007: 511–539.

⁵² Stein 1927: *passim*.

⁵³ Equestrian 'expertise' has been much exaggerated in the literature. The competence of members of the *ordo equester* differed from individual to individual and had little to do with equestrian status as such. See Brunt 1983: 44–52; Talbert 1996: 342. Richard Saller comes to similar conclusion after his analysis of the equestrian promotion patterns during the principate. He reaches the conclusion that the *ordo equester* did not guarantee professionalism and see as key 'patronage' and 'personal factors'. See Saller 2002: 57–8. On *lex Claudia* see Pelletier 1969: 7–14; Nicolet 1980: 877–888. We know today that equestrian monopoly of trade and finance is a myth. Members of the *ordo senatorius* carried out business in the sectors traditionally considered equestrian in spite of legal obstacles (such as *leges* limiting trade). They could do so with the help of *institores* (see Aubert 1994: *passim*). See Plut. *Cato* 24.11. On senatorial trading interests, see D'Arms 1980: 77–89; D'Arms 1981: 48–71; Schleich 1983: 65–90; Schleich 1984: 37–76. The idea of a more or less clear delimitation of business interests between senators and equestrians is highly dubious. See Andreau 1999: 289.

⁵⁴ On *publicani* see Dufour 2010: 145–195. For examples of equestrian publicans, see Lintott 2010: 88–89.

⁵⁵ *Luxuria* of the last century of the Republic became proverbial. See Davis 1910: 152–193.

In common with many representatives of *ordo senatorius* and *ordo equester*, Pollio conducted diverse business. While our knowledge of his enterprises remains fragmentary, several facts can be determined with a high degree of probability. Unfortunately the surviving sources are very unevenly distributed in time. What we know about Pollio's business ventures must relate to the last years of the Triumvirate and in particular to the first 15 years of the Augustan period. That limits us to speculation regarding his earlier business activities.

It is thought that prior to 31 BCE Pollio engaged in profit-making trade, an activity considered typical for his order.⁵⁶ That is a highly uncertain assumption. Our sources are silent on Pollio before Actium and any generalisation on the equestrians are risky in view of the paucity of evidence on their business interests. On the basis of what we have it is impossible to say what was and what was not typical. Similar uncertainty as Pollio's trading activities surrounds his financial ventures.⁵⁷ The one thing we may assume a priori is that even before his work in Asia, Pollio owned some land.⁵⁸ The size of holdings remains a matter of conjecture but it is likely that he was already very rich.⁵⁹

All the above is little more than guesswork. We enter safer ground after the battle of Actium. Archaeological evidence relating to Pollio can be dated only approximately, but most of it seems to come from between 30 and 15 BCE. This includes three stamps bearing Pollio's name on amphorae found at Carthage, at a site known from literature as *Le mur à amphores*. Later, after the 'Second wall of amphorae' was discovered, a distinction was made between that and the 'First wall of amphorae'. Both sites were discovered and published by Père Delattre in 1894 and 1904.⁶⁰ Delattre found over 200 amphorae at each site (the exact numbers are today impossible to determine). The significance of these finds is all the greater when set against the scarcity of amphorae uncovered at other digs in Roman Carthage (including those financed by UNESCO). Delattre was aware

⁵⁶ A. Łoś (1988: 68) suggests Pollio was a slave trader. That is not impossible but we have no information on that.

⁵⁷ That Pollio's trading and financial expertise was behind his appointment to Asia is rather arbitrary (Łoś 1988: 70): there is no evidence to support it. It seems the most important factor was Augustus' trust.

⁵⁸ It would be natural for agricultural production at Pollio's estates to go hand in hand with food processing (eg. wine or olive oil production) and pottery making. Research on late Republican elites show the frequency of a mixed model with agriculture accompanied by industrial and trading activities. On account of the wealth of literature on the subject, I cite just a few works: Shatzman 1975; D'Arms 1980: 77–89 (and other articles in the volume); D'Arms 1981; Schleich 1983: 65–90; Schleich 1984: 37–76; Wallace-Hadrill 1991: 244–277; Łoś 1996; Berdowski 2004: 259–293.

⁵⁹ Pollio may have inherited a significant fortune from his manumitted father but we have no knowledge of this.

⁶⁰ Delattre 1894: 89–119; Delattre 1906: 33–48.

that he had found important features and compared (with a good deal of hyperbole) the importance of the amphorae from the ‘First wall of amphorae’ with the findings of similar vessels at Pompeii. It is unfortunate that the quality Delattre’s excavation methods and publication, though not atypical of his time, leaves much to be desired. The ceramic material from both sites (walls) was fortunately subject to a detailed analysis and inventory by Joann Freed and her team in the 1990s (of course with all the limitations inherent in analysis of material dug up 100 years ago). Freed’s results were published in several articles although there is still no monograph to present all of the conclusions drawn from the said inventory.⁶¹

Pollio’s stamps (P·VED·PO) are found on handles of wine vessels known as *Koan amphorae*.⁶² Amphorae of that type were produced not just at Kos, but also in Italy (so-called ‘Koan type’ or ‘Pseudo-Koan’). They took over the function of the Italian Dressel 1B amphorae. Carthage imported large quantities of wine in amphorae that came both from Kos and from Italy.⁶³ According to Joann Freed, the amphorae stamped with the name of Pollio and another equestrian, P. Plotius Tucca came from Kos. The vessels reached Carthage most likely between 30 and 15 BCE, a time range that fits well with the dating of other amphorae from the ‘First wall’. Thanks to the *tituli picti* on some of them, the oldest inscription may be dated to 43 BCE and the most recent to 15 BCE. Pollio could have started pottery production on Kos shortly after his return from Asia Minor, presumably in 27 BCE. We are ignorant of the precise date the amphorae with his stamps reached Carthage, but the correlation with the date of Augustus’ restoration of the colony at Carthage is striking.⁶⁴ It is no coincidence the two worked side by side.

Three stamps found on amphorae from Carthage leave little doubt that Pollio owned pottery workshops, although their location, management, and scale of production remain matters of pure speculation. It seems that the taxonomy of Pollio’s amphorae found at Carthage allows for a cautious conclusion that they were produced at Kos, all the more likely in view of Pollio’s links to the island known from other sources.⁶⁵

The amphorae found at Carthage are not the only vessels stamped with Pollio’s name uncovered by archaeologists. Similar artefacts found in Palestine have recently been studied by G. Finkielsztein.⁶⁶ We have a total of 11 stamps imprinted from at least two distinct matrices (MA i MB). They have been at Masada (MA2,

⁶¹ Freed 1996: 119–155; Freed, Moore 1996: 19–28.

⁶² Delattre 1894: 116; *AE* (1971), no 487; Tchernia 1969: 146.

⁶³ Grace 1979: vol. 6 [no pagination]; Freed, Moore 1996.

⁶⁴ On Carthage under Augustus, see Whittaker 1996: 591–610.

⁶⁵ Buraselis 2000: 55.

⁶⁶ Finkielsztein 2006: 123–139.

MA3),⁶⁷ Herodium in the Judean desert (MA5, MA6, MA7, MA8, MA9, MB1, MB2), Caesarea Maritima (MA4) and Samaria (MA1, MI [Matricé indéterminée]). The MA2 stamp from Masada is dated by H.M. Cotton and J. Geiger to 27–6 BCE on the basis of the archaeological context. Finkielsztein cites R. Bar-Nathan's opinion, transmitted to him orally, that the amphorae stamped with Pollio's name were part of a delivery for Herod which arrived at Masada in 27–26 BCE⁶⁸. The M3 stamp on a vase comes from *locus* 1047, where two nearly complete amphorae were found and dated to 37–34 BCE.⁶⁹ The stamps from Herodium and other locations are also impossible to date with absolute precision. If Pollio is assumed to have started his pottery business circa 27 BCE (in 31–27 BCE he was in *Asia* as a special envoy of Augustus) and the vessels stamped with his name dropped out circulation following his death, we are looking at the period of 27–15 BCE. We need not, however, take these dates as immovable milestones for the vessels may well have been in production in the period of 31–27 BCE as well as prior to 31 BCE. The workshops at Kos were presumably managed by *institores* and their manufacture in no way implies the equestrian's presence on the island. And while it remains unlikely, the amphorae may have been reused after Pollio's death. Thus the dating of the Masada pots may be imprecise, but the years 30–15 BCE are the most likely timeframe for their arrival there.

That the buyer of the pottery made at Pollio's workshops was Herod is exceptionally interesting. G. Finkielsztein suggests that the vessels did not find their way to the Judean king by accident but that the two men were on familiar, perhaps friendly terms. It may even have been Augustus himself who connected them.⁷⁰ In the words of Finkielsztein, they were both 'les hommes de l'Empereur' of a kind: Herod as a client king of the Empire, Pollio – as a friend of the emperor entrusted with delicate tasks in Asia Minor and Greece. Finkielsztein observes they were both regarded by their contemporaries as unsympathetic and even cruel. Did they ever meet in person? Finkielsztein thinks it likely. In his view the opportunity for Judean king to meet Pollio may have arisen during Herod's first visit to Rome in 40 BCE or at an unspecified date of his second visit. They may also have met at Rhodes in 30 BCE where Herod was summoned by Augustus (Ios. Flav. *AJ* 15.187–201).⁷¹ Naturally other opportunities may have arisen for we do not

⁶⁷ Inscriptions on stamps found at Masada were misread by the publishers of *Masada II*, p. 219 (No 946–947), as: NEPOT[.]

⁶⁸ Following Finkielsztein's publication an article by Rachel Bar-Nathan and Yehudit Gardner (2015: 45–56) was published ('The King's Amici: Publius Vedius Pollio and Herodium'). As it is written in Hebrew, I was not able to use it.

⁶⁹ Finkielsztein 2006: 129. It must be admitted, however, that the Masada stamps cannot serve as the basis of detailed chronology of vessels at the royal fortress, since they are dated indirectly.

⁷⁰ Finkielsztein 2006: 138.

⁷¹ Finkielsztein 2006: 137–138; Toher 2009: 77.

know all of Pollio and Herod's travels. Finkielsztein believes Pollio may have sent amphorae with his own wine to Masada as a sign of his friendship and respect for the Judean king.⁷² Herod imported large quantities of Italian products (wine first of all, but also Spanish garum), imitating the Roman banqueting style and culinary preferences of the Roman elite.⁷³ The hypothetical friendship between Pollio and Herod may have led to the former offering hospitality to Herod's sons, Alexander and Trasybulos, during their 22 BCE visit to Rome (Flav. Ios. *AJ* 15.343).⁷⁴ The reconstruction proposed by Finkielsztein is interesting but remains purely speculative in view of the silence of the sources.

As long as no amphorae featuring *tituli picti* with Pollio's name are found, it will be hard to know if the products of his pottery workshop that made their way to Herod's royal wine cellars were filled with Pollio's wine. It seems likely, however, as mentioned above, the mixed economic model with simultaneous income streams from agriculture and crafts was fairly typical for Italian elites.⁷⁵ It is highly likely that the same obtained in the provinces.

Vedius Pollio obviously was a landowner in Italy, as it was an indispensable marker of social status and equestrians were no exception in this respect.⁷⁶ We may probably assume that Pollio held land in Campania and Lucania.⁷⁷ It is equally likely that he held property in the provinces, especially in Asia and Greece. A land holding at Kos may be taken as a virtual certainty due to Pollio's pottery production on the Island. Livia Capponi recently suggested that Pollio also held property at the Egyptian nome of Arsinoe, as allegedly shown by two papyri: *SB* XVI 13017 and *P.Coll.Youtie* I 19.⁷⁸ The former is an agreement between three peasants and a certain Achilleus to lease 60 arouras near the village of Herakleia,

⁷² Irrespective of whether Pollio and Herod were friends, wine from the former's estate must have enjoyed some prestige if it was good enough for the royal table.

⁷³ Berdowski 2008: 107–122.

⁷⁴ Josephus Flavius is widely thought to have meant C. Asinius Pollio (cos. 40 p.n.e.). See Feldman 1985: 240–243. Ronald Syme (1961: 30 [Addendum]), points out this is by no means certain and instead of Asinius, it may be Vedius Pollio. See Finkielsztein 2006: 118. Yet another view is proposed by Braund 1983: 240–241: rather than to Asinius Pollio, Josephus was referring to a Jew settled at Rome. This is possible as we know of a Pharisee using the *cognomen* Pollio (Flav. Ios. *AJ* 15.370).

⁷⁵ Łoś 1996: passim. This is well illustrated by the well-known example of L. Eumachius of Pompeii whose amphorae have been found both in northern provinces and in Egypt, as well as at the 'First wall' at Carthage. Some at least of the wine came from Eumachius' estate. The massive income of *gens Eumachia* allowed Eumachia, a municipal priestess and the daughter of the Pompeian potentate, to finance public works. See Łoś 1996: 122–123; Savunen 1997: 53–56. On the income structure of imperial and local elites, see Berdowski 2004: 259–293.

⁷⁶ There is nothing surprising about landowning equestrians. Many of them relied on land for most or all of their fortune. See Talbert 1996: 342.

⁷⁷ In the latter case we know his *figlinae* were located there. See below.

⁷⁸ Capponi 2002: 181–184.

dated to 5 July 24 BCE. The land leased had previously belonged to an (otherwise unknown) Eudaimonos and then (prior to 24 BCE) was held by two individuals by the names of Μα[γ]ήνας (Μαγήνας) and Πωλίων. Capponi identifies them with two equestrians from Augustus' entourage: C. Maecenas and P. Vedius Pollio. Both feature again in *P.Coll.Youtie* I 19,¹²¹ dated to CE 44. The documents refers to the transfer of land held by a certain Euander, a freedman of Tiberius and names earlier landowners, Μαικήνας and Πωλλ[ίων]. There can be no doubt they are identical to the individuals known from *SB* XVI 13017. The name of *Maikenas* is also found in other documents attesting to his land holdings at the Fayum Oasis and the individual in question is widely thought to be the associate of Augustus.⁷⁹ Maecenas may have accumulated all of this land by grants from Augustus in recognition of his loyal service. The same is possible for Pollio. With both serving as Augustus' *consilieri* of a kind they must have known each other (perhaps very well). It is not improbable that they went into business together, although that does not necessarily imply their joint landholdings in Egypt. For this there is no hard evidence: Pollio's *cognomen* is common enough⁸⁰ to allow for identification with Vedius Pollio without additional information.⁸¹

In addition to vessels Pollio was also engaged in the manufacture of bricks and tiles, as indicated by inscriptions on tiles excavated in Lucania. More than 20 tiles stamped P.VEI.POLLIO have been found in a villa at Masseria Ciccotti (*Provincia di Potenza*) in the Brandano Valley. The villa, excavated by a Canadian team, conforms to the Varronian plan of the *villa rustica* with *pars urbana*.⁸² The tiles from the collapsed roof of the western part of the peristyle and the adjacent

⁷⁹ Sijpesteijn 1985: 279; Sijpesteijn 1986: 296. I could not gain access to Parássoglou 1978 and Kehoe 1992.

⁸⁰ See n. 74.

⁸¹ For the same reasons that reliable identification with Vedius Pollio is impossible, we cannot settle on any other candidate. The most likely alternative would be Asinius Pollio (L. Capponi rules this out). The paths of Asinius Pollio and Maecenas crossed on several occasions and they worked together, eg. at Brundisium in 40 BCE: Maecenas negotiated the truce on Augustus' side, Pollio on Antonius' (App. *BC* 5.64). Capponi sees competition between Maecenas and Asinius Pollio on account of each leading a 'literary circle' (Asinius Pollio was Vergil's patron). She also cites the cool relations of the emperor with Asinius Pollio, apparently due to the latter's republican *libertas* and his siding with Antonius under the so-called Second Triumvirate. A. Bosworth (1972: 441–473), demonstrates, however, that the sources fail to confirm this and the relations were, if not cordial, then correct. Asinius Pollio was also friend with C. Cornelius Gallus, the poet and first prefect of Egypt. Perhaps he played a part in the grant of the land at Arsinoe to Asinius? It also cannot be ruled out that the Pollio featured at *SB* XVI 13017 and *P.Coll.Youtie* I 19 is a local partner of Maecenas. At this stage we must consider this issue unresolved.

⁸² The villa complex was occupied from the first century BCE to the early sixth century CE. It underwent repeated reconstruction with three distinct architectural phases. See Fracchia, Gualtieri 1998: 295–343; Gualtieri 2000: 329–340.

rooms date to the late first century BCE (phase 1 of the villa). Those of the many tiles that bear name of Pollio undoubtedly refer to our protagonist: the *Veidius* variant of his *nomen gentile* is attested in the inscription from Beneventum.⁸³

The tiles from Masseria Ciccotti stamped with Pollio's name provide no evidence that the villa was his property though that is a possibility that must not be ruled out. It may, however, be safely assumed that in the Brandano Valley region there were Pollio's *figlinae* under the management of his freedmen for it is hard to imagine that building materials were transported over great distances. This region of Lucania naturally hosted many other *figlinae*, owned by local business interests, as well as, in accordance with M. Gualtieri's suggestion, a *figlina publica* (POT stamps).⁸⁴

While the details of the production of ceramic building materials at Pollio's Lucanian *figlinae* remain obscure, further excavations could change this, as can be seen from the discovery of the tile stamped P.VEI.POLLIO at the villa at San Gilio (Oppido Lucano), a mere three kilometres from Masseria Ciccotti.⁸⁵ Pollio's investment in this economic sector comes as no surprise, as Paivi Setälä's analysis of comparative material from the area of Rome demonstrates significant interests of senators and equestrians in the production of building materials.⁸⁶

In addition to agriculture, food processing, the production of pottery and ceramic building materials, Pollio also made money from other economic sectors, trade in particular, but also finance. In these fields we are limited to guesswork, though the fact of Pollio's trading activities is not in doubt: it is implied by his ownership of the workshops. Whether the amphorae produced there were filled with wine from Pollio's own estates or sold to other wine producers, their distribution had to be organised. The same applies to his tiles and bricks. That Pollio's amphorae have been found at Carthage and in Palestine suggests distribution on an impressive scale. We have no direct evidence but can assume that wine and maybe other goods were involved.

It seems the *akme* of production at Pollio's workshops dates to the period of the civil wars after Caesar's death and the years immediately following the battle of Actium. The wealth he accumulated in that period must have been significant, judging by Pollio's two properties, his luxury house in Rome and a villa at Pausilypon, Naples (see below). It seems probable that Pollio's political standing and the mission entrusted to him (most likely in 31 BCE) by Augustus in the province

⁸³ See n. 9.

⁸⁴ Gualtieri 2000: 331–336. Unfortunately I could not gain access to article by A. Muscettola 1996: 119–131.

⁸⁵ Gualtieri 2000: 340 (Addendum).

⁸⁶ Setälä 1977: *passim*. See also Steinby 1982: 227–237.

of *Asia* in particular, created additional opportunities to make money and Pollio's friendship with Augustus helped him win special privileges, as attested by an inscription found in 1976 at Ephesus. The document is known in literature as the *Monumentum Ephesenum* or *lex portorii Asiae*.⁸⁷ The Ephesian inscription is a collection of legal regulations regarding taxes on the cities in Asia Minor, the rules governing tax collectors, duty collection and other aspects of the Roman tax system. The inscription, while written in CE 62 under Nero, is a compilation containing earlier 'documents', dating from 75 BCE to CE 37. We thus have a collection of decisions made by Roman officials over a century.⁸⁸

The *Monumentum Ephesenum* records under the year 17 BCE, among numerous decisions by the consuls C. Furnius and C. Silanus, information of a *senatus consultum*, which relieved Vedius Pollio of payments to the tune of 10,000 denarii.⁸⁹

96 [iudem addiderunt:] quarum rerum immunitas senatus consulto Vedio Pollioni data est, quanto plus quam decem milia denarium erunt, pro his rebus [quadrigesima] publicano dabitur.

96 οἱ

97 [αὐτοὶ προσέθηκα] ῥῶν πραγμάτων Οὐηδίῳ Πολλίωνι συγκλήτου δόγματι ἀτέλεια δέδοται, ὅσῳ ἂν πλείον δηναρίων μυρίων, τούτων τῶν πραγμάτων τὸ

98 [τεσσαρακοστὸν μ]ῆρος τῷ δημοσιῳνῇ δοθήσεται.

96 [The same (consuls) added]: for whichever things immunity has been granted to Vedius Pollio by decree of the senate, on the amount they are worth more than 10,000 denarii, the [fortieth] part on these things will be given to the *publicanus*.⁹⁰

The key question is how to understand the *immunitas* granted to Pollio. From what the sources tell us, the senate or the emperor granted *immunitas* most often in the form of tax relief for select communities (eg. cities, colonies) or individuals (officials, veterans etc.).⁹¹ The inscription's publishers discuss this in regard to Pollio at a high level of generality: 'Immunity from dues was granted at some unspec-

⁸⁷ That both inscriptions (cf. *CIL* III 7124 discussed on p. 99–100) were found at Ephesus is probably no coincidence. Starting in 129 BCE the centre of power within Asia moved from Pergamon to Ephesus. See Rigsby 1988: 140–141. An initial report on the *Monumentum Ephesenum* was published in 1986 in *Epigraphia Anatolica*, and *editio princeps* in the same journal in 1989. See Engelmann, Knibbe 1986: 19–32; Engelmann, Knibbe 1989: 1–206. I used the newest edition of the inscription, published at Oxford in 2008 by several scholars (cited below as Cottier et al. 2008). The Greek and Latin texts are accompanied by an English translation and extensive commentary. An integral part of the publication consists of five analytical texts in the second part of the book.

⁸⁸ Cottier et al. 2008: 5–8.

⁸⁹ II. 96–98 (§ 40).

⁹⁰ Translation by M.H. Crawford (in: Cottier et al. 2008).

⁹¹ See *OCD*, s.v. *immunitas* (G.P. Burton). Who was released from the obligations depended on the preferences of individual emperors. See Macro 1980: 688. On free cities, see Lintott 1993: 36–40.

ified point by decree of the senate to the equestrian friend of Augustus known to have been active in Asia (...). This immunity is restricted to 10,000 *denarii* (per shipment, apparently).⁹² It is unknown if the tax relief was calculated 'per shipment', as the authors suggest, or in some other way but it is clear that it was not a one-off. It seems that Pollio sold in the province of Asia the products of his properties or those he traded as a middleman. Greg Rowe believes that the relief applied not to goods imported into the province but, on the contrary, those taken out of it.⁹³ The business privileges granted to Pollio by the senate were obviously an outcome of his close relationship with Augustus and his special position within the province. Further research into the issue is called for. Only finds in Asia Minor of vessels stamped with Pollio's name would give concrete evidence of his *immunitas*.

It is clear our picture of Pollio's economic ventures is incomplete, and we know only a small part thereof. As I have had occasion to remark, our sources on equestrians and the profile of their business activities in the late Republic and Augustan period remain modest, hence the difficulty in determining the extent to which Pollio was representative of his order. If any generalisation appears justified, it is that the equestrian elites enjoyed diversified income streams. Their structure in the case of Pollio fits what we know about the elites at both imperial and local levels.⁹⁴ In addition, the example of Pollio further strengthens the case made by Claude Nicolet and other scholars against the myth of limited equestrian interest in agriculture and other sources of income from land (eg. exploitation of *fglinae*). Pollio and his ilk invested in land not just on economic but also prestigious and ideological grounds. Pollio's business ventures also demonstrate another characteristic feature of the period, namely spectacular accumulation of wealth.

Luxuria et crudelitas

The evidence of epigraphy and archaeology presented above throw an undoubtedly interesting light on the life and works of Vedius Pollio. None, however, of the conclusions made on this basis find confirmation in written sources which provide just two pieces of information about Pollio, both of which put him in negative light: his love for luxury and inhumane cruelty. For his contemporaries and for posterity Pollio's name came to stand for the decadence of the transition from the Republic to Empire and of brutality in stark contrast to *humanitas*. Lit-

⁹² Cottier et al. 2008: 142.

⁹³ Rowe 2006: 115. For *immunitas* for P. Canidius granted by Cleopatra, see van Minnen 2000: 29–34.

⁹⁴ See n. 75.

erary sources on Pollio show a strong moralising tendency. Hence the one-dimensional picture of the equestrian that emerges from them ought to be approached with a great deal of caution.

Setting aside Ovid's *Fasti*, which will be analysed below, the earliest mentions of Pollio come from two dialogues by Seneca (*De clementia* and *De ira*) and from Pliny the Elder's anecdote quoted at the beginning of the present article. In *De clementia* (1.18) Seneca invokes Pollio's cruelty to his slaves. The philosopher opines that respect is owed not just to free and people of high status but even to slaves. Irrespective of the law that allows the owner to do with them as he pleases, custom should impose limits on cruelty. Pollio feeding his slaves to fish deserves in Seneca's eyes a thousand deaths (*homo mille mortibus dignus* [*De clem.* 1.18]).

De clementia was no mere sophist's exercise but a political treatise addressed to the young Nero.⁹⁵ Whether the text was written prior to the poisoning in CE 55 of Britannicus, the emperor's stepbrother, or later, Nero's tutor could have had few delusions about his very real inclination to cruelty.⁹⁶ Seneca contrasts the cruel times of Caligula and Claudius with the age of Augustus. This idealisation of the Augustan age is even clearer in *De ira* (3.40), where the philosopher describes the infamous incident in the emperor's presence at Pollio's villa at Pausilypon:

Castigare vero irascentem et ultro obirasci incitare est: varie adgredieris blandeque, nisi forte tanta persona eris ut possis iram comminuere, quemadmodum fecit diuus Augustus, cum cenaret apud Vedium Pollionem. Fregerat unus ex servis eius crustallinum; rapi eum edius iussit ne vulgari quidem more periturum: murenis obici iubebatur, quas ingentis in piscina continebat. Quis non hoc illum putaret luxuriae causa facere? saevitia erat. Evasit e manibus puer et confugit ad Caesaris pedes, nihil aliud petiturus quam ut aliter periret, ne esca fieret. Motus est novitate crudelitatis Caesar et illum quidem mitti, crustallina autem omnia coram se frangi iussit conplerique piscinam. Fuit Caesari sic castigandus amicus; bene usus est viribus suis: 'e convivio rapi homines imperas et novi generis poenis lancinari? Si calix tuus fractus est, viscera hominis distrahentur? Tantum tibi placebis ut ibi aliquem duci iubeas ubi Caesar est?' Sic cui tantum potentiae est ut iram ex superiore loco adgredi possit, male tractet, at talem dumtaxat qualem modo rettuli, feram immanem sanguinariam, quae iam insanabilis est nisi maius aliquid extimuit.

To reprove a man when he is angry and in turn to become angry at him serve only to increase his anger. You will approach him with various appeals and persuasively, unless you happen to be an important enough person to be able to quell his anger by the same tactics the deified Augustus used when he was dining with Vedius Pollio. When one of his slaves had broken a crystal cup, Vedius ordered him to be seized and doomed him to die, but in an extraordinary way — he ordered him to be thrown to

⁹⁵ Grimal 1994: 84–91.

⁹⁶ See Schol. ad Iuv., *Sat.* 5.109.

the huge morays, which he kept in a fish-pond. Who would not suppose that he did this merely for display? It was really out of cruelty. The lad slipped from his captors and fled to Caesar's feet, begging only that he might die some other way — anything but being eaten. Caesar, shocked by such an innovation in cruelty, ordered that the boy be pardoned, and, besides, that all the crystal cups be broken before his eyes and that the fish-pond be filled up. It was so that it befitted Caesar to rebuke a friend; he employed his power rightly: 'Do you order men to be hurried from a banquet to death, and to be torn to pieces by tortures of an unheard-of kind? If your cup was broken, is a man to have his bowels torn asunder? Will you vaunt yourself so much as to order a man to be led to death in the very presence of Caesar?' Thus if any man's power is so great that he can assail anger from an eminent position, let him deal with it harshly, but only such anger as that I have illustrated — fierce, inhuman, and bloodthirsty, and now quite incurable unless it is made to fear something more powerful.⁹⁷

The dialogue *De ira* is undoubtedly earlier than *De Clementia*. P. Grimal believes Seneca wrote it in the first months of Claudius' reign, at a time of thaw after the brief but extremely troubled time of Caligula, who emerges from the text as a cruel man, inclined to wrath and revenge, cowardly as well as megalomaniac.⁹⁸ That *De ira* alludes to him is entirely clear. In the fragment cited above Augustus appears as a counterpoint to Caligula. Thanks to his majesty (*auctoritas*) and power (*potestas*) the princeps prevents his friend, Vedius Pollio's unbridled wrath from running its course. Augustus here encroaches on an area reserved for the autonomous decision of a Roman citizen. However cruel the execution of a slave, it remained legal. Augustus, fully aware of the fact, has recourse to subterfuge of a kind, ordering that all glass vessels (*crystalina*) be broken, which diverts attention from the unhappy servant's mishap. It was not, however, an order in the legal sense (*illum quidem mitti iussit*),⁹⁹ merely a show of respective strengths that had to end with the emperor on top (*tantum potentiae*).

The scene from *De ira* is all the more suggestive thanks to the introduction of dialogue in a bid to enhance the drama. While the dialogue is obviously fictional, the question remains of the historical truth of the event itself. Given the paucity of our sources, it is impossible to decide what exactly unfolded at Pausilypon; historical opinion remains divided. Personally I am distrustful of this account. Undoubtedly Pollio's *luxuria* was widely known. He owned property in many parts of Italy, as well as his magnificent Roman house. Fishkeeping, at the peak of its popularity in the late Republic, serves well to emphasise this taste for lux-

⁹⁷ Translation by John W. Basore (*Loeb Classical Library*) with slight changes.

⁹⁸ Grimal 1978: 270-276. On Caligula, see Barrett 1990.

⁹⁹ Wiedemann (1981: 169) believes Augustus ordered the slave's manumission: *illum quidem mitti (...) iussit* should be rather translated 'ordered to leave the boy alone' than 'ordered that the boy be pardoned'. See Africa 1995: 73.

ury.¹⁰⁰ Wealthy Romans had a predilection for ostentatious *luxuria*, much to their contemporaries' offence. Preparation of saltwater fish-ponds by Lucullus required no doubt massive financial outlays and enormous engineering work, including drilling a canal along a hillslope (Vell. 2.33.4).¹⁰¹ Hortensius was censured for his maniacal focus on his fish: he would never allow a fish from his own *piscinae* to be served at table (Varro *RR* 3.17.5). Antonia, the daughter of Antonius and Octavia was mocked for decorating her favourite moray with earrings (Plin. *HN* 9.171). All the stories of *piscinarii* emphasised ostentatious luxury, licentiousness and affectation of *piscinae* owners. The story of Pollio's macabre habit of feeding slaves to his fish fits squarely with this literary trope which presumably had little in common with the historical truth.

The events at the Pausilypon villa were presumably an invention, albeit one that Augustus was skilful in turning to his advantage. Rumours that cast Pollio in unfavourable light may have been encouraged by the emperor's entourage. And while memory of Augustus' close relationship to Pollio proved impossible to erase (the ancient authors refer to him as *amicus Augusti*), it was possible to demonstrate first distance and then aversion to him. This, however, was after Pollio's death. That is when the legend of the 'bloodthirsty' equestrian came into being. It is significant that Ovid, when writing in his *Fasti* of Augustus taking over Pollio's house in Rome, makes no mention of Pollio's cruelty despite his clearly negative attitude towards his character. We will probably never know who in reality stood behind the story of the alleged incident at Pausilypon, but it is most likely Seneca who deserves credit for immortalising Pollio as a corrupt sadist.

Seneca's dialogues must have been known to Pliny the Elder who mentions the incident of feeding slaves to fish in Book IX of *Historia Naturalis* (as quoted above). In contrast to the Stoic philosopher, his report is laconic and devoid of emotion. Pliny was more interested in the habits of predatory morays than details of Pollio's life. It is, however, characteristic that he refers to Pollio as *amicus Augusti*. By the time Pliny wrote his *Historia Naturalis*, it would appear, the legend of Pollio had taken on a life of its own.

Pollio appears again in the pages of Tacitus' *Annales* and if the mention of him is characterised by extreme *brevitas*, the context in which his name appears is of considerable interest. Tacitus mentions Pollio in his discussion of the emperor's relations with increasingly powerful and influential equestrians (*Ann.* 12.60), while criticising Augustus' cynical (if pragmatic) attitude at the time of defining the new political system. In his treatment of this period there is no shortage of

¹⁰⁰ Higginbotham 1997: *passim*.

¹⁰¹ On the scale of construction projects undertaken by Lucullus in Campania, see Jolivet 1987: 875–904. On the extravagance of other *piscinarii*, see Kajava 1988: 264–268.

betrayal, mendacity, shaky alliances and support for people of ill repute, including Pollio (*Ann.* 1.10). And while the historian attributes this criticism of Augustus to 'others' (*dicebatur*), as well as setting it side by side with the positives of his rule, it is clear that he, just like Pliny, has little affection for Augustus.¹⁰²

The most detailed account of the Pausilypon incident comes from the *Roman History* by Cassius Dio (54.23.1–6). It is a tradition with a strong rhetorical tendency and clear Augustan sympathies:¹⁰³

κάν τῷ αὐτῷ τοῦτῳ ἔτει Οὐήδιος Πωλίων ἀπέθανεν, ἀνὴρ ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν μνήμης ἄξιον παρασχόμενος (καὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἀπελευθέρων ἐγεγόνει καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἱππεύσιν ἐξητάζετο καὶ λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν εἰργάσατο), ἐπὶ δὲ δὴ τῷ πλούτῳ τῇ τε ὀμότητι ὀνομαστότατος γενόμενος, ὥστε καὶ ἐς ἱστορίας λόγον ἐσελθεῖν. οὗτος γὰρ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα ὅσα ἐπραττε, δι' ὅχλου ἂν λεγόμενα γένοιτο, μυραΐνας δὲ δεδιδαγμένας ἀνθρώπους ἐσθίειν ἐν δεξαμεναῖς τρέφων τοὺς δούλους αὐταῖς οὖς ἐθανάτου παρέβαλλε. καὶ ποτε τὸν Αὔγουστον ἐστῶν, εἴτ' ἐπειδὴ ὁ οἰνοχόος κύλικα κρυσταλλίνην κατέαξεν, ἐς τὰς μυραΐνας αὐτόν, μηδὲ τὸν δαιτυμόνα αἰδεσθεῖς, ἐμβληθῆναι προσέταξεν. ὁ οὖν Αὔγουστος, προσπεσόντος οἱ τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ ἱκετεύσαντος αὐτόν, τὰ μὲν πρῶτα πείθειν τὸν Πωλίωνα ἐπειράτο μηδὲν τοιοῦτον δρᾶσαι, ὥς δ' οὐχ ὑπήκουσεν αὐτῷ, 'φέρει' ἔφη 'πάντα τᾶλλα ἐκπώματα, ὅσα ποτὲ τοιουτότροπα ἦ καὶ ἑτέρα τινα ἔντιμα κέκτησαι, ἵνα αὐτοῖς χρήσωμαι.' καὶ αὐτὰ κομισθέντα συντριβῆναι ἐκέλευσεν. ἰδὼν δὲ τοῦτ' ἐκεῖνος ἄλλως μὲν ἡσχαλλεν, οὔτε δὲ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἔτι ποτηρίου πρὸς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ἀπολωλότων ὀργὴν ἔχων, οὔτ' αὖ τὸν διάκονον ὦν γε καὶ ὁ Αὔγουστος ἐπεποιήκει τιμωρήσασθαι δυνάμενος, ἡσυχίαν καὶ ἄκον ἤγαγε. τοιοῦτος οὖν δὴ τις ὁ Πωλίων ὦν ἐτελεύτησεν ἄλλοις τε πολλοῖς πολλὰ καὶ τῷ Αὐγούστῳ τοῦ τε κλήρου συχνὸν μέρος καὶ τὸν Παισύλπον, τὸ χωρίον τὸ μεταξὺ τῆς τε Νέας πόλεως καὶ τῶν Ποντεόλων ὄν, καταλιπὼν, τῷ τε δήμῳ περικαλλῆς ἔργον οἰκοδομηθῆναι κελεύσας. ὁ οὖν Αὔγουστος τὴν οἰκίαν αὐτοῦ ἐς ἔδαφος προφάσει τῆς ἐκεῖνου κατασκευῆς, ὅπως μηδὲν μνημόσυνον ἐν τῇ πόλει ἔχη, καταβάλων περιστῶν ὀκοδομήσατο, καὶ οὐ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ τοῦ Πωλίωνος ἀλλὰ τὸ τῆς Λιουΐας ἐπέγραψεν.

This same year Vedius Pollio died, a man who in general had done nothing deserving of remembrance, as he was sprung from freedmen, belonged to the equestrians, and had performed no brilliant deeds; but he had become very famous for his wealth and for his cruelty, so that he has even gained a place in history. Most of the things he did it would be wearisome to relate, but I may mention that he kept in reservoirs huge morays that had been trained to eat men, and he was accustomed to throw to them such of his slaves as he desired to put to death. Once, when he was entertaining Augustus, his cup-bearer broke a crystal goblet, and without regard for his guest, Pollio ordered the fellow to be thrown to the morays. Hereupon the slave fell on his knees before Augustus and supplicated him, and Augustus at first tried to persuade

¹⁰² On the reservations or, in the words of Syme, scepticism of Tacitus about the principate and its founder, see Syme 1958: vol. 2, 408–419; Sailor 2008: 6–50.

¹⁰³ Seneca's and Dio's accounts have in common their treatment of the Augustan age as a counterpoint to their contemporary realities. While Seneca opposes Augustus to the cruelty of Caligula, Dio portrays the founder of the principate in opposition to the Severian dynasty. See Reinhold, Swan 1990: 155–173.

Pollio not to commit so monstrous a deed. Then, when Pollio paid no heed to him, the emperor said, 'Bring all the rest of the drinking vessels which are of like sort or any others of value that you possess, in order that I may use them,' and when they were brought, he ordered them to be broken. When Pollio saw this, he was vexed, of course ; but since he was no longer angry over the one goblet, considering the great number of the others that were ruined, and, on the other hand, could not punish his servant for what Augustus also had done, he held his peace, though much against his will. This is the sort of person Pollio was, who died at this time. Among his many bequests to many persons he left to Augustus a good share of his estate together with Pausilypon, the place between Neapolis and Puteoli, with instructions that some public work of great beauty should be erected there.¹⁰⁴ Augustus razed Pollio's house to the ground, on the pretext of preparing for the erection of the other structure, but really with the purpose that Pollio should have no monument in the city; and he built a colonnade, inscribing on it the name, not of Pollio, but of Livia¹⁰⁵.

Dio is the only surviving author to discuss Pollio's social origins – while definitely a *ingenuus*, he was the son of a freedman. The term ἐξ ἀπελευθέρων is sometimes taken to refer not to Pollio's father but to one of his more distant ancestors.¹⁰⁶ There are, however, no grounds for this; it is easy to assume that Pollio's father was a freedman. While Pollio's career was indeed spectacular and the tasks Augustus entrusted to him important, this is far from an isolated case. At the beginning of the principate this sort of a career was still beyond the reach of freedmen but their sons, free of the stigma of manumission, achieved success and important office. Dio speaks of Pollio's origins with disdain, emphasising the equestrian did nothing to merit a place in people's memory (ἀνὴρ ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν μνήμης ἄξιον παρασχόμενος) and that he achieved nothing (λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν εἰργάσατο). His only claims to fame were cruelty and wealth (ἐπὶ δὲ δὴ τῷ πλούτῳ τῇ τε ὁμότητι ὀνομαστότατος γενόμενος).

Dio relates the Pausilypon after Seneca but builds on that account, primarily by the addition of dialogue. In contrast to Seneca, however, Dio relegates the dramatic predicament of the doomed slave to the background, while setting the dispute between the emperor and his host squarely at the centre of his narrative. Further, in contrast to Seneca, Pliny and Tacitus, Dio does not refer to Pollio as the emperor's friend. Taking into account the *prooimion* regarding Pollio's background and achievements (or lack thereof), it would appear unclear what Augustus was doing at a party of such a 'rascal' (cf. Cic. *Att.* 6.1.25: *magnus nebulo*). Dio's account fails to suggest on Pollio's part the sort of deference to Augustus that could be expected towards the ruler of an empire. Quite the contrary, the historian

¹⁰⁴ Here Dio leaps from the villa at Pausilypon to Pollio's house in Rome.

¹⁰⁵ Translation by E. Cary (*Loeb Classical Library*) with slight changes.

¹⁰⁶ See Łoś 1988: 67, n. 15.

emphasises that the slave was sentenced to death in complete disregard of the distinguished guest (μηδὲ τὸν δαιτυμόνα αἰδεσθεῖς). Augustus initially attempted to avert the brutal sentence through reasoning with Pollio (τὰ μὲν πρῶτα πείθειν τὸν Πωλίωνα ἐπειρᾶτο). When that failed, the emperor ordered all glass vessels brought in and broken. Only with the utmost effort did Pollio rein in his anger and remain calm (ἡσυχίαν καὶ ἄκων ἤγαγε). In Seneca's account Augustus acted without hesitation or contradiction, his *auctoritas* would admit none. Dio, on the other hand, gives the account of a confrontation, which ends naturally with the emperor gaining the upper hand but only after a failed attempt at persuasion and then a sort of subterfuge. Dio, in popularising the story of the cruel equestrian and fair-minded emperor, picked from the written tradition those elements only that amplified his message.¹⁰⁷

While narrating the Pausilypon incident Dio provides us with the significant detail that on his death Pollio left a large number of beneficiaries of his will, including Augustus, who received a large proportion of his estate, including the villa that was the scene of the unfortunate incident. In the light of Dio's account such a bequest would appear bizarre: why would the humiliated equestrian make the emperor the chief beneficiary of his will? What would Pollio be thanking for? Dio makes no attempt at a critical analysis of the Pausilypon incident, which in his era would not have been easy. In the Severan period, events three centuries prior would have been little more than a legend, and legends take on a life of their own.¹⁰⁸

The Pausilypon estate was without a doubt a valuable acquisition for the emperor. The ambition of the architecture can be witnessed to this day for a villa that fits the location described by Pliny and Dio can be found on the coast in

¹⁰⁷ The historian's conscientiousness requires that mention be made of Suetonius' account (*Aug.* 67), certainly known to Dio which shows the princeps as capable of cruelty to slaves and freedmen, no less than Pollio was. According to Suetonius, the emperor punished his secretary Tullus' bribe taking by breaking his legs. This character trait of Augustus is confirmed by Plutarch (*Mor.* 207b) who mentions the order to impale on a shipmast an Egyptian official for killing and eating a quail that was meant for bird fighting. It is quite possible of course that these stories are worth no more than Pollio's 'black legend'.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Africa recently used the example of Adam Smith, a great 18th-century philosopher, how legend and anecdote, used for arguing a cause, undergo further deformation. The author of *The Wealth of Nations* attempted to prove that bureaucratic control over slaveowners in America would be more effective than leaving things to self-government by slaveowners. To that end he used the example of Vedius Pollio's reining in by Augustus who ordered not only one but all the equestrian's *servi* freed. In one of his lectures Smith put the number of allegedly manumitted slaves at 800–1000 with market value under American conditions would have been 40,000–50,000 pound sterling. It goes without saying that neither Seneca nor Dio mentions the freeing of all of Pollio's slaves and Smith's estimates are pure speculation. The philosopher needed, however, to spice up the ancient anecdote for his own ends. See Africa 1995: 73–75. On the role of anecdotes in historical sources for the principate, see Saller 1980: 69–83.

present-day Posillipo, roughly halfway between Naples and Puteoli (Puzzoli). Its remains were linked to Pollio as early as the mid-nineteenth century and main excavations were carried out in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ The detailed publication of excavation results was the work of R.T. Günther.¹¹⁰ In 2002 restoration of the complex was started under the direction of Giuseppe Vecchio and since 2009 it has been available to tourists as an archaeological park. Despite resumption of the work, only a small part of the Pausilypon site has been excavated.¹¹¹

The Pausilypon villa complex is a massive estate with a large number of architectural structures spread over circa 7 hectares, including residential quarters, a private theatre, an odeon, a temple, a *nymphaeum*, baths, *piscinae* etc. (fig. 4). Inscriptions confirm the villa's status as an imperial property at least from the time of Nero to that of Trajan.¹¹² While no hard evidence exists for Pollio's ownership of the villa prior to 15 BCE, we do know that he bequeathed a villa at Pausilypon to the *princeps*. There is no reason to doubt that Pausilypon was Pollio's property before it became Augustus'.

One of the biggest problems concerns the dating of the Pausilypon structures, due to our poor knowledge of the stratigraphy. On current knowledge, the bulk of the uncovered structures was built or rebuilt after the villa had come into the emperor's possession.¹¹³ The buildings found in the so-called *pars publica* are practically all from that period.¹¹⁴ The large theatre, with a *cavea* of around 47 meters in diameter and 19 rows of seats that, according to Frank Sear, could fit

¹⁰⁹ The initial exploration were concentrated on the upper hill where the most spectacular remains were preserved (theatre, odeon, *nymphaeum* etc.). See Fusco 1842; Alvino 1845; Ruggiero 1888.

¹¹⁰ See Günther 1913. Günther's work is out of date in many respects (the most cumbersome is imprecise dating of artefacts) but remains the fullest discussion of the villa at Pausilypon. Fortunately there are newer works, see Della Valle 1938: 205–267; Pagano 1980: 245–255; Vecchio 1999; Varriale 2007: 147–164; Varriale 2015: 227–268; Varriale 2016; Varriale 2016: 283–301; Busen 2016: 211–231.

¹¹¹ Regular surface studies have been done since 2013. They are coordinated by *Technische Universität München* under the supervision of Tobias Busen. See Varriale 2015: 229.

¹¹² Three inscriptions are dated to CE 65 and show Pausilypon as managed by Macrinus Diadumenus, an imperial freedman in rank of procurator. See *Eph. Epigr.* VIII 335–337. From the age of Trajan we have an inscription that mentions by name *M. ULPIUS AUG. LIB. EUPHRATES QUI PROCURAVIT PAUSILYPO*. See *CIL* VI 8584. Also from the time of Trajanus is a lead pipe (*fistula*) with the inscription: *CAES TRAIANI HADRIANI AUG.* See Günther 1913: 129. On imperial presence at Campanian *villae*, see D'Arms 1970: 79–115 (new edition 2003).

¹¹³ See Varriale 2016: 295–296: 'Despite the lack of data in our possession, it is possible to hypothesize that the villa, above all the *pars publica*, underwent modifications so significant that the structure of the residence of P. Vedius Pollio was essentially erased. These modifications probably date to the Flavian age, while further changes, the extent of which is not clear, were carried out in Hadrian's time'.

¹¹⁴ Varriale 2015: 238–252.



Fig. 4. Plan of the *villa* complex in Pausilypon (courtesy of T. Busen 2016).



Fig. 5. View of theatre and *odeon* in Pausilypon (courtesy of T. Busen 2016).

1425 to 1800 people, dates to the time of Tiberius or later (fig. 5).¹¹⁵ It is also to the imperial period that the odeon, some 50 meters from the theatre, belongs.¹¹⁶ Its size (25.5 meters wide) would fit 280–350 people. The odeon was built on a slope and was probably roofed over. Some architectural amendments were made in the time of Hadrian.¹¹⁷

The structures of the so-called *pars privata*, mainly the residential part, are also difficult to connect securely to the character of Pollio. Günther believes the main structure in this part belonged to the equestrian hence the name ‘Pollio’s House’.¹¹⁸ He based his view on the dating of the fragments of wall paintings but the opinion prevalent today is that Günther’s dating is too early, and the decoration belongs to the Flavian period, which weakens the link to Pollio.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Sear 2006: 129–130; Varriale 2007: 156; Varriale 2015: 240–242; Varriale 2016: 291–292. Günther believed the theatre was built in Pollio’s lifetime. Technically speaking, there is no significant obstacle to linking the theatre to Vedius Pollio except the fact that his potential decision to build a theatre of that size would be an extraordinary extravagance. I tend to think that the theatre belongs to the imperial period.

¹¹⁶ Varriale 2015: 245–246; Varriale 2016: 293–294; Busen 2016: 211–231.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed discussion of the odeon and its geometric arrangement vis-à-vis surroundings, see Busen 2016: 217–228. Cf. Sear 2006: 130; Varriale 2015: 245–246.

¹¹⁸ Günther 1913: 63–76.

¹¹⁹ Varriale 2015: 254.

All the structures discussed above seem to belong to a period after Pausilypon had been Pollio's property. The one structure dated by all archaeologists to before Pausilypon's transfer to Augustus is the so-called *Grotta di Seiano*. It is a 770 meter-long underground passage cut in the living rock of Posilippo which connected Coroglio to the valley of Gaiola.¹²⁰ Inscriptions found inside indicate that before Pausilypon was taken over by Augustus, this was a public passage, but we have no idea if its construction is in any way linked to Pollio.

Of obvious interest are the fish ponds, which are today partially covered by the sea, its level having risen since antiquity. They were studied by Günther, then by James Higginbotham who generally followed Günther's plans.¹²¹ In 2005, an inspection of the underwater structures has been started near the Gaiola Islands. The scholars carefully inspected the ancient port of Pausilypon, the channel that separates the Gaiola Islands from the mainland, and the fishponds (*piscinae*). The detailed studies were published by Maurizio Simeone and Paola Masucci.¹²² The *piscinae* are on a NE to SW axis and cover about 9000 m². The most impressive are the three southernmost ones, which were connected by a system of canals and locks with the sea. A wall protected them against the impact of the sea waves. To the north of the complex, opposite the eastern island of Gaiola, there were another two basins, trapezoidal in shape, also equipped with a system of locks and channels. Their barrel vault, the remains of which can be today identified at the bottom of the basins, may support a belief that they were adapted for breeding morays.¹²³ To the north, there were further structures related to fish farming.

There is currently no way to date the *piscinae* in Pausilypon, but it is tempting to assume they were built in Pollio's lifetime or earlier. The literary tradition on the equestrian's passion for fishkeeping is in keeping with the archaeological evidence. While the bloody incidents events of Seneca and Dio's accounts are most likely made up, there is no doubt reason to Pollio kept fish at luxury *piscinae* in common with other rich men of his age.

While the Pausilypon villa underwent repeated reconstruction while in the emperor's possession (which erased the groundplan from Pollio's day), we may assume that it was typical of such residential complexes in Campania. One common feature of such structures was the ostentatious display of wealth. Particularly fit for this purpose were the co-called *villae maritimae*, which peppered the coasts of Latium and Campania in the second and first centuries BCE.¹²⁴ Especially

¹²⁰ Varriale 2015: 235.

¹²¹ Higginbotham 1997: 191–194.

¹²² Simeone, Masucci 2014: 227–242.

¹²³ Simeone, Masucci 2014: 236.

¹²⁴ D'Arms 1970: *passim*.

the latter was home to a large density of such villas (leading Strabo [5.4.8] to call the shores of the Bay of Naples one huge, continuous city). In many cases, in addition to the luxury residential part, a villa would serve as a production unit with fish farming, pottery production, food processing etc.¹²⁵ A villa implied a new lifestyle, emerging in response to the process of 'hellenisation' and changes in the conditions of the Roman elites. Many villas were decorated with Greek sculptures while wall paintings, architecture and landscaping all betrayed Hellenic inspiration. This sort of 'dialogue' with Greek art foreshadowed trends that were yet to emerge in public architecture.

A villa also implies a certain style of leisure. It displays clearly an autonomous sphere of *otium* and a separation of politics from private life.¹²⁶ Behind the walls of one's own villa, pleasures could be indulged that official ideology frowned upon. This was both an effect of a trend of the time and of the political situation in the late Republic: many people would decide on a voluntary withdrawal from public life for which a villa would provide a perfect refuge.

Did Pollio retreat to his villa after his mission to Asia Minor, focusing on his business interests? It is true that we hear nothing of his activities after 27 BCE. Perhaps the newly formed structures of the state left little need for Augustus' erst-while friend who receded to the background. It cannot be ruled out he had become an inconvenience to the princeps (Tacitus and Dio seem to think so). Although our knowledge of the spatial arrangements at Pausilypon in Pollio's time is limited, it seems that he possessed good taste in architecture and his interests stood in stark contrast to the picture of a degenerate brute we know from literary sources.

Sic agit censura

In addition to the Pausilypon villa, Pollio's will bequeathed his house in Rome, which occupied a large part of the northern slope of the Oppius hill, to Augustus. In this case, as Dio notes with clear satisfaction, the emperor ordered Pollio's house pulled down and built in its stead a monumental porticus, known as *The Porticus of Livia* (*Porticus Liviae*). The emperor's action no doubt carried an eloquent social message, perhaps even a warning to others.

Aside from the fragment of Dio's *Roman History* quoted above (54.23.1–6), another source mentions the destruction of Pollio's house: Ovid's *Fasti* (6.637–648). It is with this account that we ought to start for its extraordinary value as

¹²⁵ Marzano 2007: 47–81.

¹²⁶ Zanker 1988: 25–31.

a contemporary source written by an eyewitness. Thus Ovid's account is free of the Pollio legend that grew after his death.¹²⁷

Te quoque magnifica, Concordia, dedicat aede
 Livia, quam caro praestitit ipsa viro.
 disce tamen, veniens aetas, ubi Livia nunc est
 porticus, immensae tecta fuisse domus;
 urbis opus domus una fuit, spatiumque tenebat,
 quo brevius muris oppida multa tenent.
 haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni,
 sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua.
 sustinuit tantas operum subvertere moles
 totque suas heres perdere Caesar opes.
 sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur,
 cum iudex, alios quod monet, ipse facit.

To thee, too, Concordia, Livia dedicated a magnificent shrine, which she presented to her dear husband. But learn, thou age to come, that where Livia's colonnade now stands, there once stood a palace huge. The single house was like the fabric of a city; it occupied a space larger than that occupied by the walls of many a town. It was levelled with the ground, not on a charge of treason, but because its luxury was deemed harmful. Caesar brooked no overthrow so vast a structure, and to destroy so much wealth, to which he was himself the heir. That is the way to exercise the censorship; that is the way to set an example, when the judge does himself what he warns others to do.¹²⁸

Ovid says that in place of Pollio's house Livia built a temple to Concordia. She spent (at least officially) her own money (*praestitit ipsa*), at the same time as honouring her dear husband (*caro viro*). It was also here that Livia built an imposing porticus.¹²⁹ Since no trace survives of either building, scholars dispute their relative location as well as the date of construction and function. The marble plan of Rome at the time of Septimius Severus (known as *Forma urbis Romae*) features the Porticus of Livia as a rectangular building of c. 120 x 70 meters (fig. 6). The internal double colonnade surrounded the building on all four sides. At the centre of the porticus stands a rectangular structure, considered by some scholars to be the temple of Concordia.¹³⁰ Ovid admittedly calls the temple *magnifica*, but while its position inside the porticus would rule out a large building, *magnifica* does

¹²⁷ Steven Green (2004: 227–229) believes this fragment, in common with other ones (eg. on the Temple of Aesculapius and Jupiter [1.289–294], of Iuno Sospita [2.55–66], *Ara Pacis Augustae* [1.709–722]), fits the poet's flattery of the emperor.

¹²⁸ Translation by J.G. Fraser (*Loeb Classical Library*).

¹²⁹ See Panella 1999: 127–129. On public significance of Livia's construction, see Purcell 1986: 89–90.

¹³⁰ See Stanford Digital *Forma Urbis Romae* Project (VIII-3): <http://formaurbis.stanford.edu>. For a discussion of the temple of Concordia, see Richardson Jr. 1976: 57–64; Flory 1984: 309–330; Panella 1999: 127–129; Barrett 2002: 200–203.



Fig. 6. *Forma urbis Romae* (VIII-3 10opqr, photo credit: Soprintendenza ai Beni Culturali del Comune di Roma).

not necessarily refer size but could mean its architectural brilliance. If its location inside the Porticus of Livia is rejected, it becomes unclear where the temple could possibly have stood.

It is not easy to precisely date the dedication of the porticus and the consecration of the temple. It was certainly several years after Pollio's house was pulled down that the porticus was completed and certainly not before January 7 BCE. Dio seems to suggest that the house was levelled immediately after Pollio's death and if so, the ruins would for several years loom ominously as a warning to others. The year of the Concordia temple's consecration remains unknown, as Ovid cites only the day and month: 11 July.¹³¹ Flory believes the decision by Livia (and naturally Augustus) to build a temple to Concordia was to emphasise the role of the goddess as the patroness of a harmonious marriage and family life, which would fit into the wider Augustan effort on family values. Livia was to play a role in this as a symbol of the traditional Roman matron.¹³²

The selection of the site for the portico and temple was naturally far from accidental. The destruction of Pollio's house was calculated to make an impression – Ovid describes it as enormous, a virtual city in itself: many a walled city covered a smaller area (*urbis opus domus una fuit, spatiumque tenebat, quo brevis muris oppida*

¹³¹ For a discussion of the dating of the Porticus and the temple of Concordia, see Flory 1984: 311–315.

¹³² Flory 1984: 317: 'The dedication of a public shrine to the goddess of harmonious married life fits into the building program attested for Livia and suits the portrait left for us in literature, inscriptions, and on coins of her public identification, encouraged by Augustus, as the pre-eminent benefactor of family life, the first wife and mother in the state, and the exemplar of chaste and old-fashioned Roman womanhood'.

multa tenent).¹³³ The poet stresses that was not the only cause of its destruction: *haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni, sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua*. The words *crimen regni* are of particular significance in the context. It is true that Ovid explicitly rules out the *crimen*, which must be understood as a conspiracy against the sovereign, as the reason for Augustus' decision, but the use of the word itself is eloquent.¹³⁴ The poet names *luxuria* and the poor example it set for other Romans as the reason for its destruction. Augustus decided to pull down Pollio's house even though he himself inherited it. The actions of the princeps must have acted as an act of censure (*sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur, cum iudex, alios quod monet, ipse facit*), a warning to other owners of opulent houses, including people from the emperor's inner circle, such as Maecenas. Augustus tolerated their *luxuria*, took advantage of their services, but at the same time sent them a message that he could turn a blind eye to their extravagance but equally well act as a censor, confiscating their property. Maecenas followed in Pollio's footsteps by bequeathing his *horti* to Augustus. It would seem he had little choice.¹³⁵

The destruction of Pollio's house was not an isolated incident but an element of the Augustan rejuvenation programme and his plans to change the spatial organisation of Rome. The same fate met the house of M. Aemilius Scaurus, aedile of 58 and praetor of 56 BCE. A notorious exemplar of extraordinary splendour (as emphasised by Pliny the Elder [NH 36.5–7]), it serves as a symbol of intense competition in conspicuous residential construction.¹³⁶ Augustus had four marble columns Scaurus had brought to his house in Rome from Greece walled into the *frons scenae* of the Theatre of Marcellus.¹³⁷ In this way not only was luxury excoriated but the monumental columns were placed at a public theatre for the benefit

¹³³ The trend to imitate urban elements at villas, eg. stone walls, monumental gates, small temples, is clear in the first century BCE. Although Ovid uses the word *domus*, Pollio's property resembled a villa more than a house. The same applies to many gardens around Rome (such as that of Maecenas), which also resembled villas in their size and character of buildings. On imitation of urban elements at villas, see Purcell 1987: 189–203; Edwards 2002: 158–159.

¹³⁴ The connection of *luxuria* with tyrannical aspirations was clearly emphasised by Augustus though it must be said that people like Pollio or Maecenas posed no threat to the princeps.

¹³⁵ The process of confiscation of private property at Rome by the emperors continued throughout the first century CE. See Patterson 1992: 206.

¹³⁶ The pace of such changes must have been impressive if Pliny (HN 36.110) cites the example of M. Aemilius Lepidus, whose house was Rome's most luxurious at the time of construction in 78 BCE but had dropped out of the top 100 a mere 35 years later. On aristocratic competition in construction, see Patterson 1992: 200–204. For Pliny (HN 36.113) the year 58 BCE, when M. Scaurus and P. Hypsaetus were aediles, was the turning point in the moral degradation of Rome. The enormous political ambitions of both can be seen from the coin issue of that year (RRC 422/1) with a kneeling camel which refers to Scaurus' military success at Nabatea.

¹³⁷ Moving the columns to the Theatre of Marcellus was strongly symbolic, as Scaurus had once used these columns at a private theatre he had built of wood for a political campaigning. See Plin. HN 17.5–6, 36.6; Ascon., *In Scaur.* 27C; Patterson 1992: 203; Zanker 1988: 137.

of the people. This intent of reclaiming space ‘appropriated’ by the aristocracy and the nouveaux riches for the people is also clear in the case of Pollio’s house and is generally emphasised in the Augustan construction activity at Rome. The actions of the princeps were probably met with approval by the Roman *plebs* who, in the words of Cicero (*Mur.* 76), *odit (...) privatam luxuriam, publicam magnificentiam diligit*.¹³⁸

The construction of massive gardens and extensive residences required many rental properties to be pulled down, thus adding to the strain on an already stretched problem of the overpopulation in the city (Strabo 5.3.7).¹³⁹ The restitution of public space as an element of the wider Augustan building programme is confirmed by two *cippi* found near viae Giovanni Lanza and S. Martino ai Monti with an identical incipit: [IMP(erator) CAESAR AUGUSTUS] | [EX PRI]VAT[O] IN [PUBLICUM] | RESTITUI[T].¹⁴⁰ That the Porticus of Livia was devoted to popular use was, in the words of Flory, an expression of the ‘desire to emphasize the democratic uses to which wealth should now be put’.¹⁴¹ The *plebs* could enjoy not only the porticus and garden but also a painting collection (Ovid *AA* 1.71–72).¹⁴²

It seems Pollio realised that after his death the house would in any case be taken over by the princeps, hence the bequest. Dio says that Pollio asked in his will that Augustus erect there a beautiful building for the popular benefit: τῷ τε δήμῳ περικαλλὲς ἔργον οἰκοδομηθῆναι κελεύσας (Dio 54.23.5–6). Augustus ignored his desire to the extent that he did all he could to erase any association of the new structure with Pollio’s name: the times of public construction by the political and financial elites of the Republic were over once and for all. Such activity was now the privilege of the princeps and *familia Caesaris* (the buildings of Livia, Agrippa, Marcellus etc.). Augustus made it clear that a new time had come – and new values. The name of Pollio, symbolic of the old Republican era and the excesses of wealth accumulation by a handful of Romans, was to be erased. Augustus thus repudiated a friend to whom he owed a debt of gratitude, at least from the initial years of his reign.

¹³⁸ The destruction of houses in a bid to erase the memory of an individual and as a sign of disapproval did not spare even the family of Augustus who had his granddaughter Iulia’s house pulled down (Suet., *Aug.* 72). On Iulia’s guilt, see Bauman 1992: 108–113; Raaflaub, Samons II 1990: 430–431. On construction by Augustus and his circle, see Shipley 1931: 7–60.

¹³⁹ Grimal 1943: *passim*.

¹⁴⁰ *CIL* VI 1262, 31572; Gatti 1888: 237–238; Lanciani 1893: 28–29.

¹⁴¹ Flory 1984: 328.

¹⁴² See Grimal 1943: 189. On Augustan efforts to make art collections public, see Pollitt 1978: 164–165.

Amicus Augusti?

It is significant that literary sources (Seneca, Ovid, Pliny, Dio) make no mention of Pollio's achievements, and Dio (54.23.1) goes so far as to deny that he deserved to be remembered (ἄνθρωπος ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν μνήμης ἄξιον παρασχόμενος) since he accomplished nothing of significance (λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν εἰργάσατο). At the same time both Seneca (*De ira* 3.40) and Pliny (*HN* 9.77) call him a friend of Augustus (*amicus Caesaris*, *amicus Augusti*), suggesting a close relationship between them. A similar tone is found in Tacitus (*Ann.* 12.60) who counts Pollio among the most important names (*praevalida nomina*) of his age. It seems that Pollio was of particular use to Augustus at the end of his war with Antonius and in the months and years immediately following Actium. The equestrian's friendship may have later become problematic for the princeps. It should be borne in mind that *amicitia* may have had little in common with what we usually understand by friendship. In order to gain a better understanding of Pollio's relationship to the emperor, some light must first be thrown on the conditions in which the new bureaucratic and political elites were formed at the dawn of the principate. The sources list *amici*, *comites*, *adiutores* etc.

Inspiration for the institution of *amici Augusti*/ *amici principis* is widely seen by scholars in two sources: on the one hand, the Hellenistic tradition (φίλοι in a ruler's entourage), on the other, in the Roman institution of *clientela* and patronage.¹⁴³ No doubt the nucleus of an imperial court may be seen as early as in the time of Caesar.¹⁴⁴ The entourage that followed the dictator around (as noted by Cicero [*Att.* 13.52] on the occasion of Caesar's famous visit at his villa in 45 BCE) counted some 2,000 people. Defining the circle of people who could be called *amici principis* at the time of Augustus is difficult, in that the list would be certain to be incomplete. We must thus rely on the 'philological method', that is, listing all individuals referred to in the sources as *amici Augusti*, as Friedländer did.¹⁴⁵ The list quickly makes clear the diversity of the group: it includes senators and equestrians, but also people of lowly social standing. In time the group of the *amici* also developed an internal hierarchy of *prima* and *secunda admissio* – and the division was far from identical to that between *ordo senatorius* and *ordo equestris*.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Basic literature: Mommsen 1869: 120–131; Friedländer 1908: vol. 1, 70–82, [An original German edition was published in 1871.]; Friedländer 1913: vol. 4 (Appendices and notes), 58–74; Humbert 1877: 227–229; Neumann 1894: 1831–1832; Crook 1975: 21–30 [A first edition in 1955].

¹⁴⁴ Patterson 2007: 133–134.

¹⁴⁵ Friedländer 1913: vol. 4 (Appendices and notes), 61–62. For amendments and comments, see Gaudemet 1982: 42–60.

¹⁴⁶ Crook (1975: 23) thinks political influence was at stake.

The *amici principis* formed a diverse and informal group. While they advised the emperor and served as source of administrative personnel, they must not be conceived as an 'professional advisory body'.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore the 'title' of *amicus* may sometimes have functioned as a synonym of an official role, eg. a provincial governor, procurator, secretary etc.¹⁴⁸ Some *amici* may have sat on the *consilium principis* while also being *comites principis*. This latter group was narrower: in practice every *comes* was an *amicus principis*, but not every *amicus* was a *comes*.¹⁴⁹ This was due to the fact the *comites* would accompany the emperor on his travels as his entourage. Not all *amici* could take part in such voyages. A natural turnover of personnel is to be assumed among the *amici principis*, as someone would lose the emperor's trust and be replaced by another. A rapid rise and equally abrupt fall were both possible. In the relations between the *amici* and the emperor there is an obvious echo of the old dependence of the client on his patron. The *amici* were never defined in number. It is an open question whether the emperor's death automatically terminated this *amicitia*. Friedländer thought the *amici* would not lose their position which is indeed largely confirmed by the sources.¹⁵⁰

All this suggests that the term *amicus principis* should not usually be taken in the normal sense of the word: the emperor did not necessarily feel affection for his *amicus*. Was this the case with Vedius Pollio?

There is no easy answer to this question. Pollio (in common with another equestrian, Maecenas) was linked to Augustus by a pragmatic need. His selection for the Asian mission was most likely the result of Augustus' trust, but also perhaps Pollio's qualifications. The winner of Actium needed dedicated, loyal people at this truly transformative juncture. Augustus was embarking on a path of defining a new political system, both in terms of ideology and practice, on issues such as the legitimisation of his power, relations with the senate, provincial management etc.¹⁵¹ Augustus presumably had little hesitation to attract to himself a wealthy equestrian who was given responsibilities in Asia Minor more suitable perhaps for a governor of *propraetorian* or *proconsular* rank. This was a time of rapid careers, as seen from the examples of Maecenas or Cornelius Gallus. What counted was efficiency and loyalty to the sole ruler of Rome.

¹⁴⁷ Crook 1975: 30. Tacitus (*Hist.* 4.7) wrote some decades later: *nullum maius boni imperii instrumentum quam bonos amicos esse*.

¹⁴⁸ Crook 1975: 23.

¹⁴⁹ Mommsen 1869: 120–131; Friedländer 1908: vol. 1, 75; Patterson 2007: 143–144.

¹⁵⁰ Friedländer 1908: vol. 1, 81.

¹⁵¹ On Augustan ideology, see Morawiecki 1989: 194–290; on defining power and new organisation of imperial administration, see Syme 1939: 313–405; Grant 1949: 97–120; Ziolkowski 2000: 279–306; Eck 2007: 46–99.

That is presumably the progression of the career of Vedius Pollio who had showed no political aspirations under Caesar and who had been busy making money. Similarly, after his return from Asia Minor, Pollio reined in his political ambitions and focused on business or, an alternative which seems more likely in the new era after 27 BCE, the *princeps* no longer needed his friend's help (did the example of Cornelius Gallus' ambitions give Augustus a pause for thought?).¹⁵² With time, both the person of Pollio and his relationship to him may have become irksome for the emperor. Augustus, engaged in a large-scale project of rejuvenation of the state, may have found it inconvenient to associate with a rich equestrian whose massive house in Rome must have riled the plebs. On the other hand, literary sources undoubtedly demonise Pollio (this applies in particular to Dio's late account). His relations with the emperor were certainly good, maybe even friendly in the usual sense.¹⁵³ While on his death Augustus destroyed Pollio's house and turned it over to public use by building the Porticus of Livia, this was far from a typical *damnatio memoriae*, as frequently occurred in later years (to mention just Cn. Calpurnius Piso, accused by Tiberius of contributing to the death of Germanicus¹⁵⁴ or the example of Iulia, Augustus' granddaughter accused of adultery¹⁵⁵). Contrary to John Bodel's suggestion who compares the destruction of Pollio's house to the 58 BCE destruction of Cicero's house by Clodius or the house of the aforementioned Iulia,¹⁵⁶ Pollio's case was different. Rather than erasing his memory, the point was to turn his house into a warning and a demonstration. In contrast to Cicero, whose house on the Palatine was immediately replaced with the temple of Libertas, the ruins of Pollio's house would loom for several years over the cityscape in what must have been a powerful political statement. Furthermore Augustus had no qualms about taking over Pollio's villa at Pausilypon and perhaps his other properties. Had he wished to suppress all memory of his relationship to the equestrian, he would have acted differently. The destruction of Pollio's house was closer to the idea of *κατασκαφή δόμων* in the Greek world (which Bodel considers the opposite of the Roman *damnatio memoriae*¹⁵⁷), namely a warning, a demonstration. Pulling down Pollio's house was a visible sign of the end of the Republic. The new order would not tolerate such ostentatious display of wealth as in the final century of the Republic. Later careers and fabulous fortunes accumu-

¹⁵² Eck (2000: 201) sees the emperors temporary using equestrians also in the second century CE.

¹⁵³ The examples of Maecenas and Asinius Pollio may be instructive: detailed analysis of sources discredits the story of Augustus' supposed disfavour. It is likely that Augustus maintained contact with Vedius Pollio until his death. The incident of Pausilypon (although dubious as far as the feeding of slaves to fish) indicates the emperor would visit his friend in Campania.

¹⁵⁴ See Eck, Caballos, Fernández 1996; Flower 1998: 155–187.

¹⁵⁵ See n. 137.

¹⁵⁶ Bodel 1997: 9–10.

¹⁵⁷ Bodel 1997: 8.

lated by people close to emperor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (not least, imperial freedmen) show Augustus' censure of *luxuria* as utopian. Nevertheless, displays of wealth were to an extent capped. Both repression and reward became equally important and complementary strategies of the new government.¹⁵⁸

There is much to indicate that Vedius Pollio fell victim not just to the censure of the princeps but also a whispering campaign, pushed perhaps by the emperor's inner circle and immortalised first by Ovid and Seneca, and then by later writers. Dependent as we are on ancient historiography with its one-dimensionally dark depiction of Pollio, we are to some extent predestined to share this view. But Pollio as an *éminence grise* is not a view that emerges from epigraphic and archaeological evidence. On the contrary, these sources depict an enterprising man of good taste in architecture with a penchant for Greek influence (Pausilypon) and able to enjoy the emperor's trust. That is little recompense to a man who has gone down in history as an *exemplum* of a sadist and a brute. But Vedius Pollio himself never had a chance to defend himself against his ancient infamy.

Addendum

After submitting this article, I became aware of several new publications that I was not able to take into account, among them two articles in the volume: *Auguste et l'Asie Mineure*. Ausonius Éditions. Scripta Antiqua 97, Paris 2017: François Kirbihler, 'Les problèmes d'une mission publique entre République et Empire: P. Vedius Pollio en Asie' and Alberto Della Rosa, 'Propriété familiale, pouvoir impérial : origine et gestion du patrimonium d'Auguste en Asie Mineure'. François Kirbihler in his extensive article once again raises the question of the mission of Vedius Pollio in Asia, addressing the most controversial elements of the discussion so far: the dating of the mission, the scope of Pollio's activities and the nature of his function. The author proposes a hypothesis that reconciles the existing scholarly positions: of those who emphasise Pollio's formal position in the province (*praefectus, procurator, praeses*) and those who see him as a special envoy of Augustus with a set of specific tasks defined *ad hoc* (e.g. *mandata*). According to Kirbihler, Pollio's activity in Asia should be divided into two stages. In the first period of roughly two years following the battle of Actium Pollio governed the province as

¹⁵⁸ Patterson 2007: 137. In addition to the 'rationing' of urban space, Augustus also sought to control writing. Thanks to the destruction of books and intimidation of writers contemporary to the princeps, works whose dissenting tone would have served as a perfect foil to surviving sources were sentenced to oblivion. On destruction of books and Roman literary censorship strategy, see Polański 2007: 263–287. There is no consensus on the character of Augustan literary censorship, see Raaflaub, Samons II 1990: 417–454.

praefectus. During this time, he carried out the most urgent tasks, such as demobilisation of Antonius' army and an implementation of specific fiscal projects. In the period of 29–27, along with the restoration of proconsular power in the province, the nature of Pollio's mission changed, and henceforth he operated as a private *procurator* of Augustus, managing his estates and acting as *euergetes*. In Kirbihler's opinion, the latter period might include certain activities related to the restoration of sanctuaries and specific financial reforms. Roberto Dalla Rosa seems to share the belief that the mission of Pollio in Asia lasted longer than is usually thought and he agrees that his legal position could have changed during his stay in the province.

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