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**Hunting for Boars with Pliny and Tacitus**

Although authorship of the *Dialogus de oratoribus* seems to have been conceded to Tacitus, the date of the work remains a subject of conjecture. This paper will argue that a closer examination of the letters of Pliny to Tacitus can provide the answers to the questions of date and context surrounding the *Dialogus*, reasoning that Tacitus wrote the *Dialogus* in response to the petitions of Pliny to express his views on Roman oratory (passim, esp. *Ep.* 1.20). Moreover, Tacitus dubs the chief spokesperson for contemporary eloquence Aper in response to a letter from Pliny regarding boar hunting (*Ep.* 1.6), indicating a degree of light-heartedness scholars often fail to appreciate in the *Dialogus*.

This intertextuality regarding Aper/apri was noted by Stefan Borsz ·k in his *RE* supplement on Tacitus (1968), but has subsequently been either ignored or glossed over in dealing with the main speaker of the *Dialogus*. The reference to hunting boars in Pliny's letter to Tacitus and his catching of three boars while engrossed in his notebooks is too similar to be coincidental. Excluding Secundus, who gives no speech in the extant text, and who views himself not so much as a participant in the discussion of the *Dialogus*, but as *iudex*, there are three primary interlocutors. Furthermore, aside from the correspondence noted by Borsz ·k, another passage in the same letter indicates the jovial spirit in which the *Dialogus* was written at the request of Pliny. Pliny, as he relates his accidental netting of the boars, tells his friend, '*ridebis et licet rideas.*' The last words of the *Dialogus* are '*cum adrisissent, discessimus.*' This correlation sheds new light on the interpretation of the problematic text of the *Dialogus*. These intertextual references, in addition to the '*nemora et luci*' (*Ep.* 9.10 and *Dialogus* 9.6, 12.1) first noticed by Lange (*Dial. de or. Tacito vindicatus, Acta sem. Lips.* I (1811) 77ff.), indicate that the *Dialogus* was written by Tacitus as a response to Pliny's requests both in his letters and in private conversations. The occurrence of this key parallel in *Ep.* 9.10 tells us even more, as the subject of that letter is, once again, the metaphor of boar hunting.

Murgia (*HSCP* 89 (1985) 171ff.) has correlated references between the letters of Pliny and the *Dialogus*, following up on BruÈre's citation of connections between the works of Tacitus and the *Panegyricus* (*CP* 49 (1954) 161ff.). But both of these scholars conclude that Tacitus must have influenced Pliny, having unnecessarily dismissed the hypothesis that Pliny may have provided Tacitus with the impetus for a dialogue on oratory. They insist that the *Dialogus* was published, or at least known to Pliny, before he wrote his first book of letters, presumably in 96-97 A.D. This underestimates the relationship between Pliny and Tacitus. The last words of the *Dialogus*, as well as the general environment in which Pliny and Tacitus circulated seem to indicate that the references from the letters of Pliny, which Murgia so studiously noted, were not only the origin of the *Dialogus*, but also evidence of the relationship between these men outside of our extant literary sources, which the dedication of the *Dialogus* to Fabius Iustus (cos. suff. 102 A.D.), also an associate of Pliny, confirms.