



**University
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BA (University of Victoria, 2016)

“Pliny the Elder’s History: Recording the Past in the *Naturalis Historia*”

Department of Greek and Roman Studies

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

1:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B415

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Gregory Rowe, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Cedric Littlewood, Department of Greek and Roman Studies, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Margaret Cameron, Department of Philosophy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Allan Mitchell, Department of English, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* is remarkable for its references to its sources throughout the text. There is little space between citations in the text, and Pliny provides much information in indirect statements. As a result, scholarship previously treated the work as a compilation. Pliny appeared to echo his sources, and so he provided a treasury of literary fragments which scholars attempted to extract. More recent scholarship has observed that Pliny's use of the *auctores* is more involved than mere repetition. He criticizes, questions, compares, contrasts, and denies their statements. Similarly, recent scholarship, notably Doody, has demonstrated that identifying the *Naturalis Historia* as an encyclopedia is anachronistic, but both Doody and Naas make only passing remarks about the text being a *historia*. This thesis argues that the *Naturalis Historia* is a Roman *historia* and that Pliny's references to his sources function within this historical project. Pliny's moral exempla, attempts to perpetuate *mos maiorum*, and self-professed obligation to the past all reflect the Roman historiographic project of his work. According to this perspective, the *Naturalis Historia* re-envisioned Roman history intellectually. Thereby, Pliny's work tries to preserve and disseminate knowledge, encourage intellectual pursuits, and hopes for their persistence in posterity.