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THE NARRATIVES OF CICERO'S *EPISTVLAE AD QVINTVM FRATREM*: CAREER, REPUBLIC AND THE *EPISTVLAE AD ATTICVM**

ABSTRACT

The narrative and design of Cicero's overlooked collection of letters to his brother Quintus (henceforth, QFr.*) demand investigation. Within each book, the constituent letters delineate the trajectory of Cicero's life, transitioning from his political prominence to his increasing irrelevance. This narrative unfolds not only within the micro-narratives of individual books but also across the macro-narrative of the entire collection. Containing only letters from Cicero to Quintus dated between 60/59–54 and featuring a notable resemblance to the* Epistulae ad Atticum *(henceforth,* Att.*) Books 2–4,* QFr.*, it can be argued, functions as both a 'microcosm' of* Att. *and its supplement. This article addresses these issues and argues that* QFr. *deserves a place alongside the 'major' Ciceronian collections.*

Keywords: Cicero; Quintus; letter collections; arrangement; chronological narration; addressee; history; biography; epistolography

QFr. is one[1] of the most understudied collections among the entire Ciceronian correspondence. The twenty-seven extant letters that compose the three-book collection have been largely considered of secondary importance, and hence studied with a narrow[2] focus on selected themes or for their contributions to the study of the two major collections, *Att.* and *Fam*.

It is now over two decades since Beard[3] suggested that the books of the collection of Ciceronian letters might have been carefully assembled, by (an) ancient editor(s), to constitute meaningful units. However, it appears that few if any scholars have taken

* Sincere thanks to Roy Gibson for his trust, support and advice. Unless stated otherwise, all the dates are B.C.E. Abbreviations of Cicero's works are those of *OCD*[4]. Text and translations of *QFr.* are taken from Shackleton Bailey's 2002 edition, while translations of *Att.* belong to Shackleton Bailey's 1965–70 edition.

[1] *QFr.* and the collection of letters *ad Brutum* (henceforth, *ad Brut.*) are overshadowed by the two more prominent Ciceronian collections, *Att.* and the *Epistulae ad familiares* (henceforth, *Fam.*); neither *QFr.* nor *ad Brut.* is typically studied for its own sake. This 'phenomenon' is confirmed by the scaled-down bibliography (when compared to that on *Att.* and *Fam.*) on the two minor collections: from 2002 to 2021, there have been only 15 new entries in *APh* on *QFr.* and 5 on *ad Brut.*, whereas there have been 121 new studies on *Att.* and 111 on *Fam*.

[2] Almost half of the 56 entries in *APh* on *QFr.* focus on a singular theme/letter or employ the collection as background for *Att.* and *Fam*. *Ad Brut.* presents a similar scenario: among the 44 entries in *APh*, the majority presents historical and prosopographical studies on Brutus; the others employ it as source for the discussion of *Att.* and *Fam*.

[3] M. Beard, 'Ciceronian correspondences: making a book out of letters', in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome* (Oxford, 2002), 103–44. See also R.K. Gibson, 'On the nature of ancient letter collections', *JRS* 102 (2012), 56–78 and R.K. Gibson and A. Morrison, 'Patterns of arrangement in Greco-Roman letter collections: 400 BCE–400 CE', in S. Facione (ed.), *Concatenantur sibi epistulae nostrae. Reading Ancient Latin Letter Collections* (Foggia, 2023), 11–57. For the analysis on the organizing patterns of single books, cf. L. Grillo,

the time to ask whether the three books of *QFr.* could share, together with *Att.* and *Fam*., a similar internal organization. Over two decades later, while the scholarship on *Att.* and *Fam*. has flourished,[4] *QFr*. is still considered to be lacking in that complexity of topics and structure that scholars recognize in the two major collections.[5]

What would happen if one read through *QFr*. in light of the findings of the scholarship on *Att.* and *Fam*.? How would these results change the relation between *Att.*, *QFr.* and *Fam*.? How would this affect our perception of *QFr*.? The first step towards understanding the uniqueness of *QFr*. involves a focus on the transmission of the collection in the extant manuscripts alongside *Att.* and *ad Brut*. Section 1 argues that the arrangement of the collections in the manuscripts releases the historical and biographical potential of the selected letters. Section 2 analyses the design of the three-book collection: *QFr*. stands out as a unique example (in the Ciceronian corpus of letters) of a collection in which each of the constituent books features essentially the same narrative pattern. At the same time, each book offers distinct characteristics and effects that set them apart from each other. Moreover, section 2 argues that the twenty-seven letters of *QFr*. narrate a story about Cicero not necessarily envisaged at the time of the letters' composition. The letters display the 'parabola' of the lives of both Cicero and the Republic, from 60/59 to late 54.[6]

Sections 3 and 4 look more intently at the deliberate structural and thematic links between *Att.* and *QFr.* and propose a bivalent reading of *QFr.* as both a 'pocket-version' of *Att.* and as a 'supplement' to the narrative proposed by it. Three crucial questions will be asked: 1) why does *QFr*. end with a letter dated December 54? 2) Do Cicero's relationships with Quintus as well as with the increasingly powerful Caesar and Pompey play a role in this? 3) To what extent did the narrative pattern in *Att.* Books 2–4 (June 60–November 54) influence the constitution of *QFr.* (end 60/January 59–December 54)?

While the role of (an) ancient editor(s)—convincingly demonstrated by White[7] and widely taken up by others—is crucial and unavoidable in any discussion of the arrangement of letters in the Ciceronian collections and the narratives they constitute, I acknowledge that this topic remains controversial for some readers. Therefore, the analysis conducted here will, where possible, prioritize the examination of emerging narrative patterns within the collection without delving too much into speculation about the process of constructing the Ciceronian collections (although such speculation will be unavoidable at times). I aim to encourage readers to reconsider the distinctive nature of *QFr*. and, ultimately, emancipate it from its status as a 'second-string collection'.

'Reading Cicero's *Ad familiares* 1 as a collection', *CQ* 100 (2015), 1–14 and L. Grillo, 'The artistic architecture and closural devices of Cicero's *Ad familiares* 1 and 6', *Arethusa* 49 (2016), 399–413, F. Martelli, 'The triumph of letters: rewriting Cicero in *Ad fam*. 15', *JRS* 107 (2017), 90–115. R.K. Gibson, 'The *Pro Marcello* without Caesar: grief, exile and death in Cicero, *Ad familiares* 4', *Hermathena* 202/203 (2017), 105–46, S. Cammoranesi, 'Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* narratives of the Civil War' (Diss., Manchester University, 2022). On *Att.* and *ad Brut*., see R.K. Gibson (forthcoming).

[4] The massive number of editions of *Att*. and *Fam*., from the fifteenth century onwards, also demonstrates the growing interest in the two major collections only. On *Att*.: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]); on *Fam.* and on *QFr*.: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[5] J. Henderson—in 'Cicero's letters to Cicero *ad QFR*: big brother's keeper', *Arethusa* 49 (2016), 439–61 and 'Continued: soon after', *Arethusa* 49 (2016), 489–501—is the first modern scholar to have analysed *QFr*. as a corpus and to have raised questions about the books' narrative.

[6] A similar idea is explored, for *Fam*. Book 15, by Martelli (n. 3).

[7] P. White, *Cicero in Letters: Epistolary Relations of the Late Republic* (Oxford and New York, 2010). For the scholarship that has followed White's approach: see n. 3 above.

1. CICERO'S COLLECTION OF LETTERS TO HIS BROTHER QUINTUS

The collection is, arguably, a product of the post-Republican period of ancient Rome. Although work on assembling letters might have begun soon after Cicero's death in December 43, the process of publication itself may well have gone on for some decades. Allusions by Ovid have been proposed, but none of these constitutes firm evidence.[8]

At any rate, the first certain reference to *QFr.* as a collection is in Suetonius (*Aug*. 3.2).[9] It would be perfectly possible to argue that *QFr.* was not in circulation until as late as the first or second century C.E. After the constitution of *QFr.*, the collection eventually circulated, at least in Late Antiquity,[10] alongside *ad Brut.* and *Att.*[11] The decision to transmit these three Ciceronian collections together potentially casts a light on the structural connection that exists between *QFr.* and *Att.* (and *ad Brut.*); it may also suggest that *QFr.* was constructed originally to work as the microcosm of *Att.*[12]

The twenty-seven letters that compose *QFr.* seem to have been originally organized into the form found in most manuscripts: 1.1–4, 2.1–16, 3.1–7. Within the books, the letters (which largely maintain chronological sequence)[13] document political events of the period between the end of 60/January 59 and December 54, and the effect that those events had on Cicero and his family's lives. In particular, the collection focusses on: the formation of the so-called 'first triumvirate' and rise to power of the triumvirs; Cicero's exile in 58 and return in 57; Clodius' activity against Cicero and fight against Milo; Pompey and Caesar's personal power and the instability of already weak Roman institutions.

QFr., as it stands, is effectively a 'monologue'—consisting exclusively[14] of Cicero's letters to his younger brother Quintus, a Roman politician and military leader between

[8] See Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]) on *QFr.* 1.3.1 and Ov. *Tr.* 4.3.39–40 and *QFr.* 1.3.1 and Ov. *Tr.* 3.11.25–30. Possible allusions to *QFr.* have been also detected in Plin. *Ep.* 8.24.1, 8.

[9] The earliest certain evidence for the circulation of *Fam.* is Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 1.1.5); the first certain references to items from *Att.* are found in Seneca's letters (97.3–6, 118.1–2). On the evolution of epistolography in the period here discussed, see P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell'impero, con cenni sull'epistolografia preciceroniana* (Rome, 1983).

[10] The surviving manuscripts descend from the (now lost) Verona manuscript of Cicero's letters which Petrarch found in 1345 in the Cathedral Library of Verona. It probably represents the late antique circulation of the three collections (*Att.*, *QFr.*, *ad Brut.*) together. Among extant manuscripts, the most important is the Florentine Laur. Med. 49.18 (14th cent. = **M**), which recreates the contents and order of Petrarch's manuscript (similarly in the Parisinus lat. 8538 [15th cent. = **R**]). On this, see B.L. Cook, 'Petrarch's reading of Cicero's letters: a Ciceronian response', *C&M* 63 (2012), 321–53 and Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[11] *Ad Brut.* and *Att.* were probably published between the end of the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E.: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[12] See section 4 below.

[13] The letters mostly follow a chronological sequence, with the only exception being 2.8 (early February 55), which has been moved forward to precede 2.9 (June 56). A similar situation obtains in the much larger *Att*. (and also in *ad Brut*.), where the letters follow a broadly chronological order (roughly seventeen per cent of the 426 free-standing letters of *Att.* appear to be positioned out of chronological order: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]), while only 6 out of the 26 extant missives of *ad Brut*. fall out of this pattern. Contrast *Fam*., where the letters follow different criteria, including, but not limited to, chronology: see n. 3 above.

[14] *QFr.* is the only extant collection that respects this principle strictly. The collection that comes closest is *Att*., since it contains only a small number of letters (six per cent: 27 out of a total of 453: Gibson [n. 3 (forthcoming)]) sent to/from someone else. *Ad Brut.* is next, with thirty-five per cent (9 out of 17) of letters that fall outside this principle of a single addressee. *Fam.* presents a different

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66–43.[15] Cicero certainly addressed more letters to Quintus than are currently extant,[16] and Quintus wrote back to Cicero;[17] however, none of these exchanges is found in the collection. For readers committed to the idea of an active role for (an) ancient editor(s) of the correspondence, this might appear intentional: not only does *QFr.* cover the constricted timeframe 60/59–54, but it also excludes Quintus' letters (which might have been, in theory, at their disposal)—presumably to enhance Cicero's role as *paterfamilias*. Letters written by Quintus are extant in *Fam*. and include those addressed to Tiro (*Fam*. 16.8, 26, 27) and one addressed to Cicero (*Fam.* 16.16) about Tiro's manumission.

1.1 The contents of the collection

In order to help the reader appreciate the design of the collection, it may be helpful to offer a brief review of the contents of the three books.[18]

Book 1: four letters (among which the first is the longest of the collection: 521 lines)[19] that cover the period between the end of 60/January 59 and August 58. The first two letters, written from Rome, contain Cicero's advice to Quintus (who was going into his third year as governor of Asia) on how to govern his province. Their main themes (summarized in 1.1.18) are: 1) the maintenance of Quintus' own integrity and self-restraint (1.1.4–9), especially in relation to his irritability (1.1.37–40, 1.2.7–9); 2) the surveillance of his subordinates, from his staff to his slaves (1.1.10–14, 1.1.17, 1.2.3); 3) a cautious selectivity as regards close friendships (1.1.15); 4) the importance of mildness of manner in delivering judgement (1.1.19, 1.2.4–6) and impartiality in dispensation of justice (1.1.20–1, 1.2.10–11). Letters 3–4 offer a rather different narrative: they are written from Thessalonica at the time of Cicero's exile.

Sixteen letters are included in Book 2. These focus on the events of mid December 57–August 54, and are mainly written from Rome (except for 2.6, written en route to Anagnia; 2.9 from Tusculum; 2.13 from Cumae/Pompeii). In these letters, Cicero, who has just returned to Rome from exile, reports on the Senate's agenda to Quintus. Reports of the Senate's meetings include news on: 1) Clodius' activity (Clodius' indictment and obstructionism: 2.1, 2.2; his conflict with Milo: 2.3, 2.5 and with Sestius: 2.4); 2) the restoration of Ptolemy XII Auletes (2.2) and the conflict between

structure, since it includes letters from a range of Cicero's different correspondents: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[15] Quintus was proconsul of Asia from 61 to May 58. From late 57 to June 56, he acted as Pompey's legate in Sardinia and from 54 to 52 as Caesar's legate in Gallia: see R.T. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic* (New York, 1952), 2.181, 213, 226.

[16] The last missive included in the collection is *QFr.* 3.7 (December 54). Cicero surely addressed other letters to Quintus during the years of his consulate and from exile or after December 54. This intended selection could be a signal of editorial design, since it is possible that Cicero and Quintus exchanged other letters, as might be demonstrated by some letters included in *Att.*: see section 3 below.

[17] Quintus must have written to Cicero especially when abroad (on this, see n. 52 below). Writing to those who were in Rome, to secure their protection, was crucial for those who were abroad: White (n. 7), 10 n. 7. Selected internal evidence: *te puto saepe habere qui num quid Romam uelis quaerant. quod ad me <de> Lentuli et Sesti nomine scripsisti* (*QFr.* 2.2.1); *a te post illam Vlbiensem epistulam* (*QFr.* 2.3.7).

[18] The contents of the collection have also been discussed by P.B. Harvey, 'Cicero *Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem et ad Brutum*: content and comment', *Athenaeum* 79 (1991), 17–29.

[19] Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]), who has a spreadsheet on *QFr.* The line counts in Gibson are based on W.S. Watt (ed.), *Marcus Tullius Cicero: M. Tulli Ciceronis epistulae* (Oxford, 1958).

Lentulus and Pompey (2.2, 2.4); 3) the increasing anxiety about the frictions between Caesar and Pompey (2.1, 2.3–4, 2.5–16).

Book 3 contains seven letters[20] written between September–December 54 from Rome and his villas (3.1 from Arpinium and Rome; 3.5 from Tusculum). Here Cicero, who has been appointed Pompey's legate in Spain, informs his brother (still in Gallia, under Caesar's command) on 1) Gabinius' case (3.1–4); 2) his own decision to withdraw from politics to focus on his literary works (3.5–6, 3.7).

2. A STORY OF DECLINE

The twenty-seven letters of *QFr.* create a narrative of Cicero's private life and career, not necessarily envisaged by their author at the time of their original composition. By reading the letters of *QFr.* in the manuscript's order, the reader can follow Cicero moving[21] in Book 1 from a still solid social and political position (1.1–2) to exile (1.3–4); in Book 2 from political reinstatement (2.1–3) to political disillusionment and fears for the future of the state (2.4–16); and in Book 3 from increasing political disenchantment (3.1–4) to the decision to withdraw from political concerns and focus on literary works (3.5–7).

The order of the books of the collection (as also the repetition of keywords within the letters and their length)[22] sustains a particular storyline about Cicero (and the Republic):[23] Books 1 and 2 open with an initial image of optimism but move towards the end to a position of decided pessimism. Similarly, Book 3, which opens with a comparatively positive portrait of Cicero but closes on an image of despair and angst, becomes increasingly bitter as the end approaches. This is a unique[24] feature of *QFr.* Among the Ciceronian letter collections: three consecutive books with essentially the same narrative pattern (starting with a portrayal of a more enthusiastic and politically engaged Cicero and ending with an unengaged and disillusioned one),[25] but where each book creates a distinct narrative effect that distinguishes it from the others.

[20] MS **M** registers nine letters for Book 3, instead of the seven Shackleton Bailey includes in his edition (2002). Copyists of **M** failed to recognize 3.5 as one letter alone, but believed that it contained three different letters: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[21] A similar progressive degradation of Cicero' social prestige is also shown in the similarly short compass of *Fam*. 5.1–21, even if the ancient editor's/editors' intervention here is more invasive and probably counter-historically orientated. For the counter-historical narrative on Cicero that emerges from *Fam*. 15, see Martelli (n. 3). Whitton has traced a similar movement in *ad Brut.*: C. Whitton, 'Last but not least: *Ad M. Brutum*', *Hermathena* 202/203 (2017), 185–224, at 194.

[22] As shown below (pages 110–19), the presence/absence of meaningful keywords in the letters and the length of the letters are crucial for understanding the narrative on Cicero's life presented by the collection.

[23] The idea that the decline of Cicero and his influence mirrors the decline of the Republic is also found in numerous *post reditum* speeches: J.H. Nicholson, *Cicero's Return from Exile: The Orations* Post reditum (Bern, 1992) and A.M. Riggsby, 'The «post reditum» speeches', in J.M. May (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric* (Leiden / Boston / Cologne, 2002), 159–95.

[24] Instead, individual books of *Att.* and *Fam*. present micro-narratives within a much larger macro-narrative involving the events of Cicero's life. These micro-narratives (differently from *QFr.*) are not also recurrent at the level of the whole collection but are characteristically confined to one or more books: cf. the narrative on Cicero's exile in Greece, which is confined only to *Att.* Book 3; see also the narrative on Cilicia that emerges only from *Att.* Books 5–6: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[25] Similarly in *Fam.* Book 5, where the first set of letters presents a rather enthusiastic/politically engaged image of Cicero (1–12), which appears in contrast with that emerging from the concluding set of letters (13–21).

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2.1 Book 1: spes*,* amicitia*,* gloria

Written at the time of Quintus' proconsulate in Asia, *QFr.* 1.1–2 offer Cicero's (probably unsolicited) advice[26] to Quintus (who had been forced to continue his role of governor of Asia for a third year). These two letters were not conceived as a collected series by their author; however, serendipity aside, whoever put together Cicero's correspondence may well have decided to juxtapose them for their intrinsic links.[27] Together the two letters offer the first stage of a narrative of Cicero's life and career: Cicero speaks with the prestige of an ex-consul in his role as Quintus' adviser. This image of prestige and pre-eminence is only too visible from the letters' constitutive elements, mainly the date of sending and their length. The two letters were dispatched from Rome, the centre of public and political life,[28] between the end of 60/January 59 and December—periods of strenuous political and social activity. This image of political and social resonance is also emphasized by the total length of the two letters: 871 lines for Book 1[29] of which 711 belong to 1.1–2 (521 lines for letter 1[30] and 190 for letter 2).[31]

Pre-eminence and prestige are also visible in Cicero's role as Quintus' adviser[32]—a role inherited after their father died in 64.[33] In advising his younger brother, Cicero reunites two positions (on which he bases his supremacy): that of experienced politician and saviour of the Republic (even if he has not yet held a proconsulship) and that of the elder brother of Quintus, now *paterfamilias*.

[26] Although at the beginning of *QFr.* 1.1 Cicero states that his intention is not to advise Quintus on how to behave (§8 *atque haec nunc non ut facias … scribo*), he eventually becomes Quintus' mentor (§18 *sed nescio quo pacto ad praecipiendi rationem delapsa est oratio mea, cum id mihi propositum initio non fuisset*). To offer advice was a delicate business, especially if it was unwanted or unsought. Quintus, who at the time held a proconsulship, might feel offended by Cicero's attempt to advise him on a matter in which he had a certain expertise, but Cicero did not (Cicero will hold a proconsulship only between 51–50). Strategies of redressive politeness (for which, see J. Hall, *Politeness and Politics in Cicero's Letters* [Oxford and New York, 2009], 107–34), such as the praise of Quintus' leading abilities (§§9, 25) and the stress put on Cicero's affection (§§41, 45), are employed by Cicero to mitigate Quintus' possible irritation. Quintus was probably familiar with the greater part of Cicero's advice (see Cicero's advice on Quintus' staff at §§10–15 or selectivity in friendships at §16), as Cicero points out later in §36 (*sed quid ego te haec hortor quae tu non modo facere potes tua sponte sine cuiusquam praeceptis*). On Cicero's language for offering advice: see n. 32 below.

[27] *QFr.* 1.2, written a year later than *QFr.* 1.1, repeats its themes. Moreover, the gap of a year between 1.1 and 1.2 makes it possible to believe that there must have been other letters exchanged between the two brothers: see nn. 16–17.

[28] Conversely, *QFr.* 1.3 and 1.4 are written from Thessalonica during Cicero's exile.

[29] In contrast to the 623 lines of Book 2 and to the 617 lines of Book 3: Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]). The decreasing number of lines in the letters included in each book might be intentional: it certainly helps to bolster the narrative on Cicero that I believe is in place in *QFr.* For a broader study on Cicero's book-length, see J. Stover, 'The Ciceronian book and its influence: a statistical approach', *Ciceroniana On Line* 5 (2021), 263–83. Length appears also to be a criterion for the organization of ancient letter collections: Gibson and Morrison (n. 3), 11–57.

[30] Letter 1.1 is the longest of the entire surviving Ciceronian corpus; the next longest is *Fam.* 1.9 (443 lines), a letter on Lentulus' proconsulship in Cilicia.

[31] Letter 1.2 is second only to 3.1 (255 lines): Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]). However, this does not invalidate my reading of the collection. Letter 3.1 is a different case: it inaugurates the dark narrative on Cicero that gradually emerges from the last book of the collection.

[32] The tone and the language here employed are appropriate to Cicero's role as adviser (on which, see n. 26 above): cf. the use of *rogo*: 1.1.4, 1.2.11, 1.2.14; *admoneo*: 1.2.14; *praescribo*: 1.1.12; *hortor*: 1.1.36, 1.1.46. On this letter as an essay on good rule and modelled on the philosopher's letter of advice to a ruler, see E. Rawson, 'Roman rulers and the philosophic advisor', in M.T. Griffin and J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society* (Oxford, 1989), 233–57. On the contrary, Cicero is the one listening to Quintus' advice in Book 3.

[33] Henderson (n. 5), 442 n. 6.

The language[34] employed in 1.1–2 underpins and substantiates a narrative of Cicero as a powerful man, in contrast with the narrative of decline in 1.3–4 (as we shall see in detail below). The four extant letters of Book 1 are connected by the repetition of three keywords: *spes*, *amicitia*, *gloria*; the linguistic distinctiveness of their use in 1.1–2 as opposed to 1.3–4 plays a crucial role in conveying this narrative of progressive decline.

In 1.1–2, the reiterated use of these keywords conveys an image of Cicero as an optimistic and powerful man, both on the political and on the personal levels. Despite the increasing personal power of the triumvirs,[35] Cicero appears hopeful and courageous (differently from 1.3–4): he is optimistic that the political circumstances will change, and asserts that he is not afraid of anything—including Clodius' attacks: *equidem cum spe sum maxima tum maiore etiam animo: spe, ut superiores fore nos confidam … sin autem ui agere conabitur, spero fore studiis non solum amicorum sed etiam alienorum ut ui resistamus* (1.2.16). Furthermore, the support shown by old friends[36] and new acquaintances as well and his closeness to the magistrates on duty make Cicero optimistic about his future. Should Clodius decide to harm him (for his activity against the Catilinarians),[37] Cicero will be able to count on their endorsement: *sin autem ui agere conabitur, spero fore studiis non solum amicorum sed etiam alienorum ut ui resistamus. omnes et se et suos amicos, clientis, libertos, seruos, pecunias denique suas pollicentur … tribuni pl. designati sunt nobis amici, consules se optime ostendunt, praetores habemus amicissimos et acerrimos ciuis, Domitium, Nigidium, Memmium, Lentulum* (1.2.16). Finally, Cicero's hunt for *gloria* as well as his desire to enhance the respectability of his family's name demonstrate Cicero's optimistic vision of their future. Cicero encourages his younger brother to distinguish himself in his province: *non te tibi soli gloriam quaerere … sed ea tibi est communicanda mecum, prodenda liberis nostris* (1.1.44).[38]

However, as suggested earlier, *spes*, *amicitia* and *gloria* play a distinctive role not only in 1.1–2 but also in 1.3–4, where their recurrence is of substantial importance for its narrative. If in 1.1–2 these terms are the mark of Cicero and his family's actual prestige, in 1.3–4 they become an old and distant memory. The portrait of Cicero as a powerful and pre-eminent man in 1.1–2 offers a sharp contrast with the portrait that emerges from 1.3–4. Written in June/August 58, the letters were all sent from Thessalonica,[39] where Cicero was in exile. The strikingly different length of the letters

[34] Peter Heslin's data generated through a machine learning algorithm has been crucial for the analysis of the language of the letters. The data were made available for the Durham–Tübingen 'Latin Text Collections' event in September 2021.

[35] *… rem publicam funditus amisimus, adeo ut <C.> Cato … in contionem ascendit et Pompeium priuatum dictatorem appellauit* (1.2.15).

[36] On Cicero's language of *amicitia*: J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République* (Paris, 1963). See also F. Prost, '«Amor» et «amicitia» dans la correspondance d'exil de Cicéron', *VL* 191–192 (2015), 7–35.

[37] Letter 1.2.16 predates the *lex de capite ciuis Romani* by which Clodius condemned Cicero for his decision to sentence the Catilinarians to death without the *prouocatio ad populum* to exile.

[38] *nostram gloriam tua uirtute augeri expeto* (1.1.2); *qua re quoniam in eam rationem uitae nos non tam cupiditas quaedam gloriae quam res ipsa ac Fortuna deduxit ut sempiternus sermo hominum de nobis futurus sit* (1.1.38); *simul et illud cogita, nos non de reliqua et sperata gloria iam laborare sed de parta dimicare, quae quidem non tam expetenda nobis fuit quam tuenda est* (1.1.43). Glory will also come from his friends' support in the quarrel with Clodius: *si diem nobis dixerit, tota Italia concurret, ut multiplicata gloria discedamus* (1.2.16).

[39] Whereas 1.1 and 1.2 were written from Rome.

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reflects this dreadful moment[40] in Cicero's life: 114 lines for 1.3 and 46 for 1.4, a total of 160 lines as against the 711 of 1.1 and 1.2. Cicero, by his own account, is only a faint memory of the person he used to be: *non enim uidisses fratrem tuum, non eum quem reliqueras, non eum quem noras, non eum quem flens flentem, prosequentem proficiscens dimiseras, ne uestigium quidem eius nec simulacrum sed quandam effigiem spirantis mortui* (1.3.1). He mourns not only his lost standing and reputation but also that of his family—whose prestige has been significantly reduced after his exile: … *ut, qui modo fratre fuerim, liberis, coniuge, copiis, genere ipso pecuniae beatissimus, dignitate, auctoritate, existimatione, gratia non inferior quam qui umquam fuerunt amplissimi, is nunc in hac tam adflicta perditaque fortuna neque me neque meos lugere diutius possim* (1.3.6).

In 1.3–4, the keywords *spes*, *amicitia* and *gloria* convey a message of decline, one sharply in contrast with the more emphatic narration proposed (by the same terms) in 1.1–2. In 1.3–4, *spes*, *amicitia* and *gloria*—implied but not directly mentioned—determine a portrait of Cicero as a hopeless and discouraged man who experiences a decrease in his political and social resonance. For example, regarding *spes*, there is no place for hope in the dark time of the exile (1.3.5 *sed ego quid sperem non dispicio*),[41] especially if negative news on his recall from Thessalonica keeps arriving: *perspicis profecto ecquaenam nobis spes salutis relinquatur* (1.4.2). Cicero wonders why he should feel hope at all, since Clodius' power is growing—as is that of the triumvirs—and his jealous friends have either deserted or betrayed him: *nam quid sperem potentissimo inimico, dominatione obtrectatorum, infidelibus amicis, plurimis inuidis?* (1.4.3). In addition, the theme of *mors*—the very opposite of *spes*—appears with increasing frequency towards the end of Book 1. The hopeless Cicero, who is everyday more aware of the terrible circumstances in which he and his family find themselves, considers, more than once, the idea of ending his life: *lacrimae meorum me ad mortem ire prohibuerunt, quod certe et ad honestatem <tuendam> et ad effugiendos intolerabilis dolores fuit aptissimum* (1.4.4).[42]

As for *amicitia* in these times of need, Cicero's *amici*, whose loyalty and willingness to help is praised so extensively in 1.1–2, apparently show their true selves: *intimus, proximus, familiarissimus quisque aut sibi pertimuit aut mihi inuidit. ita mihi nihil misero praeter fidem amicorum, cautum meum consilium, <de>fuit* (1.4.1).[43] Cicero also gives some specific examples to Quintus of his friends' volte-face: Hortensius and Q. Arrius, although they pledged support, have now abandoned him: *Hortensio credendum sit nescio. me summa simulatione amoris summaque adsiduitate cottidiana sceleratissime insidiosissimeque tractauit adiuncto Q. Arrio. quorum ego consiliis, promissis, praeceptis destitutus in hanc calamitatem incidi* (1.3.8). Likewise, the consuls and praetors of 58—after having pledged their support to Cicero (as *QFr.* 1.2 reveals)[44]—turned their backs on Cicero, once elected: *alienatio consulum, etiam praetorum* (1.4.4).

[40] Similarly in *Fam.* Book 5, where the voluntary conciseness of some letters reveals the writer's emotions, even before their words do. On the length of the letters, see nn. 29, 30 and 31 above.

[41] *spero, si quid mea spes habet auctoritatis* (1.3.5).

[42] Cf. 1.3.2: *atque utinam me mortuum prius uidisses aut audisses, utinam te non solum uitae sed etiam dignitatis meae superstitem reliquissem! sed testor omnis deos me hac una uoce a morte esse reuocatum, quod omnes in mea uita partem aliquam tuae uitae repositam esse dicebant … nam si occidissem, mors ipsa meam pietatem amoremque in te facile defenderet.*

[43] *amici partim deseruerint me, partim etiam prodiderint* (1.3.5). Cf. 1.4.3 (cited above).

[44] On this, see page 111 above.

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In terms of *gloria*, letters 3–4 show the consequences of Cicero's search for personal and political honour (a leitmotiv of 1.1–2).[45] Back in 63, Cicero could not have imagined that exile and political and social isolation would follow upon his decision to condemn the Catilinarians to death without the *prouocatio ad populum*; or, if he did foresee this coming, he was confident of receiving aid from friends or returning to Rome with greater prestige (as *QFr*. 1.1–2 show). However, in late 58, after having spent a few months in exile in Thessalonica, Cicero realizes that his drive for glory and prestige has led himself and his family to ruin: *in plane occidimus, me miserum! ego omnibus meis exitio fuero, quibus ante dedecori non eram* (1.4.5).[46] In 1.3–4, *gloria* (like *spes* in 1.1–2) is replaced by darker and gloomier terms. In Cicero's letters from exile, there is no space for *gloria*; not only *gloria* does disappear from the vocabulary of letters 3 and 4,[47] but it is even replaced by the language of *dolor*: *calamitas* (1.3.1, 3, 4, 8; 1.4.5), *fletus* (1.3.1 twice, 3), *lacrima* (1.3.2, 3, 10; 1.4.4), *lamentatio* (1.3.4), *luctus* (1.3.1, 6), *maeror* (1.3.1, 10), *metus* (1.3.1) and *solitudo* (1.3.1; 1.4.5) are some of the words Cicero employs to describe his and his family's current state.

2.2 Book 2: activity and inactivity

The sixteen letters of Book 2 belong to December 57–late August 54, a period of political transformation and turmoil in Rome, and track the events that lead to, and postdate, the triumvirs' meeting at Lucca in April 56. Particular attention is given both to the increasing political tensions caused by the frictions between Pompey, Caesar and their supporters and to their sociopolitical consequences. The letters of Book 2 (as well as those of Book 3) repeat the narrative about Cicero already observed in Book 1:[48] they start on a markedly more forceful note (Cicero's return from exile and reinstatement in his social position)[49] and end on a disillusioned one (the loss of his social standing and political power after the Lucca congress in 56).[50] However, Book 2 also constitutes a 'natural' continuation of the narrative that emerges from Book 1,[51] since they take the reader forward in time and offer a portrait of Cicero that 'evolves' from that found in Book 1.

Book 2 opens with a letter written by Cicero in mid December 57, roughly one year and four months after the last letter (early August 58) of the previous book. The discouraged Cicero, anxious to be recalled to Rome from exile, must have written letters to his brother to put in a good word for his return or to be informed on the events[52]—as he does with

[45] See pages 110–11 above.

[46] Similarly in 1.3.1 and 1.4.1.

[47] *gloria* and its derivatives are absent in 1.3; *gloria* is found only once in 1.4.4 (*sed saepe triduo summa cum gloria dicebar esse rediturus*) but with reference to a promise of glory, after his return from exile, that does not fit anymore into Cicero's present.

[48] As discussed at page 109 above, letters that display an image of the influence and prestige of Cicero and his family open each book of the collection (1.1–2, 2.1–3, 3.1–4). Conversely, the remaining letters (1.3–4, 2.4–16, 3.5–7) convey an atmosphere of angst and despair, marked by Cicero and his relatives' loss of power.

[49] In 2.1–3, the reader observes Cicero taking once again part in the Senate's meetings and advocating in favour of clients, as also shown by the language of activity employed in the letters.

[50] The language of inactivity of 2.4–16 highlights this image of Cicero.

[51] *Att*. has a similar chronological progression in the organization of its books: from November 68 (start date of Book 1) to November 44 (end date of Book 16). For this and other similarities to *Att*., see section 4.

[52] Relying on family members, to be informed on the events occurred in Rome, was a common practice when aristocrats were (for duty or exile) abroad: White (n. 7), 12–18. Cicero's plea to his

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Atticus and Terentia.[53] However, there is no trace of them in this collection; yet Book 2 opens on a more enthusiastic note, reminiscent of the start of Book 1.

The absence (or deliberate exclusion) of the letters, from early August 58 to mid December 57, 'speeds up' the narration of Cicero's exile and presents the next stage of Cicero's career: his reinstatement in Roman social and political life. This image of an influential Cicero is on full display in the first three letters of Book 2. Cicero appears restored to his ancient prestige (2.3.7): he takes active part in the meetings of the Senate (of which he gives a full report to his brother Quintus, who was still in Sardinia as Pompey's legate); he is also engaged with the defence of clients (2.3.5–6).

As in Book 1,[54] the language of the letters of Book 2 plays a key role in suggesting a narrative of Cicero's progressive loss of prestige. Differently from the previous book, this narrative is not conveyed here by *spes*, *amicus* and *gloria* but rather by references to Cicero's activity/inactivity in the Senate and by the use of literary allusions/quotations to encrypt messages.

In the first three letters (2.1–3), Cicero appears well (re)integrated into the Roman political (and social) scene: he enthusiastically participates in the meeting of the Senate,[55] where laudatory words are pronounced about him (2.1.3, 2.3.3). This portrait of Cicero is confirmed by the clear presence of language implying senatorial activity. Cicero employs twenty-five times (within a total number of 176 lines)[56] vocabulary that hints at his presence and action in the Senate's gatherings; recurrent words are *senatus* (used fifteen times in reference to Senate's meetings to which he took part: 2.1.1–2, 2.2.3, 2.3.2–5), *sententia* (five times in reference to pronouncements proposed in the Senate he did/did not support: 2.1.1–3) and *rogare* (five times, alluding to his participation to those meetings: 2.1.1–3, 2.3.1).

Just as in Book 1,[57] a portrait of disillusionment and loss in Cicero's prestige follows (and undercuts) the one of pre-eminence. Letters 2.4–16[58] show how Cicero progressively lost his social standing and political power, especially after the Lucca congress in 56. The language of activity now registers a significantly weaker presence; it is used only twenty-two times across the much larger total of 447 lines: a reduction of over sixty per cent. In 2.4–16, *senatus* appears sixteen times and mostly concerns Cicero's disappointment[59] with the actual state of politics and his decision to withdraw from the Senate (2.5.3, 2.7.1–2, 2.16.2) to devote himself to literature (2.9.1, 2.9.3, 2.12.4, 2.13.1). The lower presence of *sententia* (six times: 2.5.4, 2.8.3, 2.13.1, 2.14.5, 2.16.3) and the absence of *rogare* (not registered at all) underline the decrease in prestige in

brother Quintus to write back to him on all matters that occurred in Rome (1.4.5) cannot have remained unheeded. Quintus, in fact, must have written letters to the exiled brother, since he had been in Rome for some time—after his return from Asia in May 58 and before his departure to Sardinia in the autumn of 57 (see also n. 17 above).

[53] A good number of letters from exile, between August 58 and November 57, have been included in *Att*. 3.13–27, 4.1–3 and *Fam.* 14.1–4.

[54] See the relevant sub-section.

[55] 2.1.1 on the Campanian land law; 2.1.2 on the process *de ui* against Clodius; 2.2.3 on the debate on who had to restore King Ptolemy XII Auletes; 2.3.1 on Clodius' charge *de ui* against Milo.

[56] Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

[57] See pages 110–13.

[58] On *QFr*. 2.4–5, see R.G. Böhm, 'Cicero, *Ad Quintum fratrem* II, 4–5', *QUCC* 23 (1986), 93–107.

[59] His reports on the Senate's agenda are less detailed than the ones in 2.1–3: a distinctive feature of Cicero's changed mood.

Cicero's life and career; as Cicero points out, his speeches now aim to win agreement from others rather than from himself (2.14.5).

Letters 2.4–16 (mid March 56–late August 54) offer the reader a strikingly different scene from that of 2.1–3; in this respect, they contribute to a repetition of the macro-narrative arc of Book 1.[60] The upcoming meeting of the triumvirs in Lucca and the growth of their personal power (2.8.3) had a strong impact[61] on the lives of Cicero and his family. This atmosphere of uncertainty and instability is visible not only from Cicero's choice of vocabulary (which emphasizes his political inactivity and despair) but also from the increasingly obscure topics of the letters and the need for secrecy. The image of a politically active Cicero (emphasized, in 2.1–3, by the language of senatorial activity) is here replaced with that of a politically inactive man. Cicero appears less interested in discussing the daily reports from the Senate's meetings (which occupy a large part in 2.1–3), as suggested already by the reduced presence of *senatus*, *sententia* and *rogare*.[62] Instead, his correspondence with his brother Quintus is filled with updates on the building of their houses (2.4.2, 2.6.3, 2.9.3) and on Quintus Junior's education (2.4.2, 2.6.2), news that does not have a place within the narrative for 2.1–3. Such news, however, emphasizes the image of a man in retreat from the public domain. Cicero's dissatisfaction with the political scenario is highlighted even more emphatically by increasing references to his decision to leave Rome to spend time in his *uillae* (2.6.4, 2.13.1)[63] to devote himself to *otium*.[64]

Cicero's decision to withhold from his letters information that could harm himself and his family as well as his invitation to Quintus to do the same are also paradigmatic of the storyline of 2.4–16. Cicero writes to Quintus, a few days before his departure for Gaul as Caesar's legate: *is dies quo tu es profectus nihil mihi ad scribendum argumenti sane dabat. sed quem ad modum coram cum sumus sermo nobis deesse non solet, sic epistulae nostrae debent interdum alucinari* (2.10.1).[65] The need for secrecy is also visible from the increasing use, in 2.4–16, of literary allusions and quotations; not only do they offer consolation during challenging times[66] but they also conceal Cicero's and Quintus' real thoughts (about the current political situation and the future of the Republic).[67]

[60] See pages 110–13.

[61] The triumvirs appear also in the first set of letters (e.g. 2.3.4, where Cicero envisages that nothing good will come for their incessant research of power). However, differently from 2.4–16, Cicero keeps here a rather positive attitude (similarly in 2.3.7).

[62] A reduction of over sixty per cent is esteemed.

[63] Leaving Rome to spend time in a villa could be considered a betrayal of one's duties; however, when the situation started to appear more desperate (especially in the period that immediately precedes/follows the congress of Lucca), Cicero takes refuge in his country estates: O. Rossi, 'Letters from far away: ancient epistolary travel writing and the case of Cicero's correspondence' (Diss., Yale University, 2010).

[64] *me … otiantem* (2.9.1) and *… summum otium forense* (2.14.5), where Cicero's political disengagement reflects the forum's inactivity owing to the increasing power of the triumvirs. Cicero's literary activity (a symbol of his political dissatisfaction) is mentioned also in 2.12.4 and 2.13.1–2.

[65] See also 2.7.1, 2.11.1, 2.13.3, 2.16.5.

[66] Cicero seems to revert to his literary works to find behavioural guidelines: White (n. 7), 109–12. Similarly in 2.8.1, where Cicero's invitation to grow apart from politics and his refuge in literary studies are (probably) concealed under an obscure reference to Jupiter's speech in the lost *De temporibus meis*: C. Di Spigno (ed.), *Epistole al fratello Quinto e altri epistolari minori* (Turin, 2002), 166.

[67] The awareness of the hazards of the delivery might have urged Cicero to convert information into literary allusions that Quintus would understand, since they shared the same literary background: B.-J. Schröder, 'Couriers and conventions in Cicero's epistolary network', in P. Ceccarelli, L. Doering,

The last three letters of Book 2 anticipate the gloomy narrative of Book 3. They focus on the importance of political flexibility and moderation (especially in a period that saw the triumvirs becoming increasingly powerful),[68] as displayed by Cicero's invitations to moderation (*mollis*, 2.14.4; *neque perturbatus nec iratus alicui*, 2.15.1; *ne cuius animum offendamus*, 2.16.1).[69] They also reveal Cicero's anxiety for the future: *erat non nulla spes comitiorum sed incerta, erat aliqua suspicio dictaturae, ne ea quidem certa, summum otium forense sed senescentis magis ciuitatis quam acquiescentis, sententia autem nostra in senatu eius modi magis ut alii nobis adsentiantur quam nosmet ipsi* (2.14.5). Cicero's apprehension about the future is also evident from his persistent enquiry about what the upcoming year of 53 will bring (2.15.2, 2.16.4). As we shall see, this feeling will intensify further in Book 3.

2.3 Book 3: activity (but primarily) inactivity

The seven[70] letters that comprise Book 3—again all written by Cicero to his brother Quintus—are mostly written from Rome (after Cicero had been appointed Pompey's legate in Spain)[71] to Gaul, where, between 54 and 52, Quintus was Caesar's legate. The letters mostly concern: Cicero's news on the building of their houses (3.1.1–6, 21–3; 3.3.1); Quintus' son (3.1.7, 14, 19; 3.3.4); their literary progress (3.5.1, 3.6.3, 3.7.6); reflections on the progressive loss of freedom and the necessity of showing support to both Caesar and Pompey (3.1.9, 3.4.2–3, 3.5.2); and Cicero's perception of the growing twilight of the Roman Republic (3.1.10, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.4.1, 3.7).

Book 3 presents several distinctive features, including a more restricted time span (compared to Books 1 and 2), since all the letters belong to the final four months of 54. The result is the creation of chronological continuity between the last letter of the previous book (2.16, late August 54) and the first letter of Book 3 (September 54).[72] The presence in Book 3 of only letters from 54 might not be fortuitous, since (if one admits the possibility of editorial intervention) 3.1–7 had to conclude the narrative[73] for the year 54 already begun in Book 2. After 2.10–16 (written between early

T. Fögen and I. Gildenhard (edd.), *Letters and Communities: Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography* (Oxford, 2018), 81–100. On the use of literature in Cicero's epistles, see H. Čulík-Baird, *Cicero and the Early Latin Poets* (Cambridge, 2022). Further examples are found in 2.9.3, where Quintus is depicted as *meliorem ciuem esse quam Philoctetam*, and in 2.11.3, where a quotation from an unknown Latin play is employed to highlight Pompey's role in Cicero's and Appius' reconciliation. Similarly in 2.14.5, where Eur. *Supp.* 119 emphasizes the dreadful condition of the Republic, and in 2.16.3, where Cicero refers to Quintus' (probable) interpretation of some episodes from Sophocles' *Banqueters* to allude to events which happened in Caesar's camp in Gaul. See also 3.1.18, where Cicero alludes to Eur. *Hipp.* 436.

[68] See 2.14.5 and 3.1.10, 3.2.1, 3.3.3, 3.4.1–2.

[69] Similarly in 3.2.2 (*nolo cum Pompeio pugnare*); 3.3.3 (*animum … moderatum*); 3.4.3 (*mediocritate delector*); 3.5.2 (*ne … offenderem quempiam*); 3.7.1, 3 (*lenitate … lenissime*; *ne … cuiusquam animum … offendant*). Cicero's reference to *moderatio* might be key to understand why the collection concludes in 54: see section 3 below.

[70] On the number of letters included in Book 3, see n. 20 above.

[71] In a lost letter, Quintus probably informed Cicero on Pompey's decision to appoint the latter as his legate; a reference is in … *quod inferior epistula scribis me Id. Sept. Pompeio legatum iri* (3.1.18). However, neither Cicero nor Pompey went to the province. Pompey remained in Italy in charge of the grain supply—also to control Caesar's movements. Cicero probably did not want to upset Caesar (3.1.18).

[72] Differently from *QFr.* 2.1, this letter was written one year and four months after 1.4.

[73] A similar design is found in *Att.*, where Books 5–12 (May 51–June 45) and 14–15 (April 44–October 44) follow the narrative arc of the previous book.

February and late August 54), there follows a set of seven chronologically disposed letters, written between September and December 54 (3.1–7). The set 2.10–3.7 presents a narrative on the tense period that precedes the Civil War,[74] in which Cicero tries (in vain) to keep a flexible and moderate[75] political position between the increasingly powerful Pompey and Caesar.

Not only does Book 3 complete the narrative pattern on Cicero's progressive loss of power and personal prestige, in operation since Book 1; it also shares a similar design with the other two books of the collection.[76] Although they ultimately participate in a narrative of Cicero's loss of prestige, the first four letters of Book 3, like 1.1–2 and 2.1–3, initially convey an image of Cicero redolent of 'prestige' and 'political activity'. Cicero is seen offering patronage to influential Roman aristocrats (3.3.1), both to win elections[77] and to support them against prosecution.[78] As in 2.1–3,[79] Cicero keeps Quintus informed on the items discussed in the Senate's meetings (3.2.3, 3.3.2). Particular attention is here given to Gabinius' accusations *de repetundis* and *de maiestate*, after his return to Rome from Syria in 54[80] and the elections to the consulship for 53.[81]

This narrative on Cicero's prestige and public resonance is also confirmed (as in 1.1–2 and 2.1–3) by the average length of the letters of 3.1–4 and by usage of the language of activity. Like each first group of letters of the previous books of the collection,[82] 3.1–4 has, on average, the highest number of lines, when compared to 3.5–7: it totals 411 lines from four letters (*c*.103 lines each), against the 206 lines of 3.5–7 (*c*.69 lines each). Nevertheless, the keywords (*spes*, *amicitia*, *gloria*) of Book 1 are almost absent in Book 3. Differently from 1.1–2, here there is no mention of *amicitia*; the only reference to *gloria* is in 3.5.3 (*nec desidero gloriam*), where Cicero states his decision not to hanker after glory anymore; and *spes* is found only in … *ponuntur in spe quam in pecuniis. <qua relicta> reliqua ad iacturam struentur … si … animum tuum ad rationem et ueteris consili nostri et spei, facilius istos militiae labores ceteraque quae te offendunt feres, et tamen cum uoles depones* (3.6.1).[83] Similarly, *senatus* (3.2.2 *consurrexit senatus*), *sententia* (3.4.1 [*Gabinius*] *sententiis condemnatus sit*) and *rogare* (3.3.3 *Pompeius uehemens … rogandis*) appear only in the first part of the book—with comparatively lower weight (when compared to usage in the previous books) and usually with negative connotations.[84]

[74] A narrative on the Civil War(s) of the 40s is also displayed by *Fam*.; see Cammoranesi (n. 3).

[75] 'Moderation' might be one of the reasons for the absence of letters dated after 54 in the collection. Another reason might be connected to how Cicero's and Quintus' relationship changed after 54.

[76] See the relevant sub-sections.

[77] E.g. Cicero's aid given to Curtius for the election to the tribunate (3.1.10) or his pledge of support to the candidates for the consulship in 53 (3.1.16).

[78] E.g. the support offered to Scaurus and Plancius (3.1.11).

[79] Cf. page 114.

[80] On Gabinius' case, see 3.1.15, 3.2.1–2, 3.3.3, 3.4.1–2. Gabinius is also mentioned in 1.2.15, 2.7.1, 2.12.2.

[81] Cf. 3.2.3 on the charges of bribery to the candidates for the consulship and 3.3.2 on the cancellation of the election days for contrary omens.

[82] Letters 1.1 and 1.2 have an average of 711 lines (*c*.356 lines per letter), whereas letters 1.3 and 1.4 count 160 lines (*c*.80 per letter). A similar design is found in Book 2: 2.1–3 have a total of 200 lines (*c*.50 per letter), while 2.4–16 present 423 lines (*c*.35 per letter).

[83] For the occurrence of these keywords in Book 1, see pages 110–13. For the reason why they have a low weight in Book 3, see below.

[84] The employment of the language of activity in 3.1–4 (although with a different weight compared to 1.1–2 and 2.1–3) might be part of the ancient editor's/editors' agenda.

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A narrative of the decline of Cicero's 'prestige' and political 'pre-eminence' emerges—as in the previous books of the collection—within the second part of Book 3. In the concluding letters of Book 3 and of the entire collection (3.5–7), particular attention is given to Cicero's decision to withdraw from the political scene and to his search for peace and consolation, as we will see below. Even though Book 3 can be divided into two sections (3.1–4 and 3.5–7)—which together re-enact the narrative on Cicero that characterizes the entire collection—a generalized sense of gloom and despair permeates the whole unit (not just 3.5–7). This feature ensures that the distinction between 3.1–4 and 3.5–7 possesses a different character from its counterparts in Books 1 and 2.

The two sections of Book 3, 3.1–4 and 3.5–7, share (albeit to different degrees) the image of a disillusioned Cicero, who lives in a Rome where the increasing personal power of Pompey and Caesar has irreparably damaged Republican institutions: *sed uides nullam esse rem publicam, nullum senatum, nulla iudicia, nullam in ullo nostrum dignitatem* (3.4.1).[85] Although (and especially in 3.1–4) the reader sees Cicero taking part in the Roman political scene—and to that extent a picture of positive activity emerges, his political activity ultimately appears strongly influenced by the power of Pompey and Caesar; Cicero is depicted seeking Caesar's approval before endorsing the election to tribunate of one of his clients (3.1.10) and withdrawing from prosecuting Gabinius (so as not to annoy Pompey: 3.2.2). Moreover, Cicero's reports on the Senate's meetings and political events (which occupy a conspicuous part of 3.1–4) appear increasingly less detailed (when compared to their counterparts in 2.1–3), and often focus on bribery and corruption (3.2.3; 3.3.3). This is caused, on the one hand, by the progressive loss of relevance of the Republican institutions; on the other, by the unreliability of couriers[86] and the repercussions that one could experience if letters ended up in the wrong hands (3.1.21, 3.6.2, 3.7.3).

QFr. Book 3 not only is the concluding book of the correspondence but also represents the concluding stage of the storyline on Cicero that the collection displays. Thus, the narrative of Cicero's progressive loss of power and prestige, already seen in operation within individual books, is also conveyed by the collection as a whole. The reader of the collection can see how Cicero, in only six years (from 60/59 to 54), progressively lost his socio-political standing and prominence. If in 1.1–2 Cicero appears confident of the possibility of increasing his social and political prestige, in 3.1–7 he is conscious of the loss of his standing. His childhood dream of excelling and outdoing others has perished utterly and his mind is now in chains (3.5.4). Even his relationship with Quintus has changed: if in 1.1–2 he was the one who, from an assumed position of authority, offered guidelines on how to govern a province (*rogo*: 1.1.4, 1.2.11, 1.2.14; *admoneo*: 1.2.14; *prescribo*: 1.1.12; *hortor*: 1.1.36, 1.1.46),[87] now he receives directions from Quintus (*rogas*: 3.1.11, 3.5.4; *admones*: 3.1.14; *iubes*: 3.6.3; *hortaris*: 3.7.6).[88] Cicero's hope for the future has (gradually) disappeared and is replaced by anxiety (3.4.4 *cura*; 3.5.4 *angor*; 3.7.3 *sollicitus*) and fear (3.6.2–4 *timeo*; 3.7.3 *timoris*). The times in which he lives deprive him of his poetical

[85] Similarly in 3.1.15, 3.2.2, 3.4.2, 3.5.4.
[86] White (n. 7), 11–21.
[87] See also the repetition of *sit*/*sint* in 1.1.13.
[88] The only exceptions are in 3.6.2 and 3.7.3, where Cicero suggests that his brother should carefully select what to include in the letters. This cannot be compared to the advice Cicero used to give on higher matters to Quintus in 1.1–2: see n. 26 above.

afflatus (3.4.4, 3.5.4). In the end, the choice of withdrawing from politics to focus on his studies (already mentioned in 2.4–16) becomes the only wise alternative (3.5.4–5; 3.7.2) to fill his need for consolation (3.5.4).

3. THE YEAR 54

In contrast to the decades-long story contained in the major collections *Att*. and *Fam*., *QFr.* privileges a shorter narrative about Cicero's life and the Republic.[89] The storyline narrated by *QFr.* concludes with 3.7, a letter written in December 54, roughly six years after the first letter of Book 1. The attention given to the year 54 within the collection (almost half of its letters are dated to 54)[90] and the fact that the narration of *QFr.* ends ten years before that of *Att*.[91] and *Fam*., when taken together, cast light on the design of the whole correspondence.

The year 54 is a significant end-point for the storyline about Cicero's private and public life, since the narrative stops before two interrelated events can make their appearance: Cicero's rupture with his brother and nephew and Cicero's decision to abandon the policy of the 'middle way'[92] and take Pompey's side. The result is a partial narration of the Cicero–Quintus relationship that covers only the years 60/59–54. The overall image of Cicero's relationship with his brother and nephew that emerges from the collection is an image of an affectionate brother and uncle who has the interests of his relatives at heart. The letters included in the collection enhance this image of goodwill between the two brothers (which was not entirely free from rifts)[93] as well as between uncle and nephew. As it happens, after *QFr.* 3.7 (December 54), no other extant letter to/from Cicero to/from his brother or nephew has been preserved—although we know that letters continued to be written between the pair.[94] News of their relationship will only resume in *Att.* in mid April 49, when Cicero writes to Atticus to complain about his nephew's conduct (*Att.* 10.4.5).[95]

This is where the two threads of the narration come together. As *Att.* 10.4.6 suggests, in April 49 and in the middle of the Civil War, Quintus Junior, who had been sent to Rome to negotiate with Caesar, denounced his uncle's plan to leave Italy[96] to reach

[89] Similarly to *ad Brut*., which covers an even shorter timespan (April–July 43), when compared to the wider timespan of *Att.* (covering twenty-four years of Cicero's life, from 68 to 44) and *Fam*. (nineteen years, from 62 to 43). But what we have of *ad Brut*. are the remnants of a much longer nine-book collection: this is a crucial difference.

[90] From *QFr.* 2.10 to 3.7.

[91] Similarly to *QFr*., the narration in *Att*. stops in 54 (*Att.* 4.19) and resumes only in 51 (*Att.* 5.1). For the (probably) intentional omission of years 53–52, see below.

[92] Largely discussed in 2.14–16 and in Book 3.

[93] Cf. 2.9.1–2, where Cicero seems to rebuke Quintus because he might have used Quintus Junior's illness as excuse not to see his brother. Letter 2.13.2 might display a similar case: Cicero might have emphasized his closeness to Quintus Junior (probably) to criticize Quintus' failure to be a present father. On this, see Henderson (n. 5), 455–7; R. Ash, 'Un-parallel lives? The younger Quintus and Marcus Cicero in Cicero's letters', *Hermathena* 202/203 (2023), 71–104.

[94] The only exception is *Fam*. 16.16.1, written by Quintus to Cicero in late May/early June 53; it recounts Quintus' joy for Tiro's emancipation and his affection for his brother. In *Att*. 11.13.2 (mid March 47), 15.2 (May 47), 16.4 (June 47), Cicero refers to an exchange of letters between himself and his brother, but none of those has survived. See also nn. 16–17 above.

[95] This is the earliest attestation on the deterioration of their relationship: see D.R. Shackleton Bailey, *Cicero* (London, 1971), 179–85.

[96] Cicero was advised by Caesar not to leave Italy: *Att.* 10.8.10, 8a, 8b, 9a.

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Pompey.[97] The news of Quintus Junior's 'betrayal' upset Cicero, to the point where he addressed to Atticus a set of letters (written between late April and early May 49) blaming his brother's lack of parental skills for Quintus Junior's ill behaviour.[98] Quintus was appalled by his son's behaviour too (*Att.* 10.4.6); after their return from Cilicia in late 50,[99] Quintus father and son seemed to be willing to support Pompey and to loosen the façade of political 'moderation' maintained throughout *QFr*.[100] Cicero displays a similar behaviour: *ego pro Pompeio libenter emori possum, facio pluris omnium hominum neminem* (*Att.* 8.2.4).

Their relationship fell apart completely[101] in August 48 (as shown all too clearly by *Att*. 11.5–11.22 of early November 48–September 47).[102] After the battle of Pharsalus, while Cicero and his son Marcus decided to return to Italy,[103] his brother and nephew took refuge and asked for Caesar's pardon.[104] In *Att*. 11.9.2 (early January 47) Cicero clearly refers to this event: … *ille* … *neque nunc tam pro se quam contra me laborare dicitur*.

But why does the collection's narrative not include Cicero's and Quintus' correspondence (if it was accessible) of 53–52?[105] The answer to this question is challenging. During the period 53–52, Cicero and Quintus presumably continued to exchange letters to inform each other on, for example, Quintus' activities in Gaul as Caesar's legate (*Fam*. 1.9.21). Cicero must have written to his brother about his defence speeches, especially the one in favour of Gabinius (that Cicero had mentioned extensively in the previous letters).[106] Cicero must have mentioned the events that led to Clodius' death in 52 (Quintus must have wanted to know, also considering that he was threatened with death by Clodius' supporters while defending his brother: *Sest*. 76), or to his encounter with Caesar in Ravenna, after his return from Gaul in 52 (*Att.* 7.1.4). Nevertheless, one probable explanation for these presumed omissions can be found in a comparison between *QFr.* and *Att*. Like *QFr.*, the (almost) chronological narration in *Att.* contains a gap[107] between Book 4 and Book 5: no letter written between late 54 and early 51 is included in the collection. Book 4 ends with a letter of November 54 (only one month before the end of *QFr.*); the narrative resumes in early May 51, with the first letter of Book 5. These parallels should prompt us to examine whether *QFr*. was intended to function as a miniature version of *Att*.

[97] *scio post Hirtium conuentum arcessitum a Caesare, cum eo de meo animo a suis rationibus alienissimo et consilio relinquendi Italiam* (*Att.* 10.4.6). Cf. Ash (n. 93), 25.

[98] *Att*. 10.6.2, 10.7.3, 10.11.3.

[99] Quintus Senior was Cicero's legate in Cilicia in 51–50: Broughton (n. 15), 245–53. His son Quintus went with them.

[100] See pages 116–17.

[101] Cicero seems not to be in contact with them. In *Att.*, Cicero highlights that he was informed of their activity by other sources: 11.6.7, 7.7, 8.2, 9.2, 10.1, 12.2, 14.3, 16.4. For Cicero's suffering in the face of Quintus father and his son's hostility: *Att.* 11.5.4, 10.1, 13.2, 15.2.

[102] A reconciliation (or, more probably, a temporary truce) between the two brothers might have occurred between July/August 47: *Att.* 11.20.1, 23.2; however, rifts resumed in late August 47 (*Att.* 11.21.1, 22.1) and carried on in 45: see Ash (n. 93), 27.

[103] A probable allusion is in *Att*. 11.7 (from Brindisi); cf. also *Fam*. 7.3.3.

[104] Quintus father and Quintus son seem to have denigrated Cicero to gain Caesar's favour: Ash (n. 93), 24–34 and n. 74.

[105] The absence of letters from 51–50 might be justified by their vicinity since they were all in Cilicia.

[106] On allusions to Cicero's and Quintus' lost letters, see nn. 16–17 above.

[107] Differently from *Fam*., which contains thirteen letters of 53 (2.16, 3.1, 7.11–15, 7.18, 16.10, 16.13–16) and two of 52 (5.18, 13.75).

4. *QFR.*: A MICROCOSM OF *ATT.*?

It can be argued that the selection and organization of letters in *Att*. might have played a role in shaping the formation of *QFr.* If we take seriously the fact that the first definite reference to *Att.* is in Seneca and that the first certain evidence for the circulation of *QFr.* is in Suetonius, we might hypothesize that *QFr.* was arranged after *Att*., between the first and the second centuries C.E.[108] One might consequently assert that the release of *Att.* had an impact on the construction of *QFr.*[109]—since it adheres to the structural principles of *Att.*, in terms of inclusion of letters mainly from/to a single addresser/addressee[110] and their shared organization by internal chronology.[111]

By seemingly adhering to the structural principles of *Att*. while favouring a narrative confined to the shorter span of the years 60/59–54, the ancient editor(s) of *QFr*.—it could be argued—might have been aiming to craft a scaled-down version of the narrative of *Att*. This argument may not convince those who remain somewhat sceptical of the role of the ancient editor(s); but it is worth considering the evidence in its favour. In particular, *QFr.* arguably re-enacts and supplements *Att.* Books 2–4:

Collection, book, letter[112]	Date	Addresser/ Addressee
***Att.* 1.1–20**	Nov. 68–May 60	Cicero/Atticus
***Att.* 2.1–3**	*c*.3 June 60–late Dec. 60	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 1.1**	end 60/beginning 59	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 2.4–25**	early April 59–*c*.Sept. 59	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 1.2**	Oct./Dec. 59	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 3.1–9**	late March 58–13 June 58	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 1.3**	13 June 58	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 3.10–13**	17 June 58–5 August 58	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 1.4**	*c*.5 August 58	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 3.14–4.3**	21 July 58–22 Nov. 57	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 2.1–9**	*c*.15 Dec. 57–June 56	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 4.4a–13**	June 56–15/16 Nov. 55	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 2.10–13**	Feb. 54–May 54	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 4.14**	mid May 54	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 2.14**	early June 54	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 4.15–16**	27 July 54–1 July 54	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 2.15–16**	end July 54–late August 54	Cicero/Quintus
***QFr.* 3.1**	Sept. 54	Cicero/Quintus

Continued

[108] On this, see section 1.

[109] The majority of the manuscripts of *QFr.* contains also *Att.*, with *QFr.* often in second position after *Att.*: see n. 10 above.

[110] The only Ciceronian letter collection which adheres strictly to this rule is *QFr.*, with the second closest collection being *Att.*: see n. 14 above.

[111] *QFr.* similarly to *Att.* and *ad Brut.*—but differently from *Fam.*—follow a largely chronological order: see n. 13 above.

[112] I follow Shackleton Bailey's 1987 edition for *Att.* and his 2002 edition for *QFr.*

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Continued

Collection, book, letter[112]	Date	Addresser/ Addressee
***Att.* 4.17**	1 Oct. 54	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 3.2–4**	11 Oct. 54–24 Oct. 54	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 4.18**	24 Oct./2 Nov. 54	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 3.5–6**	end Oct./beginning Nov. 54–end Nov. 54	Cicero/Quintus
***Att.* 4.19**	end Nov. 54	Cicero/Atticus
***QFr.* 3.7**	Dec. 54	Cicero/Quintus

QFr. follows the exact chronological arch narrated by *Att.* Books 2–4, from late 60 to the year 54–where *QFr.* ends, while *Att*. Book 4 pauses and then restarts several years later with 5.1, from May 51.[113] It also aligns with *Att.* Books 2–4 in prioritizing letters addressed to a single recipient.[114]

QFr. repeats some of the crucial themes of *Att.* Books 2–4. This was perhaps inevitable in a series of letters covering the same period; even so, the congruence is both extensive and eye-catching. Both *Att.* Books 2–4 and *QFr.* show Cicero's attempts to cope with the political instability (caused by the onset of the 'first triumvirate' in 59) and the sharpening of the rivalry between Pompey and Caesar after Crassus' death; they also show the resulting loss of freedom which Cicero experienced and which encouraged him to spend time in his villas and to commit to literary *otium*. In addition, like *Att.* Books 2–4, *QFr.* provides (although in the scaled-down version of letters 1.3–4) a narrative of the events related to Cicero's exile, from Clodius' threats to his exile in Thessalonica and his return to Rome. Their resemblance could be interpreted as intentional: one might tentatively propose that the ancient editor(s) of *QFr*. attempted to replicate the narrative of *Att*. Books 2–4, presenting the reader with a 'pocket version' of *Att*. focussing specifically on the years 60/59–54. The hypothesis that *QFr*. operates as a microcosm of *Att.* and re-enacts the narrative of *Att.* Books 2–4 finds further proof in the overall number of lines in *QFr*. and in *Att*.[115] The total number of lines of *QFr*. (2,111) is only about fourteen per cent of the 14,513 lines that make up the sixteen books of *Att*. However, *Att.* Books 2–4 total 2,545 lines, a number appreciably close to that of *QFr*. (2,111).

QFr. was not simply intended to re-enact *Att*. Books 2–4. Rather, it might have been deliberately structured around 60/59–54 to supplement the narrative of *Att*. The same reasoning applies to *ad Brut.*, whose twenty-six letters, all dated to April–July 43 seem to continue the narrative of *Att.*, which ends in November 44. By reading the letters in the order displayed by the table, there emerges a linear narrative of events from November 68 to December 54—that also supplements the wider narrative presented by *Att*.—since *QFr.* adds information not included in the former (such as

[112] I follow Shackleton Bailey's 1987 edition for *Att.* and his 2002 edition for *QFr.*

[113] The presence of twenty-six embedded dates in *Att.* Books 2–4 and eleven in *QFr.* Books 1–3 increases the plausibility of my reading.

[114] Whereas many books of *Att.* feature letters from others enclosed by Cicero for the attention of Atticus, *Att.* Books 2–4 contain *only* Cicero's letters to Atticus.

[115] Gibson (n. 19); Gibson (n. 3 [forthcoming]).

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news on Quintus' government of Asia and more generally on his relationship with his brother before they fell apart).

This might find confirmation from the analysis of the position that *QFr*. occupies in the majority of the manuscripts, descended from Petrarch's manuscript, which present the late antique circulation of the three collections together. As previously noted,[116] in MSS **M** and **R** that recreate the content and order of the Verona manuscript *QFr*. precedes *Att.* One could conclude that the scribes of the Verona manuscript had noticed that *QFr*. (60/59–54), as well as *ad Brut*. (April–July 43), integrated/continued the narration of *Att.* (68–44) and, for this reason, had arranged the correspondences together.

In conclusion, *QFr*. emerges as a meticulously constructed collection that warrants scrutiny on a par with both *Att*. and *Fam*. *QFr*. could potentially be seen as the result of a meticulous editorial effort, strategically mirroring the trajectory of Cicero's life (and of the Republic) through the deliberate adoption of the narrative pattern observed in *Att*. Books 2–4. However, the extent of this editorial effort remains a subject open to further debate and discussion.

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[116] See n. 10 above.

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