

‘dicebant, ego negabam’: The Nature of *amicitia* and *apologia* in Cicero’s *Fam.* 3.8

1. Pseudo-Demetrius. Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί. 40.18.¹

κατὰ γὰρ οὓς χρόνους φασὶ τοῦτο πεποιηκέναι με, καταπλεύσας ἤμην εἰς Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, ὥστε οὔτε συνέβη μοι ἰδεῖν οὔτε συντυχεῖν τὸν περὶ οὗ κατηγοροῦμαι. ἄλογον δὲ καὶ τὸ μηδεμιᾶς γενομένης μοι πρὸς σέ διαφορᾶς κατηγορεῖν σου τοῦ μηδὲν ἀδικούντος. ἀλλὰ φαίνονται οἱ διαβαλόντες αὐτοὶ πεπραχότες τι ἄτοπον καὶ ὑποψίαν ἔχοντες μή τί σοι περὶ αὐτῶν γράψω, προδιαβεβλήκασιν ἐμέ. σὺ δὲ εἰ μὲν κεναῖς φάσεσι πεπίστευκας, εἰπέ· εἰ δὲ διαμένεις οἷον δεῖ πρὸς ἐμέ, παραγεννηθέντος μου μαθήσῃ πάντα. καὶ γὰρ εἰ μὲν κατ’ ἄλλων πρὸς σέ πώποτε εἴρηκα, πιστὸν ἦν ὅτι καὶ κατὰ σοῦ πρὸς ἑτέρους. προσδέχου με οὖν καὶ πάντα πρὸς ἔλεγχον ἐλεύσεται, ἵνα σὺ μὲν γνῶς ὡς καλῶς με κέκρικας φίλον, ἐγὼ δὲ σοῦ πειρᾶν ἔργω λάβω.

For at the time that they say I did this, I had already sailed for Alexandria, so that I happened neither to see nor meet the person about whom I am accused. Since there has been no disagreement between you and me, it is absurd for you to accuse someone who has wronged you in no way. But those who brought the accusation appear themselves to have perpetrated some foul deed, and, suspecting that I might write you something about them, they (took care) to slander me in anticipation. If you have believed their empty accusations, tell me. On the other hand, if you persevere with me as you should, you will learn everything when I arrive. In fact, one could be confident that, if I had at any time spoken against other people to you, I would also have spoken against you to others. So, wait for my arrival, and everything will be put to the proof, so that you may know how rightly you have judged me to be your friend, and I may prove you by your actions.

2. Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.1 [SB 70]

Etsi, quantum ex tuis litteris intellegere potui, videbam te hanc epistulam cum ad urbem esses esse lecturum refrigeratam levissimo sermone hominum provincialium, tamen, cum tu tam multis verbis ad me de improborum oratione scripsisses, faciendum mihi putavi ut tuis litteris brevi responderem.

So far as I can gather from your letter you will read this of mine after you get to Rome, when provincial tittle-tattle will have grown stale. Nonetheless, as you have written to me at such length about what evil-minded folk have been saying, I feel I ought to reply briefly to your letter.

3. Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.5

Tu, <si> istius modi sermones ad te delati de me sunt, non debuisti credere; si autem hoc genere delectaris, ut quae tibi in mentem veniant aliis attribuas, genus sermonis inducis in amicitiam minime liberale...qua re potes doctissimis hominibus auctoribus, quorum sunt de amicitia gerenda praeclarissime scripti libri, genus hoc totum orationis tollere, ‘disputabant, ego contra disserebam; dicebant, ego negabam.’

If such talk about me has been carried to you by others, you should not have believed them. If, on the other hand, you favor the practice of attributing to others the thoughts that enter your own mind, you introduce into friendship a far from gentlemanly mode of conversation...So, following the advice of learned men who have written excellent books on the conduct of friendship, you can

¹ Text and translation of Pseudo-Demetrius is from Malherbe (1988). Text and translation of Cicero’s *Letters* is from Shackleton Bailey (2001).

dismiss this whole line of language – ‘they contended...I argued to the contrary,’ ‘they said...I denied it.’

4. Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.6

An mihi de te nihil esse dictum umquam putas? ne hoc quidem quod, cum me Laodiceam venire voluisses, Taurum ipse transisti? quod isdem diebus mesu conventus erat Apameae, Synnade, Philomeli, tuus Tarsi? non dicam plura, ne in quo te obiurgem id ipsum videar imitari; illud dicam ut sentio: si ista quae alios loqui dicis ipse sentis, tua summa culpa est; sin autem alii tecum haec loquuntur, tua tamen, quod audis, culpa non nulla est. mea ratio in tota amicitia nostra constans et gravis reperietur.

Perhaps you suppose that nothing has ever been said to *me* about *you*? For example, that after desiring me to go to Laodicea you yourself crossed the Taurus? That at one and the same time I held assizes at Apamea, Synnada, and Philomelium, and you at Tarsus? I will not continue, or I might seem to be following your example in the very point on which I am reproaching you. One thing I *will* say as I think: if the sayings you attribute to others are your own sentiments, you are very much to blame; but if others do talk to you in this strain, you are still in some degree to blame for listening. My attitude throughout our friendship will be found consistent and responsible.

5. Cic. *Fam.* 3.8.7-8

Si quis est qui neminem bona fide in gratiam putet redire posse, non nostram is perfidiam coarguit sed indicat suam, simulque non de me is peius quam de te existimat; sin autem quem mea instituta in provincia non delectant et quadam dissimilitudine institutorum meorum ac tuorum laedi se putat, cum uterque nostrum recte fecerit sed non idem uterque secutus sit, hunc ego amicum habere non curo. liberalitas tua ut hominis nobilissimi latius in provincia patuit. nostra si angustior (etsi de tua proluxa beneficaque natura limavit aliquid posterior annus propter quandam tristitiam temporum), non debent mirari homines, cum et natura semper ad largiendum ex alieno fuerim restrictior et temporibus, quibus alii moventur, isdem ego movear, me<d> esse acerbum sibi ut<i> sim dulcis mihi.

Anyone who believes that bona fide reconciliations are impossible does not convict my bad faith, but exposes his own; and he thinks as badly of you as of me. Whereas anyone who is dissatisfied with my administration here and considers himself injured by a certain dissimilarity between my administration and yours, the fact being that both of us have acted properly but on different principles, why, I do not care to have him as a friend. You, as a great nobleman, were more open-handed here than I have been. I may have kept a rather tight hand on the purse strings – though your own bountiful and kindly instincts were a little cramped in your second year by something unpropitious in the times. I have always been naturally rather conservative in generosity at other people’s expense and am influenced by the same temporary conditions as influence others. So folk ought not to be surprised that to be ‘sweet to myself, I must be sour to them.’

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