

“*dicebant, ego negabam*”: The Nature of *Amicitia* and *Apologia* in Cicero’s *Fam.* 3.8

In a letter written in October of 51 B.C., Cicero writes to Appius Claudius Pulcher the following (*Fam.* 3.8.5, SB 70): “So, from the advice of learned men who have written books brilliantly on the conduct of friendship, you can put aside this whole kind of discourse – ‘they contended, I argued to the contrary,’ ‘they said, I denied it.’” (*qua re potes doctissimis hominibus auctoribus, quorum sunt de amicitia gerenda praeclarissime scripti libri, genus hoc totum orationis tollere, ‘disputabant, ego contra dissereram; dicebant, ego negabam.’*) This paper will examine the implications this statement has on the form and function of Cicero’s rhetoric in *Fam.* 3.8, Cicero’s relationship to his correspondent, Appius Claudius Pulcher, and the composition of apologetic discourse in Cicero’s *Letters*.

Fam. 3.8 is one of a series of thirteen letters written by Cicero to Appius Claudius Pulcher, the brother of Cicero’s enemy Clodius. Despite Cicero’s enmity with Clodius, Cicero and Appius seemed to have tried to maintain a civil relationship (e.g. Appius dedicated a book on augury to Cicero). This collection of letters is from a particularly tension filled moment in Cicero and Appius’ relationship. In the year 51 B.C. Cicero was appointed Proconsul of Cilicia. Appius was his predecessor in the province and Cicero thought it only right that they meet before Appius was to leave the province, in order to ensure a smooth transition of power. What followed, however, was a series of miscommunications, missed chances, and, possibly, on Appius’ part, outright avoidance that led to accusations and defenses between the correspondents over who was more at fault: Appius, the scion of a very old patrician family, or Cicero, the *novus homo*. To further complicate matters, when Appius returned to Rome instead of receiving laurels for his actions in Cilicia he was met with accusations against his management of the province. His accuser? None other than Cicero’s new son-in-law, Dolabella.

Fam. 3.8 is an excellent case study to explore the epistolary form of a self-defense, or *apologia*, when your correspondent is considered your social superior, and your professional and personal relationship is strained. Before the quotation at *Fam.* 3.8.5, Cicero has spent almost the entire first half of the letter engaging in the very rhetoric that as a supposed friend of Appius, he should not have had to do – namely, directly responding to accusations that Appius has heard from other people about Cicero. In what is undoubtedly a calculated move, at the midpoint of this letter Cicero introduces the topic of friendship, *amicitia*, and shifts his argumentative stance to a more offensive position. By citing from a (now unknown) philosophical treatise on friendship (Powell, 1990), Cicero implies their ties of friendship should have invalidated any accusations Appius may have heard against Cicero. Therefore Appius, who has been influenced by others, has not been a good friend to Cicero, and it is actually Cicero who is in the wrong.

This letter provides evidence for Cicero's rhetorical strategies when composing *apologiae* in letters. Cicero's main strategy in this letter is to use the nature of Appius and his social relationship to define how accusations should be addressed, or even made at all. Although Cicero offers careful arguments in defense of himself, his main argument is that bonds of *amicitia* should supersede everything else.

Bibliography

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