

Cicero's 'Monograph' on the *Bellum Clodicum*

We are all familiar with Cicero's letters as a *source* of history, however complicated, but scholars seem to have been less interested in them as a *form* of historiography. Hallward could claim that Cicero's correspondence "is a document valuable exactly because it was not written as history, and it provides no claim for Cicero to be considered as a historian," and Traub was even able to say "in all the correspondence of Cicero we do not find any letter that narrates a past historical event." Vasaly did recently discuss Cicero as a historiographer, but that was in reference to *De Re Publica*, not his letters, and Hutchinson's chapter on narrative in Cicero's correspondence does not treat in detail the relationship between Cicero's narratives and Roman historiography.

This paper argues, however, that Cicero's narrative of the events in *Ad Atticum* IV.3 is structured like a work in the genre that modern scholars refer to as a war monograph. More specifically, the sequence of events of the letter's miniature 'war' against Publius Clodius Pulcher is very similar to the structure of events in both of Sallust's monographs, even in allotting Cicero himself a surprisingly small role in the fight against Clodius. In fact, the first thing Cicero describes himself as doing is running away: *discessimus in vestibulum Tetti Damionis*, a choice that must be explained. I argue that Sallust's monographs and Cicero's 'epistolary monograph' can be broken down into five recognizable sections: preface, actions of the enemy, first response, additional response, and final response.

To use the 'preface' of Cicero's letter as an example, Cicero justifies the existence for his 'monograph' by saying that it includes not only the events described but also a portrayal of Cicero's reaction to them: *ut perspicias ex meis litteris quo animo ea feram quae geruntur et qui sit hoc tempore aut mentis meae sensus aut omnino vitae status*. In both of Sallust's

monographs, Sallust discusses the usefulness for the state of writing history and also its ability to confer glory to the writer. Cicero also explicitly discusses his narrative in competition with others: *non quo certiora sint ea quae in oculis omnium geruntur si a me scribantur quam cum ab aliis aut scribantur tibi aut nuntientur*. Sallust also positions the value of the *Bellum Jugurthinum* with respect to other writers' words on the usefulness of history, a very common feature of ancient historiography in general. The third prefatory feature is how each narrative begins by asserting that their characters inhabit a world that has declined morally. Woodman has argued that Cicero and Sallust view decline differently, but they both see Rome as morally fallen, with Cicero even suggesting that there are no good men (*boni*) left in Rome: *magna querela et gemitu non dicam bonorum, qui nescio an nulli sint, sed plane hominum omnium*. After its preface, Cicero's *bellum Clodicum* moves to the actions of Clodius, his depravity, and descent into desperation, similar to Sallust's descriptions of Catiline and Jugurtha, and my paper will show how subsequent sections align well with the rest of Sallust's works.

For those who would doubt that the narrative in one of Cicero's letters could be influenced by another genre, I show where Cicero explicitly says that another story about Clodius was imitating a Homeric structure, ὕστερον πρότερον, Ὀμηρικῶς, in *Ad Atticum* I.16, and he would later, in *Ad Atticum* V.13 as Feeney has shown, use the death of Clodius to mark the beginning of a new era, parallel to the fall of Troy. Cicero's desire that his own deeds and defeat of Catiline be monumentalized in a monograph is also well known from his letter to Luceius, *Ad Familiares* V.12, and in his 'monograph' he claims that Clodius was far worse than Catiline: *omnes Catilinas Acidinos postea reddidit*.

To those who would point out that it is impossible for Cicero to have been influenced by Sallust and very unlikely that Sallust was influenced by a mere letter of Cicero, I conclude by

suggesting a generic ancestor common to both: Lucius Coelius Antipater's monograph on the Hannibalic war, a historian that Cicero, in *De Oratore* 2.54, would grudgingly acknowledge was the greatest historian that Rome had produced thus far: *homo neque doctus neque maxime aptus ad dicendum...uicit tamen, ut dicis, superiores.*

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