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Loss of Self, Desperation, and Glimmers of Hope in Cicero's Letters from Exile

Introduction

As a man with an active public life, but also a *novus homo*, Cicero constantly had to prove himself as an invaluable asset to the *res publica*. An ostensibly perfect opportunity arose in 63 BCE when he exposed the Catilinarian conspiracy and had Catiline's five co-conspirators executed. Based on his remarks, he viewed himself as Rome's saviour (Cic. *Pis.* 78; *Sest.* 49) for his proactive decision.¹ In fact, when Pompey, whom he claims to have considered not only an ally, but also a potentially close friend, did not offer him congratulations in 62 BCE for his achievements as consul, he expressed his disappointment (Cic. *Fam.* 5.73) by indicating how important it would be to him for Pompey to applaud him either publicly or in a pseudo-private letter.² Nevertheless, it was in 58 BCE that he experienced the ultimate humiliation when his political enemy and tribune of the plebs, Clodius,³ took advantage of the triumvirate's discontent at Cicero⁴ and engineered his exile.⁵ He

1 The resentment that Cicero provoked with his decision to execute five Roman citizens without a trial is carefully explored in Rundell 1979, 304–306.

2 White 2010, 66–67, 199 n. 25, argues that there is a clear dichotomy between Cicero's private and public letters. He points out that Cicero himself reveals in a letter to Atticus the methods that he used to conceal the identity of his letter, viz. refraining from using his external seal, dictating his letters to a freedman to avoid his handwriting being recognised, and coming up with a pseudonym for the letter heading (Cic. *Att.* 2.20.5). McConnell 2014, 12 n. 28, takes the discussion of the nature of letters in Cicero's time a step further by recognising several groups of letters: letters that were meant to be read by a wide audience, such as Cicero's extensive account of events to Lentulus Spinther (Cic. *Fam.* 1.9), letters that were sent to intimate friends, letters which included 'coded language', and letters that Cicero was at pains to keep private for a variety of reasons. He concludes that the consensus in Cicero's time was that "merely by putting pen to paper one was doing something 'public'". On the very public nature of the correspondence between Roman politicians in the age of Cicero, see also Miller 1914, 69; von Albrecht 2003, 68–69; Steel 2005, 59; Lintott 2008, 223; Hall 2009, 25; White 2010, 31–34; Evangelou 2022, 50.

3 Craig 2004, 187, states that in the *Pro Milone* Cicero presents the deceased Clodius as "a clear and present danger to the continued survival of the Roman state".

4 According to Rundell 1979, 313–314, the triumvirs' support of Clodius was to a certain extent the result of coercion. Mitchell 1991, 130, expresses a similar view by underlining the repercussions that they would face if they were to go against Clodius, who had become a notably popular tribune. Degl'Innocenti Pierini 1996, 1–2, argues that the triumvirate chose to sacrifice Cicero for fear of

promulgated two bills, which were then voted into law; the first was directed at those who had ordered the execution of Roman citizens without granting them a formal trial and the second named Cicero specifically. Likely for fear for his life (Cic. *QFr.* 14.5), Cicero decided to leave Rome. He appears to have fled from Rome while being hopeful that in a few days his supporters would ensure his safe return (Cic. *QFr.* 14.4). Nonetheless, it was not until 4 August 57 BCE that an official decision was made for his recall from exile. The letters that he wrote to his wife, Terentia, and to their children, Tullia and Marcus,⁶ to his brother, Quintus, and to his closest friend, Atticus, provide unique insight into the safety that Greece, and specifically Thessalonica, offered him during one of the most intense challenges that he faced in his entire life. The following discussion focuses chiefly on the letters that Cicero wrote during his time in Thessalonica.⁷ Its primary aims are to delve deeper into his experience in Thessalonica as both a safe haven and a hopeless place during a significant part of his banishment and to demonstrate his attempts to elicit his loved ones' pity (*miser cordia*) in order to convince them to intensify their efforts for his restoration to Rome.⁸

losing the support of the *populares*. Seager 1965, 531, interprets Pompey's decision to refrain from protecting Cicero from Clodius in 58 BCE as a sacrifice that he was forced to make out of self-interest. However, as Williams 2013, 54–55, rightly points out, Pompey was already dissatisfied with Cicero's consulship in 63 BCE, because of Cicero's opposition to the agrarian reform bill that Pompey wanted for his veterans (Cic. *Leg. agr.* 1.2.5–6).

5 As Robinson 1994, 475, observes, Cicero refrains entirely from referring to his absence from Rome in 58–57 BCE as an exile, whereas “he uses the words *exsilium*, *exsul*, and *exsulo* frequently in other contexts”. Géraud 2014, 245–246, raises the same point. On Cicero's usage of *exsilium* in his writings, see Gaertner 2007, 3.

6 Cavarzere 2007, 1507 n. 1, notes that, despite Cicero's letters technically having three recipients, they were essentially written for Terentia.

7 Overall, thirty-four letters that Cicero wrote during his banishment have survived: twenty-seven to Atticus (Cic. *Att.* 3), four to his family (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1–4), two to Quintus (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3, 1.4) and one to one of the consuls of 57 BCE, Metellus Nepos (Cic. *Fam.* 5.4). Von Albrecht 2003, 69, observes a notable absence of colloquialisms from his letters to his loved ones, even though they are private letters. Similarly, Adams 2003, 343–344, points out the complete absence of Greek words in Cicero's letters from exile. After noting that Cicero refrains from using Greek also in the letters from 48 and 47 BCE as well as in the letters from 7 to 15 March 45 BCE, i.e. after Tullia's death, he argues that there is a “psychological dimension to Cicero's code-switching” into Greek and asserts that the use of Greek words during such emotionally charged periods would feel pretentious, as code-switching was “contrived and artificial” and essentially “a game [Cicero] played with Atticus”.

8 Some of the most comprehensive discussions of Cicero's banishment include Smith 1896; Ciaceri 1941, 59–70; Carcopino 1951, 196–201; Shackleton Bailey 1971, 64–72; Seager 1979, 103–113; Mitchell 1991, 127–143; Fuhrmann 1992, 89–95; Garcea 2005; Kelly 2006, 110–125; Kaster 2006, 393–409; Cohen 2007, 109–128; Bellemore 2008, 100–120; Tempest 2011, 113–124; Williams 2013, 53–72; Marsh 2014, 37–59.

Accusations of *infirmitas*

Cicero's banishment indubitably constitutes a unique period of his life. The reader of the correspondence is confronted with a distinctively different Cicero. Not the confident orator of his public speeches, not the wise man of the philosophical dialogues, not the shrewd friend and politician of the rest of the extant letters, but a man who constantly complains about his calamity and repeatedly refers to the prospect of dying, in order to put an end to his sorrow. For this lack of fortitude (*infirmitas*),⁹ which he displays in his correspondence, he has been heavily censured by his critics.¹⁰ A prime example can be found in Lord Lyttelton's *Observations on the Life of Cicero*, in which he remarks: "In how spiritless and effeminate a manner he behaved during his exile is sufficiently known to all the world: the strain that was left upon his character was too great to be varnished over by all the glory of his triumphant return".¹¹ Similarly, Stockton lambasts Cicero for acting like a "petulant and emotionally self-indulgent child".¹² Ancient historians, such as Plutarch (*Cic.* 32.5–7) and Cassius Dio (38.18–29) also condemned Cicero's attitude during his banishment and especially for his failure to bear his calamity with more dignity by resorting to philosophy.¹³ More importantly, Cicero's most intimate and loyal friend, Atticus, repeatedly and heavily criticised Cicero for displaying a weak spirit (*animo infirmo*; *Cic. Att.* 3.10.2) in their correspondence.¹⁴ On 17 June 58 BCE, Cicero replies by expressing his disappointment in Atticus' reproaches

9 All translations are made by the author.

10 For a list of his critics in antiquity as well as in modern scholarship, see Hutchinson 1998, 25 n. 1.

11 Lord Lyttelton 1775, 19. Berry 2020, xxi, also notes that Cicero never fully recovered from the blow that Clodius inflicted on him by leading him into exile.

12 Stockton 1971, 190. Interestingly, unlike the overt criticism that Cicero received both for his public and private life from Mommsen 1854–1856, Drumann/Groebe 1899–1929, and Carcopino 1951, Stockton's uncharacteristically harsh remarks are limited to the period of Cicero's exile, specifically because of how he dealt with his misfortune as attested in his extant letters.

13 For an interesting discussion of the reception of Cicero's exile in the early Roman Empire, see Keeline 2018, 164–177. McConnell 2014, 224, observes a shift in Cicero's view of the place of philosophy in politics before and after his exile.

14 *Cic. Att.* 3.10.2; 3.11.2; 3.12.1; 3.13.2; 3.15.1. On Atticus' disapproval of Cicero's continuous lamentations in his letters from exile, see also Narducci 1997, 59. Robinson 1994, 480, refers to Cicero's replies to Atticus' criticism as "a disingenuous attempt to portray himself as a hero". Schwitter 2017, 389, interprets Atticus' reproaches as concern to protect his friend from damaging his reputation. Hutchinson 1998, 27 n. 2, rightly observes that Atticus' tone towards Cicero was equally firm when Cicero was mourning Tullia's death (*Cic. Att.* 12.41.3).

and by stressing that no man has suffered such a devastating blow in his life.¹⁵ He also implores him to stop castigating him and instead to focus on how to alleviate his burden (Cic. *Att.* 3.10.3).¹⁶

Assertions about Cicero's mental condition are surprisingly common in scholarship. In many notable studies of his exile, he is perceived as a hopeless man suffering from depression.¹⁷ While many of his statements do give the impression that he was struggling with coming to terms with his new life in exile – irrespective of the city in which he was forced to remain –, it also needs to be borne in mind that a diagnosis of a mental condition of a historical person is highly problematic. Apart from the fact that most classicists lack the necessary qualifications to diagnose mental illness,¹⁸ the extant evidence that sheds light on Cicero's exile is fairly limited and thus any observations made rely heavily on Cicero's depictions of events and of his perception of reality, since the correspondence is unidirectional. Moreover, there is a tendency to take statements found in Cicero's letters, especially from exile, at face value. I maintain that more caution needs to be exercised when dealing with Cicero's claims in his correspondence. Consequently, his constant references to weeping during his banishment¹⁹ do not necessarily mean that he literally wept in all those occasions, as his statements could be an exagger-

¹⁵ He raises this point again on 5 and 17 August 58 BCE (Cic. *Att.* 3.13.2; 3.15.2).

¹⁶ Cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.11.2; 3.15.7. For a further list of references to the disapproval of Cicero's letters from exile both in antiquity and by modern scholars, see Hutchinson 1998, 25 n. 1.

¹⁷ Mitchell 1991, 141, argues that at certain points of his banishment he was on "the verge of mental collapse". Similar assertions about Cicero's mental condition can be found in many notable studies of his exile. Claassen 1996, 222, notes that Cicero was "in despair", while Seager 1979, 108, states that he "had not been hopeful" and that he "sunk in pessimism". Tyrrell/Purser 1969, 30, assert that he "was on the point of self-destruction". For Marsh 2014, 42, Cicero "was nearly driven to suicide by anguish and despair". May 2002, 11, also observes a serious consideration of suicide in Cicero's correspondence and attributes it to his depression. Dugan 2014, 13–14, detects "suicidal impulses" in his letters and asserts that "he was driven to contemplate self-destruction". According to Shackleton Bailey 1971, 65, "Cicero wanted to destroy himself, whether by ordinary suicide or in a desperate sally against Clodius [...]. He continued to contemplate suicide in the following months". Treggiari 2007, 57, following completely Cicero's claims, states that he seriously contemplated ending his life and then regretted not having done so. Contrast, however, Robinson 1994, 475 n. 1, who does not simply assume that Cicero's statements are unequivocally an accurate representation of his inner thoughts and thus simply notes that Cicero "expresses the wish that he had committed suicide". Baraz 2012, 55, rightly states that "any letter penned by Cicero cannot be taken to present the author's thought in an entirely direct and unmediated way".

¹⁸ Cohen 2007, 110, raises a similar point by noting that "authors attempt to apply modern psychological terminology based on the letters he wrote during this period".

¹⁹ Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.3; 1.3.10; *Fam.* 14.1.5; 14.2.1; 14.2.2; 14.3.1; 14.3.5; 14.4.1; *Att.* 3.15.4; 3.10.2.

ation used to stress the magnitude of his plight.²⁰ Similarly, the fact that Cicero repeatedly and categorically denies that he entertains any hope of ever being recalled to Rome or that he is contemplating suicide should not be treated as conclusive evidence that he felt completely hopeless²¹ and suicidal.²² As the discussion aims to demonstrate, a closer reading of the statements that he makes in his letters to Atticus, Quintus, and Terentia suggests that he held varying degrees of hope throughout his banishment.

The Impact of his Banishment

Before delving deeper into the impact that Cicero's exile had on him, it is imperative to bear in mind the possibility that the claims in his letters to Atticus and his family were made with rhetorical purposes in mind; specifically, with the intention of *commiseratio* (appeal to one's pity/compassion). As Hutchinson has demonstrated convincingly, the view of Cicero being so distraught throughout his exile that his mental state affected his ability to write letters to his family, his friends, and allies in Rome should be rejected.²³ The fact that Cicero had in mind the power of emotive language, especially in the elicitation of pity,²⁴ can be observed in a remark that he makes in a letter to Quintus (Cic. QFr. 1.3.5):

Nunc, si potes, id quod ego qui tibi semper fortis videbar non possum, erige te et confirma, si qua subeunda dimicatio erit. Spero, si quid mea spes habet auctoritatis, tibi et integritatem tuam et amorem in te civitatis et aliquid etiam misericordiam nostri praesidi laturum.

²⁰ Hutchinson 1998, 27, stresses that such exaggerations are typical in Cicero's works, including his public speeches and philosophical treatises.

²¹ According to Marsh 2014, 45, Cicero held some hope throughout his banishment, hence his attempts to secure the support of people whose collaborative efforts could effect his restoration. Smith 2015, 30, expresses a similar view by asserting that the hope to rehabilitate his public persona was the driving force behind his persistence in exile.

²² Hill 2004, 2, argues against associating suicide with depression in ancient sources and stresses that in the ancient world the former was "dramatically public in character" as it could attract "publicity for its agent/victim and enhance his or her reputation in society at large".

²³ Hutchinson 1998, 25. He also argues strongly against the view that one could possibly express one's emotions without a thought process.

²⁴ As Tempest 2011, 121, points out, Cicero followed the example of his fellow members of the equestrian order who attempted to aid Cicero's cause, before he left Rome, by wearing mourning garments. The theatricality of their actions is perhaps best exemplified in the attempt of certain senators, who, as soon as the consuls forbade them from wearing mourning clothes in support of Cicero, rushed out of the Senate screaming and tearing their clothes in public.

Now, if you can, do that which I, who always seemed valiant to you, cannot, i.e. lift yourself up and take heart, if a struggle is to be faced. I hope, if my hope carries any weight, that your integrity, the love that the community has for you, and also to some extent the pity for myself will bear protection for you. (transl. by the author)

Since the letter was written on 13 June 58 BCE in Thessalonica, Cicero was acutely aware of the benefits of being pitied by others.²⁵ As the discussion below will attempt to demonstrate, Cicero's life in Greece during his exile was so strenuous that his remarks in his letters to his loved ones appear to reflect the reality in Cicero's eyes. Nevertheless, even though the act of writing letters, in which he laments over the state of his life, was a valuable outlet for him to express his emotions, his remarks to his family also served a different purpose: they allowed him to seize control of the way that his correspondents felt about him and his conduct towards them. Thus, the more they pitied him, the more likely it would be to excuse his behaviour²⁶ and to fulfil any wish he had, no matter the obstacles that they would have to face.²⁷

One of his main concerns after the promulgation of Clodius' second bill that named Cicero as its target (Cic. *Att.* 3.1; 3.2) was his physical safety. As soon as Clodius' bill was voted into law, Cicero had every reason to fear for his life,²⁸ because the law denied Cicero access to fire and water within 400 or 500 miles from Rome (Cic. *Att.* 3.4; *Fam.* 14.4.3).²⁹ That meant that during his journey, until he reached his destination, if anyone were caught offering him shelter, they were in danger of facing punishment for breaking the law (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.2).³⁰ Despite having many friends and acquaintances that assured him that they were willing to help him in his time of need, thus endangering their own lives (Cic. *Att.* 3.4), Cicero had every reason to remain doubtful, considering that he had been abandoned by Pom-

25 Kaster 2005, 145, interprets Cicero's remark to Quintus as a conviction that Quintus would be protected because of the combination of two emotions, love (for Quintus) and pity (for himself).

26 As it will be demonstrated later on, Cicero repeatedly admits that he was wrong, but places most of the blame on others.

27 Hutchinson 1998, 47, also considers Cicero's outpour of emotions in his letters from exile as an attempt to persuade his correspondents.

28 Explicit references to fear can be found thirty-one times in Cicero's extant letters from exile: *metus* (fear): Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.11; *Att.* 3.8.2; 3.8.4; 3.9.3; *metuere* (to fear): Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.4; *Fam.* 14.2.2; 14.4.3; 14.4.4; *Att.* 3.18.2; 3.23.4; *timor* (terror): Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.4; *Att.* 3.13.2; 3.17.1; *timidus* (fearful): Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.1; *Att.* 3.23.4; *timere* (to be fearful): Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.9; *Fam.* 14.2.3; *Att.* 3.4; 3.8.2; 3.9.1; 3.15.7; *pertimere* (to fear greatly): Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.4; 1.4.1; *pertimescere* (to be terrified): Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5; *vereri* (to be afraid): Cic. *Att.* 3.7.1; 3.17.3; 3.23.4; 3.24.1; 3.24.2.

29 Moreau 1987, 475.

30 As Ciaceri 1941, 53, and Fuhrmann 1992, 91, observe, the punishment for anyone caught offering shelter to Cicero was death.

pey, who had pledged to support him against Clodius (Cic. *Att.* 2.22.2).³¹ More importantly, he states that he felt betrayed also by his friends, who offered him pernicious counsel by urging him to leave Rome (Cic. *Att.* 3.10.2).

The possibility that he experienced genuine fear until he reached Thessalonica is strengthened by his pleas to Atticus to join him.³² In May 58 BCE, he politely rejects Atticus' generous offer of his estate in Epirus, because he wants to avoid being in close proximity to Achaea, where he had many enemies (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.1). In the first extant letter to Atticus, while heading towards Vibo, he stresses that, in order to travel through Epirus, he will need to be escorted by Atticus and his men.³³ He also laments his inability to stay at one place for an extensive period of time, for fear of Clodius' law. As a result, he has to move constantly from one friend's property to another (Cic. *Att.* 3.2). On 29 April 58 BCE, he notes that, in order to feel safe to live somewhere, it would have to be a fortified place, unless he was staying there only for a limited amount of time (Cic. *Att.* 3.7.1). Based on the letter to Atticus from 27 March 58 BCE (Cic. *Att.* 3.2), it appears that he planned to make it to Greece, but was afraid to travel there on his own, hence his repeated request to Atticus to join him, so that he could safely move from Greece to Brindisium, if there was such a need. If Atticus were to decide to grant Cicero's request, he would have put his own life in danger, as Cicero admits that Atticus' journey would be troublesome (*molestum*; Cic. *Att.* 3.2). Despite the desperation that Cicero displayed in his letters to Atticus in his attempts to persuade him to accompany him, Atticus proved reluctant to endanger his own life for his friend's sake and ultimately chose to support Cicero from the safety of Rome. As a result, every time a friend and ally offered his home to him, Cicero expressed his gratitude, acknowledged the danger that they were facing, and did not take their assistance for granted.³⁴

Cicero's distress evidently did not stem solely from his fear for his life. In a matter of days, he was forced to face a startlingly new reality. His lamentations in his correspondence with his loved ones provide adequate information about his perception of his peril. He repeatedly refers to everything that he was deprived of by opting for exile over remaining in Rome and clashing with Clodius and his supporters.³⁵ Even though each reference differs considerably, the emphasis is

31 Luijheid 1970, 92–93, points out that Pompey tended to conceal his intentions from Cicero.

32 On Cicero's continuous efforts to convince Atticus to join him, see Evangelou 2019, 155–161.

33 Cic. *Att.* 3.1: *tuo tuorumque praesidio* ("your and your men's protection").

34 Laenius Flaccus (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.2); Sicca (Cic. *Att.* 3.4); Atticus (Cic. *Att.* 3.7.1); Plancius (Cic. *Att.* 3.14.2).

35 Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.1; 1.3.6; *Fam.* 1.4.3; 1.4.6; *Att.* 3.5; 3.7.1; 3.7.3; 3.10.2; 3.11.2; 3.15.2; 3.15.4; 3.17.3; 3.20.1. Narducci 1997, 58, views Cicero's continuous references to everything that he had lost in exile as an obses-

clearly placed on the members of his family.³⁶ He notes that he can no longer see his children or his wife (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.3) or be held in Terentia's arms (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.1).³⁷ He, nonetheless, claims that he can still picture his wife, but that image of her only intensifies his suffering (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.3; 14.3.2).³⁸ He also stresses that the thought of his two children as being miserable during his absence because of him makes the tragedy of his banishment all the more unbearable.³⁹ He expresses equal emotional pain because of his brother's absence from his life. Quintus is presented as an excellent man who is devoted⁴⁰ to him and as someone whose actions have always made Cicero feel proud to be his brother (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.1).⁴¹ Cicero seems to have greatly enjoyed Quintus' company, as he claims that it gave him pleasure (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.3). He further stresses their bond by referring to themselves as most loving and intimate brothers (*amantissimis et coniunctissimis fratribus*; Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.4),⁴² thereby underscoring the impact that his inability to see Quintus has on him.⁴³ Based on Cicero's remarks, it would appear that the bond that he shared with his family was as strong as his steadfast friendship with Atticus.

sion. Similarly, Pina Polo 2017, 96, states that "Cicero obsessively demanded that Atticus join him in exile".

³⁶ In his letter to Quintus from June 58 BCE, he reminisces about the life that he enjoyed before his exile and understandably mentions his brother first and then his children and his wife as constituent elements of his jubilation in Rome (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.6).

³⁷ While relying completely on Cicero's claims, Grebe 2011, 43, notes that "Cicero wanted Terentia to be with him in exile and he desired to die in her arms". Treggiari 2007, 64, also views Cicero's remarks in his correspondence with Terentia as expressions of "genuine emotions". In contrast, White 2010, 135, argues that the chief reason that Cicero asked Terentia to remain in Rome was that he relied on her for the constant and reliable provision of information.

³⁸ Grebe 2003, 132, argues that Cicero's letters to Terentia are a testament of her obedience towards him, considering that she offers to join him in exile, but only if he so wishes (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.5).

³⁹ Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.1; 14.1.5; 14.2.1. Hence his request to Terentia to send him updates not only on the efforts of his friends and allies to effect his restoration, but also on her and their children's well-being (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.6).

⁴⁰ Quintus' loyalty to Cicero is also stressed in Cic. *Sest.* 145. In a letter to Atticus from 13 June 58 BCE, he claims that he chose to refrain from seeing Quintus, because he was certain that his brother would be incapable of seeing him in misery and then leaving him alone in exile (Cic. *Att.* 3.9.1).

⁴¹ Clearly an exaggeration, as evident in Cicero's letters to Quintus himself (Cic. *QFr.* 1.1, 1.2), in which he expresses his disapproval of his brother's administration of Asia and even stresses how Quintus' actions and his irritability reflect badly on Cicero (Cic. *QFr.* 1.2.10–11).

⁴² Cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.11.2: *fratrem optimum humanissimumque* ("the greatest and kindest brother").

⁴³ Hutchinson 1998, 38–40, observes Cicero's use of emotion in his letter to Quintus as an attempt to assuage Quintus' plausible anger at him for refusing to meet Quintus, as was expected of him because Quintus was returning from a province. He also argues that Cicero attempts to mollify his brother by arousing Quintus' pity for him.

The absence of Atticus from his life appears to have hurt him deeply and to have been one of the relationships that he missed the most during his banishment.⁴⁴ Apart from his family and dear friends, Cicero had lost everything that was good in his life (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6), including his fortune, his political career and influence, his rank, his glory, and especially his ability to exhibit his many talents and virtues (Cic. *Att.* 3.10.2). His remark in a letter to Terentia from April 58 BCE that they lived and prospered (*viximus, floruimus*; Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6) perfectly illustrates the stark difference between his life in Rome and in exile. Essentially, Cicero suggests that, while banished, he does not feel alive or able to achieve anything meaningful in his life.

Through his efforts, Clodius managed to punish Cicero for his testimony in 61 BCE at the Bona Dea trial by delivering a crushing blow to him which affected every aspect of his life.⁴⁵ In addition to losing everything that Rome represented for him, his banishment seems to have cost him even his sense of identity (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.7), best illustrated in his remark to Atticus: *desidero enim non mea solum neque meos sed me ipsum. Quid enim sum?* ("I verily long for not only my things and my loved ones, but also myself. For what am I?"; Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2).⁴⁶ In his correspondence with Terentia and Atticus, he complains that he is losing himself. In November 58 BCE, he expresses a wish to be recalled to Rome, to be reunited with his family, but perhaps more importantly, to gain himself back as well (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.3). His statements in his letters from exile about his state of mind vary considerably.⁴⁷ On 6 April 58 BCE, he reassures Atticus that he is the same man whom Atticus has always loved and, even though his enemies have managed to deprive him of everything that he had, he did not lose himself as well in the process (Cic. *Att.* 3.5).⁴⁸ The rest of his correspondence with Atticus gives the impression of deterioration of his mental state and his ability to think clearly. Throughout his exile, he chose isolation over spending time with friends or acquaintances, and he actively avoided crowds and even daylight (Cic. *Att.* 3.71; 3.19.1). On 29 April 58 BCE, he attempts to explain to Atticus the fact that he has not been sending letters

⁴⁴ Cic. *Att.* 3.73; 3.11.2; 3.15.2; 3.17.3.

⁴⁵ As Epstein 1987, 78, points out, exile in Cicero's time was "the consummate legal injury short of execution". Hutchinson 1998, 26, refers to exile as the worst punishment that a Roman citizen could receive. Claassen 1999, 10–11, notes that "in the Roman world, exile and death were closely related. Because exile frequently served as pre-emption of, or substitute for the death penalty, it was often portrayed in literature as the virtual equivalent of death".

⁴⁶ On Cicero's expressed concern throughout his banishment that he was losing himself, see Narducci 1997, esp. 58–59, and Hutchinson 1998, 41. His identity crisis is also stressed by Citroni Marchetti 1999, 73, and Géraud 2014, 242.

⁴⁷ Dugan 2014, 12 n. 11, also points out Cicero's conflicting remarks about losing his identity.

⁴⁸ Claassen 1992, 28, views Cicero's remark as "philosophical equanimity".

more often, by claiming that his distress has affected his mind (Cic. *Att.* 3.7.3). A month later, he laments to Atticus that his concern about Quintus has rendered him incapable of making decisions on anything (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.3).⁴⁹ He attributes the inconsistency, which Atticus may have observed in the letters that he has been receiving from Cicero, to the agitation of his mind. His cognitive abilities have thus been affected not only by the misery that his banishment has caused him, but, more importantly, by the thought that his disaster could have been avoided had he not made the mistake of trusting certain persons to help him in his time of need (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.4). He further notes that he was unable to see through the villainy of those whom he trusted, because he was overcome with grief (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.4). Such claims notwithstanding, on 5 August 58 BCE he dismisses Atticus' concern over the balance of his mind and emphatically claims that *mihi vero mens integra est* ("my mind is truly unimpaired"; Cic. *Att.* 3.13.2), unlike the time when he left Rome (Cic. *Att.* 3.13.2). Atticus must have been unconvinced by Cicero's reassurances and pressed further on this matter, which prompted Cicero to stress, once again, that, despite his misery, his mind was sound (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2). His contradictory remarks suggest that even though he realised that his ability to think clearly was affected to a certain extent by his sorrow, he refused to admit so in his letters to Atticus.⁵⁰

Whereas Cicero's misery during his exile is ubiquitous in his letters, the suffering inflicted on his friends and family as a further cause of his distress has not been adequately explored. In his correspondence with his loved ones, Cicero repeatedly acknowledges that he is not the only person suffering as a result of his exile. His wife is deprived of a husband who would protect her if he were in Rome. In a letter to Terentia from October 58 BCE, he informs her that he has learned from Publius Valerius how she was forced to leave the Temple of Vesta, where she was taking refuge, and was taken to the *Tabula Valeria* (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.2).⁵¹ Cicero's reaction to learning about this incident suggests that he believed that it was orchestrated by Clodius and his supporters, who were eager to

⁴⁹ He makes a similar claim at the end of his second extant letter to Quintus (Cic. *QFr.* 14.5).

⁵⁰ Hutchinson 1998, 28, argues that, even though Cicero's replies to his correspondents who expressed some kind of disappointment in his conduct towards them are emotionally charged, they should not be interpreted as "insincere acting".

⁵¹ Shackleton Bailey 2001, 64–65 n. 1, argues that Terentia was likely forced to go to the Comitium, where the Tribunes met, in regard to a matter of financial nature. Buonopane 2016, 56, asserts that Clodius must also have been present. Epstein 1986, 235, considers Terentia's harassment by the Clodian family during Cicero's absence as evidence that they blamed her for encouraging Cicero to testify against Clodius at the Bona Dea trial. On the financial impact of Cicero's exile on Terentia, see Dixon 1984, 80–88.

punish Cicero further by oppressing his wife. He claims that, having been made aware of how she is being tormented, he cannot help but think of her as crying and mourning (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.2), which inevitably intensifies his anguish.⁵² In fact, he emphatically states⁵³ that Terentia's misery causes him more sorrow than his own condition as an exile (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6).⁵⁴ Similarly, Quintus cannot bear the thought of losing his brother and cries while Cicero is also crying, when Cicero is forced to leave Rome (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.1). In his attempt to ensure that Cicero had enough funds in his exile, in addition to the sum that Cicero received from the Treasury on Quintus' behalf, Quintus informed Cicero of his plan to send him more money through a bill of exchange. While Cicero does not attempt to dissuade him from doing so, he reveals that he is deeply concerned about the financial strain that such an action would put on Quintus, being well aware that he would struggle to pay off his creditors (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.7). Nonetheless, Quintus' selfless act seems to increase Cicero's distress over the toil that his banishment continuously takes on his family. In both extant letters that he wrote to his brother during his exile, Cicero expresses distinctly the extent of his sorrow. He stresses that Quintus is robbed of someone who had used his voice to defend effectively such a large number of men, yet he is prevented from defending his own brother from a possible prosecution,⁵⁵ as his removal from Rome ensures that he remains silent in exile (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.2). Cicero goes as far as to assert that no man has ever been thrust down by as much mourning as Quintus has (Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.5). Hence his claim that he is incapable of thinking of Quintus without crying (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.3).⁵⁶ In all these examples a clear vicious circle can be observed: Cicero suffers in exile, which causes distress to his loved ones, the thought of which makes Cicero even more miserable.

52 Hutchinson 1998, 32, 36, makes an interesting observation in his study of Cicero's letters to his family and to Atticus. He points out that he displays more restraint in his correspondence with Atticus, since, in his letters addressed to Terentia and his children, he appears to be overwhelmed by his emotions. He also interprets the common references to tears as a rhetorical device that he employs frequently in letters from exile as a climax that can also be found in his public speeches, since weeping in public was not perceived as "acting by the audience".

53 Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6: *sic existimes* ("Reckon, as I do").

54 In his last extant letter to Terentia, he reiterates this point and adds also his children's suffering as more difficult to bear than his own peril (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.1). Grebe 2003, 143, asserts that Cicero's letters to his wife "document intrinsic love, a love valued in itself rather than instrumentally for personal interest".

55 Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.9; 1.4.5; cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.8.2.

56 In a letter to Atticus from 27 June 58 BCE, he asserts that Atticus is inconsolable because of Cicero's calamity (Cic. *Att.* 3.11.2), though in this case without adding that the thought of Atticus as suffering causes him further distress.

Apart from the clear display of affection in his letters to his family and to Atticus, the reader of the correspondence can observe a man who refuses to come to terms with his new reality. His lamentations do not focus entirely on his loved ones, but also on himself. His letters suggest that he was greatly concerned about his possessions, including his confiscated and demolished houses. Notably, while Sestius was drafting a bill for Cicero's return from exile,⁵⁷ Cicero stresses to Atticus that he is not satisfied with the proposal at its current form, as he will not feel completely restored unless his house is also restored.⁵⁸ Similarly, he appears to be deeply disturbed about the prospect of Terentia selling some of her estates,⁵⁹ because of the financial difficulties that she was facing (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.5; 14.2.3).⁶⁰ The fact that his resources were limited during his exile, as he relied principally on the financial aid that he had received from Quintus (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.7) and Atticus,⁶¹ does not seem to have troubled him sorely (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.7). His primary grievance was arguably over losing his hard-earned place in Roman society. During his banishment, he was no longer able to deliver public speeches and thus to experience the admiration and gratitude of his fellow citizens. Having lost his dignity, his status, his fame, his reputation, and his political power, he had essentially been stripped of almost everything that made him special in the eyes of his fellow Romans.⁶² It is worth stressing that for the first time in his career, he had to rely entirely on the efforts of others who were speaking on his

57 Cic. *Att.* 3.20.3; 3.23.4.

58 Cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.15.6; 3.20.2; 3.23.2; *Fam.* 14.2.3.

59 On Cicero's dependence on Terentia's resources, see Claassen 1996, 229.

60 Wood 1988, 109, asserts that Cicero's "deep attachment to his properties is evident from the pain he felt when during his exile in 58 the Palatine residence was confiscated" by Clodius. Nevertheless, taking into consideration Cicero's opposition to Terentia selling any of her estates and the fact that he strongly urges her to borrow money from their friends to cover her and their son's expenses (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.5), it could be argued that Cicero was primarily interested in retaining his entire fortune and return to Rome as lightly wounded as possible. At the same time, Allen 1944, 3, points out that his house on the Palatine Hill was of particular import to him, precisely because "it exemplified his acceptance into high Roman politics and society". Géraud 2014, 248, raises a similar point by stressing its association with Cicero's *dignitas*. Buonopane 2016, 55, also underscores the symbolic value that the Palatine house had for Cicero. Therefore, since the loss of such a property would be perceived as a massive blow on Cicero's prestige, he had every reason to avoid returning in a weakened state, devoid of his house as well as some of his wife's estates. Claassen 1992, 28, offers an interesting interpretation of Cicero's remark about his house by suggesting that his public and personal life were inextricably intertwined.

61 For a list of references to the financial support that Atticus provided for Cicero and his family during Cicero's banishment, see Rauh 1986, 9 n. 30.

62 Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2; 3.20.1.

behalf.⁶³ He was unable to defend himself or work on his restoration by employing the art of rhetoric that he had mastered over the years. He could only send letters to those interested and those potentially interested⁶⁴ in helping with his recall⁶⁵ and to give instructions to Quintus, Atticus, and Terentia on how to work most effectively on his restoration. This sense of powerlessness is prevalent in his exilic correspondence,⁶⁶ but also explicitly stated in a letter to Terentia from October 58 BCE, in which he concedes that *verum haec non sunt in nostra manu* (“alas, these matters are not in our hands”; Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.3). At the same time, his inability to return to Rome must have been one of the principal causes of his suffering. His love for Rome and his refusal to leave the city was well known to his friends and fellow politicians⁶⁷ and manifested in 51 BCE with his appointment as governor of Cilicia.⁶⁸ In his letters, he explicitly states that he is displeased with the governorship and, more importantly, he develops efforts to limit it to one year by securing the assistance even of his former enemy, Appius Claudius.⁶⁹ By being forced to remain away from Rome, Cicero was not only deprived of his country or of his friends and family, but also unable to defend the republic from men like Clodius as well as the triumvirs.

His incessant struggle with accepting his calamity seems to have been exacerbated by his poignant regret over listening to his close friends who advised him to leave Rome. Throughout his banishment, he recurrently dwells on the cause of his misery, which was his decision to flee from Rome after the promulgation of the first bill that did not even target him by name (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.5). *Prima facie* the constant references to *mea culpa* give the impression that Cicero held primarily himself responsible for his misfortune.⁷⁰ In his correspondence from exile, his banish-

63 While Dyck 2008b, 161, rightly observes that “Cicero is painfully aware of his dependence on others outside his family circle”, it is worth stressing that he relied heavily also on his brother’s, his wife’s, and even his son-in-law’s efforts for his restoration, despite their ostensibly limited political influence.

64 Such as Pompey (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.2; 14.2.2; *Att.* 3.14.1) and Metellus Nepos (Cic. *Fam.* 5.4).

65 Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.4; 14.3.3; *Att.* 3.8.3; 3.8.4; 3.9.3.

66 See, e.g., Cic. *Att.* 3.10.3.

67 Rawson 1978, 18 n. 53, argues that whenever Cicero had to remain away from Rome, he “felt only partly alive”. Notably, in a letter to his brother from June 58 BCE, he claims that neither he nor Quintus could experience any pleasure while being away from each other (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.3).

68 Lintott 2008, 253, observes that his letters to Atticus confirm that he did not wish for his appointment to be prolonged for an additional year.

69 Gruen 1995, 354.

70 Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.2; 1.3.3; 1.3.6; 1.4.1; 1.4.4; *Fam.* 14.1.1; 14.2.1; 14.3.1–2; 14.4.1; 14.4.6; *Att.* 3.8.4; 3.9.1–2; 3.14.1–2; 3.15.4; 3.15.5; 3.15.7. Mitchell 1991, 127, points out Cicero’s misjudgement of the situation that led to his exile, whereas Carcopino 1951, 197, attributes Cicero’s disaster to his overconfidence. Even though

ment is presented as a mistake that he made or even as the result of cowardice, because, ultimately, he failed to provide to his family the happiness that they deserved (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.1; 14.3.2). However, a closer look at the context of those references indicates an intention to shift at least some of the blame from himself to those who advised him to abandon Rome under the false premise that he would soon be able to return to Rome (Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.4).⁷¹ In his letters to his loved ones, even when he states that everything was his fault (*omnia sunt mea culpa*; Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.1), he immediately argues that his only error was the false impression that he could trust the judgment of his wise and knowledgeable friends over his own.⁷²

Most of his remarks about his treacherous friends are vague, as he refrains from naming the persons whom he holds responsible for his plight.⁷³ One exception is Hortensius, at whom most of his ire is directed (Cic. *Att.* 3.9.2). He also mentions Q. Arrius as well as Pompey. While he does not hide his disappointment in Pompey entirely,⁷⁴ he is careful not to include any scathing remarks about him, as he was acutely aware that he was in dire need of his support, if he were to be recalled to Rome. Even his trusted friend, Atticus, did not escape his criticism. Atticus, to Cicero's dismay, not only offered him – in Cicero's opinion – bad counsel by telling him to flee from Rome, but, more importantly, when Cicero was being exiled, Atticus looked on and remained silent (*inspectante et tacente te*; Cic. *Att.* 3.15.7).⁷⁵ In addition to blaming his friends for the condition in which he

he expresses regret for his actions, as Claassen 1992, 27, observes, at no point does he refer to the execution of the Catilinarian conspirators as a mistake.

71 Dyck 2008b, 160, also points out Cicero's attempt to blame anyone other than himself and detects rage in the first few extant letters from his banishment. Claassen 1996, 227, argues that at no point does Cicero assume any responsibility for his disaster. Conversely, Tempest 2011, 122, notes that he bears some of the blame himself.

72 Thus, he essentially admits that he committed one of the gravest mistakes in politics possible. According to Keeline 2018, 164, in his correspondence from exile Cicero is "morose and reproachful, despondent and distrusting of even his staunchest friends".

73 Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5; 1.3.8; 1.4.2–4; *Fam.* 14.4.1; *Att.* 3.7.1–2; 3.8.4; 3.9.1–2; 3.10.2; 3.13.2; 3.15.2–3; 3.15.7; 3.19.3; 3.20.1.

74 Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.9; 1.4.4; *Fam.* 14.1.2; 14.2.2; *Att.* 3.8.3; 3.14.1; 3.15.4.

75 The crisis in Cicero's relationship with Atticus as attested in their correspondence has not received considerable attention. For example, Fuhrmann 1992, 93, Welch 1996, 458–460, Narducci 1997, 59, Shackleton Bailey 1971, 70, Tempest 2011, 122, Marsh 2014, 46, and Smith 2015, 28, observe that Cicero assigns blame to Atticus for his plight, but do not stress how unique such an accusation was in their correspondence. More importantly, Citroni Marchetti 2000, 197–198, does not detect sarcasm in Cicero's remark to Atticus that he only had tears for Cicero when he was being exiled (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.4) and thus she refers to Atticus' emotional pain as the reason that he failed to help Cicero. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Atticus' reaction to Cicero's misfortune in 58 BCE is

found himself, he makes a direct connection between his consulship and his exile. By referring to his consulship as extolled (*laudatus*; Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.1) and claiming that it was this very consulship that snatched away his family, his country, and his possessions (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.1), he implicitly expresses his grievance over being punished for saving the republic and also reminds Quintus – and anyone else who could possibly read this letter – that he did not end up in exile because of a mistake that he made while being motivated by personal considerations, but for the sake of the public interest. In the same letter, while discussing Quintus' own troubles in Rome and the prosecution that Quintus could face,⁷⁶ he reiterates that both his and Quintus' perils were not the result of mistakes that they made; on the contrary, they were being severely punished for their honourable actions (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.9). He makes a similar statement in a letter to his wife, in which he explicitly states that he made no mistake (*peccatum est nullum*; Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6).

A distinctively different approach can be observed in his last extant letter to Terentia, when he moved from Thessalonica to Dyrrachium (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.1–2). Not only does Cicero make no reference – in connection with his decision to leave Rome – to his friends who betrayed him either with their advice or with their inaction at his greatest time of need, but more than in any previous extant letter from exile, he appears to hold himself responsible for his actions and decisions. He begins by asserting that his calamity is greater than Terentia's, because, while both are indeed suffering during Cicero's banishment, Cicero has an additional reason to feel miserable: his regret over the way in which he dealt with Clodius' threats. He emphatically notes that his wretchedness is his fault alone and argues that he had three better options than to flee from Rome, i.e. to accept Caesar's offer for the land commission,⁷⁷ to refuse Caesar's offer, though more carefully than he did, or, as he mentions in the rest of his correspondence from exile, to remain in Rome and die bravely defending his honour, thereby protecting his good name and his family.⁷⁸ He argues that his decision to abandon Rome brought shame to him and showed that he lacked valour and assiduity (*virtutem et diligentiam*; Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.2).

consistent with his tendency to separate himself from one of his most intimate friends, as it became particularly clear in 43 BCE.

⁷⁶ On G. Clodius' son, Appius Claudius, and his desire to prosecute Quintus (Cic. *Att.* 3.171) in an attempt to prevent him from working on Cicero's recall, see Nicholson 1992, 75; see also Wiseman 1970, 207–208, Kaster 2005, 204 n. 30, and Alexander 1993, 247, who simply notes that Quintus was facing a threat “by a Claudius” for his maladministration of Asia.

⁷⁷ Cic. *Prov. cons.* 41–42. For an in-depth discussion of what Caesar's offer entailed, see Rising 2015.

⁷⁸ According to Géraud 2014, 244, Caesar certainly regretted abandoning Cicero for rejecting his offer.

His conflicting remarks about leaving Rome instead of facing prosecution indicate that his decision was inextricably complex. It would appear that during the initial period of his banishment, he refused to assume complete responsibility for his decision to flee from Rome as a coping mechanism. By focusing on men like Pompey, who abandoned him, or Hortensius, Q. Arrius, and Atticus, who assured him that leaving Rome for a few days would give his supporters enough time to settle the matter and ensure his safe return, he did not have to face the harsh reality: first, trustfully relying on Pompey's promises to protect him was a gross miscalculation on his part. Second, his friends did not force him to take their advice, since he could have simply trusted his better judgment, as he had done up to that point. Third, his decision to flee from Rome was motivated, at least partially, by his desire to remain alive, as he lacked the courage to stay in Rome and face Clodius' gangs or a trial for the execution of the five Catilinarian conspirators. At the same time, in his letter to Terentia, the possibility of being recalled to Rome, thanks to a large extent to the efforts of men whom he had accused of having betrayed him, seems well within grasp (Cic. *Fam.* 14.2–5). Therefore, he could have chosen to avoid even implicitly attacking them, for fear that his letter could have been intercepted and fallen to the wrong hands.

Secret Hopes for Restoration

The lack of hope that Cicero professes to experience is unsurprisingly prevalent throughout his entire extant correspondence from exile. He consistently and categorically denies that he entertains any hope of ever returning to Rome.⁷⁹ A clear intention can be observed to clarify that others may have reason to be hopeful, but he most certainly does not. He claims that even when he is ostensibly entertaining some hope, he simply goes along with the hopes of his loved ones,⁸⁰ because he does not wish to discourage them or seem ungrateful.⁸¹ As a result, in most instances that the word *spes* (hope) is used,⁸² it is in reference to someone

79 Cic. *QFr.* 1.35; 1.4.2; *Fam.* 14.3.2; 14.4.4; *Att.* 3.3; 3.7.2; 3.7.3; 3.8.3; 3.9.2; 3.15.6; 3.19.2; 3.23.5; 3.24.1. As Hutchinson 1998, 37, observes, the vast majority of Cicero's letters suggests that he did not entertain any hope of ever being restored to Rome.

80 For example, on 21 July 58 BCE, he notes that, despite plausibly giving the impression of a fool who believes that his situation will improve, in reality he is only entertaining some hope because Atticus himself is urging him to do so through the optimism that his letters exude (Cic. *Att.* 3.14.1).

81 Cic. *Att.* 3.13.1; 3.19.2; 3.23.4; 3.25.

82 The noun *spes* (hope) and the verb *sperare* (to hope) are used sixty-five times in Cicero's extant letters from exile: Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5; 1.3.6; 1.4.2; 1.4.3; *Fam.* 5.4.1; 14.1.2; 14.1.3; 14.2.3; 14.2.4; 14.3.2; 14.4.3; 14.4.4;

else's hope⁸³ and when Cicero uses it about himself, it is in order to state that he sees no reason to be optimistic about his restoration.⁸⁴ In the rare occasions that it is used to express Cicero's own hope, it is in relation to his hope for other persons. One example can be found in the aforementioned letter to Quintus, in which he states that he hopes that Quintus' character and the pity that others feel for Cicero will be enough to offer Quintus protection from prosecution (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5). Despite the fact that he does not use the verb *sperare* in reference to himself, he, once again, displays some negativity by adding: *si quid mea spes habet auctoritatis* ("if my hope carries any weight"; Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5). Similarly, at the very end of his first extant letter to Terentia, he uses the word *spes* not in relation to his recall to Rome, but to characterise their young son, Marcus (Cic. *Fam.* 14.4.6). Interestingly, in an effort to signify that his hopes for restoration were raised after hearing about Pompey's commitment to his cause, he chooses to begin his letter with the word *expectatio* (expectation) over *spes* (Cic. *Att.* 3.18.1). His choice suggests that he is studiously avoiding giving the impression that he is hopeful that through his allies' efforts he may soon be allowed to return to Rome. His aversion to hope is perhaps best expressed at the very end of his first letter to Atticus from Dyrrachium. He emphatically states: *ego iam aut rem aut ne spem quidem exspecto* ("at this point, in fact, I no longer desire hope, but results"; Cic. *Att.* 3.22.4). Consequently, through his remarks he appears to suggest to his correspondents that, if they want to change his mind, they should not focus on trying to restore his hope, but instead to provide him concrete evidence that his official recall is imminent.

Throughout his exilic correspondence, Cicero is consistently pessimistic. Whenever he receives positive reports about the progress of his recall, he expresses doubts as to whether that particular development would be enough to lead to his restoration.⁸⁵ A typical example of Cicero's pessimistic attitude can be found in one of his letters to Atticus from 29 April 58 BCE. After acknowledging Atticus' strenuous efforts to collect as much positive news as possible, in order to revive Cicero's hopes, he refers to them as scanty (*exigua*) and suggests that they should

14.4.5; 14.4.6; *Att.* 3.72; 3.73; 3.9.2; 3.10.1; 3.11.1; 3.12.1; 3.13.1; 3.14.1; 3.15.6; 3.16; 3.17.2; 3.18.1; 3.18.2; 3.19.1; 3.19.2; 3.20.1; 3.22.1; 3.22.2; 3.22.3; 3.22.4; 3.23.1; 3.23.4; 3.23.5; 3.24.1; 3.25. In the letters before his exile, they are used only forty-seven times. Thus, before the exile forty-seven references can be found in fifty-two letters in thirty-nine pages of text as opposed to during the exile with sixty-five references in thirty-four letters in twenty-one pages of text. Similarly, Michalopoulos 2018, 184, observes that *spes* and *sperare* are used much more frequently in Ovid's poems from exile than his previous writings. He attributes this frequency to Ovid's ordeal as well as to the absence of his loved ones from his life.
⁸³ Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5; 1.3.6; 1.4.5; *Fam.* 14.1.2; 14.1.3; 14.2.3; 14.3.2; *Att.* 3.73; 3.10.1; 3.12.1–2; 3.14.1; 3.15.6; 3.19.2; 3.22.1.

⁸⁴ Hutchinson 1998, 46, makes a similar observation.

⁸⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.3–4; *Att.* 3.73; 3.9.2; 3.13.1; 3.14.2; 3.15.6; 3.16; 3.22.4.

wait and see what happens, only because Atticus so desires (Cic. *Att.* 3.73). He thus unequivocally refuses to admit that Atticus' reports have made him more hopeful about his future. His reasoning behind his wariness is best explained in a letter to Quintus. He states that he sees no reason to indulge hope when the last time that he trusted his friends and allies, they all betrayed him.⁸⁶ More importantly, his political rival and bitter enemy, Clodius, is still in office as a tribune.⁸⁷ He argues that even after Clodius' term is over, he could still persuade the new tribunes to veto Cicero's restoration (Cic. *QFr.* 14.2–3). Therefore, Cicero clearly had legitimate reason to refrain from immediately embracing all ostensibly positive reports that he was receiving.

Nevertheless, many of his remarks and the requests that he makes to everyone working on his recall indicate that, despite painstakingly refusing to admit it, he did not consider a recall to Rome beyond the realms of possibility.⁸⁸ Clearly, when he left Rome, he was hoping that within three days he would be able to return safely (Cic. *QFr.* 14.3).⁸⁹ That hope clearly did not initially materialise, but, as his letters reveal, the hope of restoration was not lost, as his friends and allies were reportedly working on his recall. One of the strongest indications that he had not given up hope entirely at any point of his banishment can be found towards the end of most extant letters that he sent to his loved ones. Atticus, Terentia, and Quintus are asked repeatedly to send him as many and as detailed reports as possible on the affairs in Rome and updates on their efforts for his restoration.⁹⁰ He even asks Terentia to send him couriers frequently, so that he can be promptly informed about everything taking place in Rome (Cic. *Fam.* 14.34), especially regarding the new tribunes, on whom most of his hopes were resting (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.3). Although he welcomes any rumours they may have heard (Cic. *Att.* 3.10.3; 3.11.1), he stresses that he prefers to be informed about the facts. Because of the tendency of some of his correspondents to paint a picture less grim than the reality, at certain points Cicero found himself receiving conflicting reports,⁹¹ hence

⁸⁶ The same point is raised again in his letter to Atticus (Cic. *Att.* 3.92).

⁸⁷ Gruen 1966, 130, notes that, even though Clodius' tribunate only became possible thanks to the triumvirs, he did not display much gratitude to them and thus could not have been acting on their behalf when he forced Cicero into exile.

⁸⁸ Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.3; 14.2.3; 14.2.4; 14.3.3; 14.3.5; 14.4.1; *Att.* 3.72; 3.13.1; 3.14.1; 3.15.4; 3.17.3; 3.20.1.

⁸⁹ Smith 1896, 81, convincingly argues that the fact that Cicero remained close to Rome and refrained from heading towards "southern Italy until April" suggests that he believed that that he would soon be recalled to Rome.

⁹⁰ Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.10; 1.4.5; *Fam.* 14.1.6; 14.2.4; 14.3.4; 14.3.5; *Att.* 3.71; 3.7.3; 3.8.2; 3.10.3; 3.11.2; 3.12.3; 3.13.2; 3.15.2; 3.15.3; 3.15.8; 3.17.3; 3.18.2; 3.19.3; 3.20.3; 3.21; 3.22.1; 3.22.3; 3.23.5; 3.24.2.

⁹¹ It is worth noting that Cicero did not rely for news on the events taking place in Rome solely on the letters that he was receiving from Terentia, Quintus, his friends, and allies, as he would also

his implicit request to Atticus to avoid bending the truth in his attempt to offer him a reason to cling to life.⁹² His letter to Atticus from 10 September 58 BCE, in which he asserts that Quintus refrains from writing frankly to his brother for fear of losing all hope of being recalled to Rome (Cic. *Att.* 3.18.2), indicates that he was thoroughly aware that his loved ones were alarmed because of his remarks about dying or ending his life during his exile and, as a result, they were at pains to give him false hope by twisting the truth or a real reason to remain alive by securing his restoration.

The place in which he resided was also a strong indication of his hopes to be recalled to Rome. Whenever he was optimistic (Cic. *Att.* 3.10.1) that such a decision could be made in his favour, he moved as close to Rome as he possibly could. At the beginning of his exile, when he entertained some hope that his restoration would be effected in a matter of days (Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.3), he was reluctant to move immediately to Greece. In contrast, he spent a considerable amount of time in Thessalonica,⁹³ where, based on his remarks in his correspondence with Terentia, Quintus, and Atticus, it would appear that, despite feeling protected, he was most miserable because the prospects of his recall were still relatively slim. Hence, when the elections of the new tribunes gave him hope about a bill being drafted for his restoration to Rome, he decided to move closer to Italy, from Thessalonica to Dyrrachium. On 25 November 58 BCE, when he moved to Dyrrachium, he sent a letter to Terentia, in which he informs her that one of the main reasons that he chose it was that it was the nearest city to Italy (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.7). While in Dyrrachium, he anxiously awaited reports from his correspondents (Cic. *Att.* 3.2.4). He notes that he remained there to receive letters with updates as quickly as possible (Cic. *Fam.* 14.3.4).

Cicero's letters from exile indicate that he stayed in Thessalonica purely out of necessity and convenience (Cic. *Att.* 3.20.1). In a letter to Atticus from Brundisium, he reveals that his initial plan was to travel to Athens and remain there, but he decided against it both for fear of his enemies in Athens, and also because he was concerned that it would not be considered far enough from Italy (Cic. *Att.* 3.7.1). Even though Thessalonica was clearly not Cicero's first choice of residence, it apparently became a relatively safe place for him at which to remain

acquire information from travellers who were simply passing by the place at which he was staying (Cic. *Fam.* 5.4.1; *Att.* 3.13.1). On Cicero's sources of information during his exile, see also Pina Polo 2017, 98–99.

⁹² Cic. *Att.* 3.8.3; 3.11.2; 3.14.1; 3.16; 3.17.3; 3.18.2; 3.24.2. He makes a similar claim to Quintus when he asks him to write to him truthfully (*vere*, Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.5).

⁹³ From 23 May (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.1) to mid-November 58 BCE (Cic. *Att.* 3.22; *Fam.* 14.1).

(Cic. *Att.* 3.8.2).⁹⁴ It seems that he did not intend to stay in Thessalonica for a considerable part of his banishment, but decided to follow Terentia's and Atticus' advice and remain there until there was substantial progress with his recall to Rome.⁹⁵ On 27 June 58 BCE he notes that he is reluctant to leave Thessalonica, because he is expecting letters from Atticus and other persons, who, presumably, were working in some capacity on his restoration (Cic. *Att.* 3.11.1). In his references to Thessalonica, it becomes abundantly clear that he does not associate with the locals (Cic. *Att.* 3.19.1),⁹⁶ that he has no reason to feel any joy to live there, and that he does not wish to improve the quality of his life as long as he remains in that place, because he sees it only as a temporary residence. His misery appears to have been so intense that when Crassus' freedman saw him in Thessalonica, he reported that Cicero was particularly anxious and that he had lost weight (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2). Interestingly, in a letter to Atticus he refers to living in Thessalonica as *iaceo* (Cic. *Att.* 3.12.3), a verb used for someone who is idle, neglected, dejected, ruined, sick, or even dead. Although he notes that he has no one to talk to,⁹⁷ he does not wish to have Atticus join him in Thessalonica either and informs him that he would prefer if Atticus remained in Rome and continued his work on his restoration (Cic. *Att.* 3.12.3). His remark to Atticus suggests that he did not wish to give the impression to anyone working on his recall that he was adjusting in life in exile, as his sole concern remained to return to Rome.

A particularly insightful reference to Thessalonica can be found in a letter to Atticus from 21 July 58 BCE. After mentioning that he has not left Thessalonica yet because he wants to avoid the crowded route and because he is still expecting letters with reports on the developments regarding his restoration, he informs Atticus that he has to leave Thessalonica. He clarifies that his host, Plancius, is not the reason,⁹⁸ but rather the city itself, which he considers the worst place to bear his calamity. The fact that he does not specify what exactly irks him about the city suggests that Thessalonica and its people were not the problem for Cicero, but what they represented. Despite his plan to move to Epirus, he chooses to remain in Thessalonica, as a move to Epirus would signify his renewed hope for re-

⁹⁴ It is worth mentioning that a few days before he moved to Dyrrachium, there was an epidemic in Thessalonica that, nonetheless, did not touch him (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.3).

⁹⁵ Cic. *Fam.* 14.2.4; *Att.* 3.9.3; 3.10.1; 3.11.1.

⁹⁶ Conversely, he notes that townspeople of Dyrrachium were dear friends of his (Cic. *Att.* 3.22.4).

⁹⁷ He complains about the lack of company in Thessalonica also on 17 August 58 BCE (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2).

⁹⁸ In fact, he claims that Plancius was such a generous host that he kept postponing moving to Epirus (Cic. *Att.* 3.22.1). Similar praise of Plancius as a reason that he remained in Thessalonica can be found in his last letter to Terentia before he moved to Dyrrachium (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.3).

storation (Cic. *Att.* 3.14.2),⁹⁹ which he repeatedly claims that he does not entertain. He reiterates this point in his following letter to Atticus by stressing that he chose to remain in Thessalonica because he saw that his chances of returning to Rome were getting slimmer (Cic. *Att.* 3.13.1). A similar claim can be found in a letter from 17 August 58 BCE, in which he informs Atticus that he will stay in Thessalonica until the proceedings of the Kalends of August. If their outcome is positive, he will move to Atticus' estate in Epirus; conversely, he states that he will move to Cyzicus (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.6), if the outcome is negative. Thus, Thessalonica becomes synonymous with forlorn hope, though not complete hopelessness,¹⁰⁰ as, based on his claims, if he were to lose all hope of being restored, he would seek an end to his life (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.6).

Evidently, from the beginning of his exile, Cicero had abundant reason to be hopeful that he would one day return to Rome.¹⁰¹ First and foremost, his dear friend, Atticus, was working vigorously on his recall.¹⁰² Cicero's letters attest that his restoration to Rome gradually became one of Atticus' main concerns. On 5 October 58 BCE, he expresses his gratitude to Atticus for prioritising his recall over Atticus' own many pressing matters, including the management of the large inheritance that he had received (Cic. *Att.* 3.20.2).¹⁰³ Being fully aware of the importance of having as many allies as possible at such perilous times, Cicero asks Atticus to use his network of influential friends to effect his restoration (Cic. *Att.* 3.20.3; 3.23.1)¹⁰⁴ by writing letters to anyone who was willing to help end his calamity (Cic. *Att.* 3.15.8; 3.21). In addition to Atticus, his family became a pillar of the force behind his return to Rome. Terentia and Quintus unsurprisingly worked relentlessly and most passionately on his restoration,¹⁰⁵ which almost

⁹⁹ Cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.16; 3.19.2.

¹⁰⁰ He explicitly states this in his letter to Atticus from 15 September 58 BCE, by noting that he has remained in Thessalonica because he expects at least some results regarding his recall (Cic. *Att.* 3.19.1).

¹⁰¹ As Marsh 2014, 48, points out, already in June 58 BCE Cicero received support in the Senate, when the matter of his restoration was being discussed.

¹⁰² Cic. *Fam.* 5.4.1; *Att.* 3.8.3; 3.13.1; 3.14.1; 3.15.1; 3.15.4; 3.15.7; 3.18.1; 3.20.2–3; 3.21; 3.22.2–3; 3.23.1; 3.25.5. Along with Quintus he was tasked with protecting Cicero's wife and children (Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.10; *Att.* 3.6; 3.8.4; 3.13.2; 3.17.3; 3.19.3; 3.23.5; 3.27).

¹⁰³ It is worth noting that Cicero's letter reveals that Atticus himself had reassured Cicero that he was using all his resources to aid him, because Cicero's restoration had become his top priority (Cic. *Att.* 3.20.2).

¹⁰⁴ Fuhrmann 1992, 94, also stresses how influential Atticus was, despite his decision to refrain from seeking an active role in Roman politics.

¹⁰⁵ Cic. *QFr.* 1.3.5; *Fam.* 5.4.1; 14.3.3; 14.3.5; 14.4.3. Notably, as Hall 2009, 36, observes, Cicero wrote letters thanking each person who was helping with his recall and stressed that it was Terentia who had informed him of their generous support.

cost Quintus his life (Cic. *Sest.* 76; Plut. *Cic.* 33.3).¹⁰⁶ His son-in-law, Piso, also proved himself to be a reliable asset to him. His loyalty and his attempts to secure Cicero's recall are well attested in Cicero's letters from exile, as Cicero continuously expresses his fervent gratitude for Piso's public support as well as for the advice that he was providing him.¹⁰⁷ Apart from his loved ones, his correspondence indicates that his hopes rested primarily on the new magistrates (Cic. *Att.* 3.19.1). While he makes several general positive remarks about the new tribunes,¹⁰⁸ the consuls (Cic. *Att.* 3.24.1), the Senate (Cic. *Att.* 3.12.1), even the *boni* (Cic. *Att.* 3.25.5),¹⁰⁹ he singles out certain persons whom he deemed most devoted to his cause. In addition to the tribune, Sestius, who already in 58 BCE had drafted the bill for Cicero's recall and became one of Cicero's most ardent supporters,¹¹⁰ he mentions Curtius, Milo, Fadius, and Atilius (Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.3). He also appears to have been cautiously optimistic about the consuls of 57 BCE, Metellus and Lentulus,¹¹¹ who had expressed interest in aiding the efforts for his restoration. The last – and perhaps most important – step to ensure that he would be allowed to return to Rome was to receive permission by the triumvirate. Even though in a letter to Terentia from mid-November 58 BCE he reveals that he is afraid of Crassus, he seems more optimistic about Pompey and Caesar.¹¹² Despite his reservations about Pompey, after he abandoned Cicero for fear of jeopardising his alliance with Caesar and Crassus (Cic. *Att.* 10.4.3), he slowly began to indulge hope that Pompey would at least attempt to assist him. Apart from sending letters to Pompey himself (Cic. *Att.* 3.8.4; 3.9.3), he received several reports from Quintus and Atticus that Pompey has reassured them that he was willing to assist their efforts.¹¹³ In the end, Pompey played a key role in Cicero's official recall to Rome,¹¹⁴ for which Cicero expresses gratitude to him upon his return to Rome in his public speeches.¹¹⁵

106 It is worth stressing that Quintus' network also proved to be useful to Cicero for his recall. According to McDermott 1971, 706–707, Quintus was on much better terms than Cicero with Crassus and Calpidius, praetor of 57 BCE who supported his restoration.

107 Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.2; *Fam.* 14.1.4; 14.2.2; 14.3.3; 14.4.4; *Att.* 3.22.1. Gruen 1968, 162, underscores the role that Piso played in Cicero's restoration.

108 Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.3; 1.4.5; *Fam.* 14.1.2; 14.2.2; *Att.* 3.23.4.

109 As Epstein 1987, 9, points out, Cicero assigned blame also to the *boni* in his works after his return, especially for not preventing his banishment and for taking a soft stance towards Clodius.

110 Cic. *QFr.* 1.4.2; 1.4.3; 1.4.5; *Att.* 3.19.2; 3.20.3; 3.23.4.

111 Cic. *Fam.* 5.4.1; 14.1.2; *Att.* 3.22.2–3; 3.23.1.

112 Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.2; cf. Cic. *Att.* 3.18.1.

113 Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.2; *Att.* 3.15.1; 3.22.2; 3.23.1.

114 As Gruen 1969, 79, observes, despite the fact that Pompey managed to secure Cicero's restoration by working with the tribunes, Milo and Sestius, he only embraced Cicero's cause when it was safe for himself to do so. His inability to deal with Clodius sooner thus became a grave embarrass-

Conclusion

Cicero's exile proved to be a reverberating disaster and, in many respects, unlike anything he had faced hitherto. Greece, and especially Thessalonica, became a safe haven for him, though not without its challenges. While staying in Plancius' property in Thessalonica, he was sufficiently safe from his many enemies, but he also reports that he refrained from associating with the locals, as he preferred isolation. The frequent use of the language of emotions during his stay in Thessalonica indicates an intention to appeal to his correspondents' pity for him and thus to urge them implicitly to work more intensely on his restoration to Rome. Atticus, who seems to have been able to write most frankly to him, disagreed with the attitude that his friend was displaying and vehemently urged him to endure his calamity with more fortitude. Because Cicero did not simply inform Terentia, Quintus, and Atticus that during his banishment he was experiencing sorrow, but rather that he had no desire to continue living, his loved ones were alarmed and wanted to ensure that he would have ample reason to cling on to life. Following his remarks, it would appear that his exile had deprived him of everything that he had, including his sense of identity, since he was unable to enjoy the life that he had experienced in all of his years in Rome. As a result, his time away from Rome became synonymous with death. His letters also suggest that, despite his overt pessimism and his comments on death, he did cherish hopes that he would one day be officially recalled to Rome. Even though he misses no opportunity to insist to his correspondents that, unlike them, he sees no cogent reason to be hopeful, he repeatedly asks them to send him detailed, frequent, and accurate reports about the developments in Rome, he always treats each new place, in which he had to reside, as temporary and constantly discusses moving to a different location, he moves closer to Italy whenever there is positive development with Pompey, the tribunes, and the consuls, and when a bill of his restoration is being drafted, he is not content with simply returning to his country, but asks for his properties to be restored as well. Ultimately, even if on certain occasions when he was in Thessalonica, he was losing hope of returning to Rome, at no point of his exile did he have a valid reason to be completely hopeless.

ment for him. According to Tyrrell/Purser 1969, 31, it was Pompey's hatred for Clodius that prompted him to seek Cicero's recall. Nonetheless, as Marsh 1927, 33, points out, his return to Rome was perceived as a resounding success both for Pompey and the Senate.

115 Cic. *Red. sen.* 29–30; *Red. pop.* 16–17; *Dom.* 30; cf. Cic. *Fam.* 3.10.10.

