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THE *COMMENTARIOLUM PETITIONIS*
AS AN ATTACK ON ELECTION CAMPAIGNS*

I. *Thesis*

Although no consensus exists about the authorship and date of composition of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, scholars do agree that it provides reliable and valuable information about election campaigns in the Late Roman Republic. This information has most often been used as evidence for the view that the politics of the Roman Republic was a quest for success devoid of principle. The work foreshadows, as one of its three main points (2), a critical view of Roman politics, and at its climax openly espouses that view, describing Rome as:

... civitas ex nationum conventu constituta, in qua multae insidiae, multa fallacia, multa in omni genere vitia versantur, multorum adrogantia, multorum contumacia, multorum malevolentia, multorum superbia, multorum odium ac molestia perferenda est. Video esse magni consilii atque artis in tot hominum cuiusque modi vitiis tantisque versantem vitare offensionem, vitare fabulam, vitare insidias, esse unum hominum accomodatum ad tantam morum ac sermonum ac voluntatum varietatem... (54).

a community established from the congress of nations, in which many plots, many falsehoods, many faults of all kinds are involved, the haughtiness of many, the insolence of many, the ill will of many, the arrogance of many, the hatred and annoyances of many must be borne. I see that it is a matter of great wisdom and skill for someone operating amidst such great faults of so many men of every kind to avoid mishap, avoid gossip, avoid a plot, and to be the one man suited to such great variety of character and talk and desires...

What has seemed most striking about this work is not so much any particular fact or characteristic of Roman politics that it attributes to Roman election cam-

* I am grateful to the University of Illinois at Chicago for granting me sabbatical leave during the Spring Semester of 2005 to work on this project. I wish to thank the Faculty of Classics of Cambridge University for generously permitting me to use its facilities in the spring of 2005. I particularly wish to thank the staff of the Classical Faculty Library for their assistance. I greatly benefited from comments on a draft of this article provided to me by Cynthia Damon of the University of Pennsylvania, John T. Ramsey of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and W. Jeffrey Tatum of the University of Sydney. Robert A. Kaster of Princeton University also provided me with very helpful advice. The usual disclaimer that such generous colleagues should not be held responsible for the faults of a publication must be especially stressed in this case, since, to a greater or lesser extent, these all expressed reservations about the thesis and arguments contained in this article. I have also benefited from comments made when I presented papers on this subject to the Faculty of Classics at Cambridge (May 2005), the American Philological Association (January 2006), and the Department of History (October 2005) and the Department of Classics and Mediterranean Studies (February 2006) of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Finally, I am grateful to Brian Keeling for his editorial assistance.

paign tactics, but rather the frankness with which it recommends this unprincipled behavior.

It is the thesis of this article, however, that the primary purpose of the work was not to provide an objective description of campaign tactics for the use of a candidate, but rather, in a tongue-in-cheek manner, to poke fun at the elections of the Roman Republic, using Marcus Cicero as a cautionary example of the bad things that a politician would do to get elected. In other words, the implication that Cicero was the one man suited to operate within the Roman state is no compliment. I hope to show that the advice given by its author to, as Wiseman summarizes it, «offend nobody, make contacts everywhere, flatter, oblige, equivocate»¹, must have struck almost all Roman readers as dishonest and distasteful, and their natural reaction would have been to think that the election campaigns described by him were, or had been, a bad thing. Therefore, historians should approach the work with the same caution they would bring to any decidedly negative source, whether an oratorical attack like Marcus Cicero's *Verrines* or *Philippics*, or a witty spoof such as Seneca the Younger's *Apocolocyntosis*, especially on matters directly related to the work's central message, as opposed to tangential details included along the way. It should be stressed that this article makes no attempt to describe the true nature of Roman Republican politics. It does maintain, however, that historians who wish to do so should not rely on the *Commentariolum Petitionis* to support their point of view.

That the *Commentariolum Petitionis* was written tongue-in-cheek is plausible not because of any 'smoking gun' passage proving the work's ironic nature, but because there is considerable evidence to support that thesis and none to refute it. By contrast, each of the two views of this treatise that have been competing with each other for well over a century faces considerable difficulties that have prevented the development of any consensus. The two camps in the debate over the work's authorship and date – those who claim that Quintus Cicero wrote the *Commentariolum Petitionis* in order to provide practical advice to his brother Marcus, and those who claim that someone else wrote the work as a way of expressing what Quintus might have written to his brother – fail to provide an interpretation of the work that satisfies either the other side or, in my view, a disinterested critic. Those who believe the work was written by Quintus or at least by a contemporary cannot point to the communication of useful advice, and the skeptics cannot explain why anyone would think that this work would enhance the author's reputation as a writer or scholar. I hope to show that, when we read the *Commentariolum Petitionis* as an ironic attack on popular elections, these problems disappear, and it can be read as a rather clever exposé of how candidates pander to the electorate and the faults

¹ T.P. Wiseman, *New Men in the Roman Senate, 139 B.C. - A.D. 14*, Oxford 1971, p. 135.

that such conduct engenders. Yet, while I am not assuming the burden of absolute proof, my hypothesis does not admit of compromise, because if the work is tongue-in-cheek, it is so from beginning to end; it cannot fluctuate between serious advice and ironic jokes about how to run an electoral campaign. The hypothesis either is plausible in relation to the whole work or should be dismissed.

II. *Authorship and date:*
the standard debate and hidden consensus

The authorship and the date of composition of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, the «Brief Handbook on Campaigns», has been debated for well over a century since Eussner's attack on its authenticity in 1872². The essay's dramatic date is 64 B.C., when Marcus Cicero was planning to run for the consulate of 63, and the supposed author is his brother Quintus Cicero³. But no consensus has emerged as to either the actual date of composition or the identity of the author. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what evidence can resolve this controversy, because the same evidence that supports authenticity for the believers raises doubts in the minds of the skeptics. Many find it hard to believe that Quintus, perhaps four years Marcus' junior, and definitely four years behind him in the *cursus honorum*, would have presumed to advise his brother on a consular campaign; however, supporters of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*' authenticity can rejoin that we cannot reject the possibility that the less-experienced brother would send advice to the more-experienced brother by pointing to a letter sent by Marcus to Quintus advising him about provincial governance at a time (60 B.C. or the beginning of 59) when Quintus had two years of experience as a governor and Marcus had none (*ad Q. fr.* 1.1.18)⁴.

² A. Eussner, *Commentariolum Petitionis exanimavit et ex Buecheri recensione passim emendatum edidit Adam Eussner*, Würzburg 1872. G.L. Hendrickson, *On the Authenticity of the Commentariolum Petitionis of Quintus Cicero*, «A.J.Ph.» 13 (1892), pp. 200-212, became the standard attack on the authenticity of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*.

³ To avoid confusion I will refer to the younger brother as «Quintus», the older brother as «Marcus» or «Marcus Cicero», and the author of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* as «Auctor». By the last appellation I do not mean to imply any conclusion about whether Auctor is or is not the same person as «Quintus». I will refer to Auctor as masculine for the sake of simplicity, not because I have any particular reason to assume that Auctor was a man.

⁴ Believers in Quintus' authorship see this letter as a kind of recompense from Marcus to his brother for the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, and interpret the words *quod si ut amplissimum nomen consequeremur praeter ceteros adiuvisti* (Cic. *ad Q. fr.* 1.1.43: «if you are the one who helped us above all the rest to acquire such a great name») as a probable reference to the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (R. Tyrrell - L. Purser [eds.], *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero Arranged according to its Chronological Order* I, with a Revision of the Text, a Commentary, and Introductory Essays, London 1904³, p. 275), whereas skeptics argue that this letter explains why Auctor may have thought of making Quintus the dramatic author of the letter, interpret the clause

Historical details included in the text of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* indicate to believers that the author was very well informed; to the skeptics they show that he was copying from earlier works, some of which survive. Close parallels between the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and other works, most importantly Cicero's *In Toga Candida*, which he delivered in 64 after the dramatic date of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, persuade the skeptics that the author was borrowing from the candidate's speech, but are explained by believers as adaptations from the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and thus an acknowledgment by Marcus of his brother's help. Skeptics say that the quality of the writing in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is inferior to that in the four extant letters of Quintus preserved in *Epistulae ad Familiares* (16.8, 16, 26, and 27, dating from 53 to 44 B.C.), but such a judgment is necessarily subjective, and in any case Quintus may have been a better correspondent than essayist. Some modern scholars think that his advice is inept, but others find it shrewd, and in any case ineptitude is no disproof of historicity. The skeptics believe that the work contained such damaging passages that, if it had been not only written but published in 64, it would have torpedoed Marcus' chances of election to the consulate, but believers can defend their position by claiming that publication must have followed the election, especially since the author implies that publication will be delayed (58).

Efforts by skeptics to find an anachronism that would decisively prove that the work could not have been written in 64 B.C. have failed to persuade the believers. A verbal usage that became common in the imperial period but is otherwise unattested in the republican period could nevertheless have been one that became more popular and frequent with time – or, conceivably, could have been introduced by Quintus. Conversely, a stylistic feature that can be clearly dated to an earlier period could be copied and even overused in a later period to provide the work with a patina of age⁵. No historical detail in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* has been shown to have been unknowable at the supposed date of composition. In response to the argument that Asconius (88C) places the trial of Gallius after the election in 64, whereas the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (19) implies a date before the election, Ramsey has shown that the disputed passage can be interpreted to mean that Cicero accepted the case of Gallius before the campaign, although he defended him only after the election⁶. Skeptics claim that Quintus could not have described his brother at this point as *qui dignus habetur patronus consularium* (2: «someone worthy to

as being a general reference to Quintus' involvement in Marcus' career, and use Marcus' silence in this letter about the *Commentariolum Petitionis* as an argument against authenticity (D.R. Shackleton Bailey [ed.]: Cicero, *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem et M. Brutum*, Cambridge 1980, pp. 147, 158).

⁵ Thus R. Syme, *Sallust*, Berkeley 1964, pp. 322 f. argues that the author of the *Epistulae ad Caesarem* imitates Sallustian style to a degree and in a way that show that he cannot be Sallust.

⁶ J.T. Ramsey, *A Reconstruction of Q. Gallius' Trial for Ambitus: One Less Reason for Doubting the Authenticity of the Commentariolum Petitionis*, «Historia» 29 (1980), pp. 406-408.

defend ex-consuls») because in fact Marcus had not yet defended one ex-consul, much less two or more, but believers retort that Cicero might have already accepted the case of C. Piso (*cos.* 67), which took place in 63⁷. Moreover, we might simply be ignorant of an earlier defense by Cicero of an ex-consul⁸. Skeptics claim that the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is an example of *prosopopeia*, «invented speeches in someone else's character» (Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.25), but believers point out that it is not a speech⁹. The intractable nature of the controversy bears out Lintott's words, «Examination of any suspected forgery, where there is no physical evidence, is not merely susceptible to, but in a sense dependent on, a *petitio principii*. Extenuation comes easily to those who feel in their hearts that a document is sound, while the suspicious can always find material to fuel their suspicions»¹⁰. The arguments and counter-arguments seem to justify Dugan's verdict of *non liquet*: «This problem seems insoluble»¹¹.

Yet in spite of these disagreements, the believers and the skeptics have shared the assumption that the work presents an attempt – whether by Quintus, or by a contemporary, or by a later writer – to provide a campaign strategy that was, or could have been, implemented in 64, or at least around that time, and that in so doing Auctor provides a useful description of election campaign practices in the Late Republic: «either genuine or a revealingly realistic fabrication»¹². To be sure, the two sides may have different ideas about Auctor's purpose in composing this work, as those who believe that he was contemporary with the events described by him would be inclined to believe that the work is designed to convey useful advice, whereas those who support a much later date of composition would posit a less practical purpose, such as a display of erudition or wit or both. But both sides have implicitly agreed that the author, as a well-informed contemporary observer or as a later historical scholar, is trying to present an objective view of a consular election campaign in 64 B.C., with practical recommendations for electoral success, and that therefore the work is a reliable historical source.

Because it is generally assumed that the *Commentariolum Petitionis* presents a

⁷ M.C. Alexander, *Trials in the Late Roman Republic, 149 BC to 50 BC* (Phoenix Supplementary Volume 26), Toronto 1990, nr. 225.

⁸ R.G.M. Nisbet, *The Commentariolum Petitionis: Some Arguments against Authenticity*, «J.R.S.» 51 (1961), pp. 84 f., arguing the skeptical point of view.

⁹ I am grateful to W. Jeffrey Tatum for allowing me to read a draft of the first chapter of his commentary on the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. This chapter discusses the genre problems relating to this work, and sees it as conforming to the traditions of the didactic epistle.

¹⁰ A. Lintott, *Acta Antiquissima: a Week in the History of the Roman Republic*, «P.B.S.R.» 54 (1986), p. 225.

¹¹ J. Dugan, *Making a New Man: Ciceronian Self-Fashioning in the Rhetorical Works*, Oxford (2005), p. 1 nt. 1.

¹² Dugan, *Making a New Man* cit., p. 1.

serious analysis of Republican elections, the dominant view today is that, whoever wrote it, and whenever it was written, it should be accepted as a well-informed source for Republican politics. Therefore, in effect, the authenticity question is not particularly important to the historian. In Syme's words, «The *Commentariolum* is secure – or at least the value of this admirable and contemporary treatise on electioneering would not decline even if some unpredictable chance revealed that it was not written by Quintus Cicero, but, let it be supposed, by Atticus»¹³. Shackleton Bailey writes, «If the treatise is indeed apocryphal, it is on a very different level from the other 'forgeries' in this volume»¹⁴. Jakobson writes of the work, «... it is widely accepted – even by those who doubt its authenticity – that the testimony of this source is of great value since its author displays an excellent knowledge of the political conditions of the 'age of Cicero'»¹⁵. Tatum has made the same point: «The attribution of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* to Quintus Cicero, though likely enough, is irrelevant to the uses to which the text will be put in this chapter. That the document reflects late Republican practice, on the other hand, is taken for granted»¹⁶. Griffin, who thinks it unlikely that the work was written by Quintus or a contemporary, places some credence in its historical value, albeit cautiously¹⁷. A recent indication that the work is accepted generally as historically accurate is an aside by Burton in his discussion of *amicitia* in Plautus, wherein he accepts the testimony of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* on friendship (16) even though it contradicts his general understanding of the Roman concept: «... one source indicates that

¹³ R. Syme, «J.R.S.» 37 (1947), p. 200 (= E. Badian - A.R. Birley [eds.], *Roman Papers* I, Oxford 1979, p. 200), review of E.H. Clift, *Latin Pseudepigrapha: A Study in Literary Attributions*, Baltimore 1945. Syme's attitude toward the *Commentariolum Petitionis* underwent some revision over the years. In *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, p. 11 nt. 5 he writes, «The manual on electioneering written by Q. Cicero (the *Commentariolum Petitionis*) reveals much of the truth about his candidature». But in a discussion of works attributed to Sallust, he writes, «... if it is fraudulent, its design is not at once obvious... Yet the *Commentariolum* turns out to be highly vulnerable... Something of a prepossession could subsist in favour of the *Commentariolum* (its matter is not contemptible). When was it written, however, and with what purpose? If not by Q. Cicero, and not contemporary either, it might belong to the Augustan age» (R. Syme, *Pseudo-Sallust*, «M.H.» 15 [1958], pp. 47 s. [= *Roman Papers* cit. VI, p. 57]).

¹⁴ D.R. Shackleton Bailey (ed.): Cicero, *Letters to Quintus and Brutus, Letter Fragments, Letter to Octavian, Invectives, Handbook of Electioneering*, Cambridge MA 2002, p. 395. The other works to which he refers are Ps. Cic. *Epistula ad Octavianum*, Ps. Sall. *In M. Tullium Ciceronem*, and Ps. Cic. *In Sallustium*.

¹⁵ A. Jakobson, *Elections and Electioneering in Rome: A Study in the Political System of the Late Republic* (Historia Einzelschriften 128), Stuttgart 1999, p. 24 nt. 6.

¹⁶ W.J. Tatum, *The Patrician Tribune: Publius Clodius Pulcher*, Chapel Hill 1999, p. 256 nt. 99. Tatum believes that Quintus was the likely author of the work (p. 148).

¹⁷ M.T. Griffin, s.v. *Tullius Cicero, Quintus*, in S. Hornblower - A. Spawforth (edd.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 1996³, p. 1564: «Though certainty is not possible..., a strong case can be made for believing that neither Quintus nor, indeed, a contemporary wrote the **Commentariolum Petitionis*, a long letter on Marcus' canvass for the consulship of 63. It none the less preserves some valuable information».

at certain times, such as during an election campaign, one can apply the term *amicus* more widely – presumably to mere acquaintances as well as intimates – for the sake of political advantage... This is not to say, however, that Roman *amicitia* lacked an affective dimension – quite the opposite, in fact»¹⁸. The following is a succinct summary of the current state of the authenticity question:

... only two positions on the authenticity question now appear to be seriously tenable: that it is indeed, as it purports to be, an essay in epistolary form to Marcus Cicero written by his brother in early 64 ostensibly in order to advise him on his candidacy (although perhaps actually intended to influence power-brokers); or that it may be a later fabrication by someone else, but one so well informed that it remains a first-rate source for late-Republican electoral politics¹⁹.

On the contrary, this article will argue that a third view of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is not only possible but much more probable than either of the other two – a view that negates the status of the work as a fundamental source for the nature of politics in the Roman Republic. I turn the *communis opinio* on its head, and argue that whether or not Quintus is the author of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, and whether it was written in the Late Republic or later, it should not be read as a reliable account of Roman election campaigns in the last decades of the Republic. I will make this case not by claiming that Auctor has committed various individual errors of historical fact, as Henderson and Nisbet, in particular, have claimed²⁰, but by attempting to show that Auctor is not trying to present an accurate analysis of election campaigns, but rather to poke fun at them. My argument, although it is not premised on any thesis about the authorship or date of the work, does lead to some conclusions, as by-products, as to whether Quintus wrote it, and when the work could have been written.

III. *Uses of the Commentariolum Petitionis by historians*

The *Commentariolum Petitionis* is ostensibly a prescriptive work; in it the author tells Marcus Cicero what he should do in order to achieve election to the consulate of 63 B.C. Yet the prescriptions contained in it are based on a description of Roman election campaigns, and therefore it is natural for historians to want to make use of that description, especially since the work claims to reveal not some

¹⁸ P.J. Burton, *Amicitia in Plautus: a Study of Roman Friendship Processes*, «A.J.Ph.» 125 (2004), p. 213.

¹⁹ R. Morstein-Marx, *Publicity, Popularity and Patronage in the Commentariolum Petitionis*, «Cl.Ant.» 17 (1998), p. 261.

²⁰ M.I. Henderson, *De commentariolo petitionis*, «J.R.S.» 40 (1950), pp. 8-21; Nisbet, *Commentariolum Petitionis* cit.

recondite complexities of running a campaign that are hidden from Marcus, but the basic facts of the political environment²¹.

Moreover, the author of the *Electioneering Handbook* presents his advice to Cicero not as a demystification of the secrets of Roman electoral success, but as a sketch of manifest reality-truths familiar also to Cicero himself. Quintus' task is simply to gather together the facts of his brother's circumstances so that they are visible at a glance; through this classification Cicero may gain mastery over his chaotic and boundless experience.

Thus, the *Commentariolum Petitionis* seems to be not just a useful historical source, but one that expresses fundamental and elementary truths, accepted by contemporaries as the facts of political life – just what a historian two thousand years later would hope to find as a starting point for understanding a foreign political system.

Not surprisingly, then, the acceptance of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* as a reliable historical source has had important implications for a current debate about the nature of Roman Republican politics. North has challenged what he calls the «frozen waste» theory, to which he ascribes four propositions: 1) Rome was controlled by a narrow hereditary oligarchy, 2) better-off voters controlled the assemblies, 3) the dominant families were linked in stable alliances, and 4) acts of legislation and elections were determined by rival groups attempting to manipulate the assemblies, «the actual issues at stake or the personalities and talents of the rival candidates having little if anything to do with the outcome». As a result of this and other revisionist writings, the nature of Roman Republican politics has come under scrutiny²². The *Commentariolum Petitionis* provided important support for the very personal and policy-less view of Roman politics now under attack²³. Three obvious examples of this cynical (using the word in a non-philosophical sense) attitude toward politics are: 1) the advice to Marcus to tell the optimates that he has always been on their side and that if he ever appeared to say anything *popularis* («appealing to the people») in nature, it was only to get support from Pompey (5), while at the

²¹ Dugan, *Making a New Man* cit., p. 2. Dugan cites the first section of the treatise, ... *ut ea quae in re dispersa atque infinita videntur esse ratione et distributione sub uno aspectu ponerentur*, «... so those things that seem to you in reality scattered and boundless are placed in one view by logic and classification».

²² J.A. North, *Democratic Politics in Republican Rome*, «Past & Present» 126 (1990), pp. 6-7. His article presents the debate in terms understandable to historians in general. The key challenges to the 'frozen waste' theory have been Brunt's demonstration that Roman politics cannot be best understood as structured around *clientela*, «clientship,» thus removing a key underpinning to a purely personal view of Roman politics (P.A. Brunt, *The Fall of the Roman Republic and Related Essays*, Oxford 1988, pp. 382-442), and Millar's contention that voters in Roman assemblies made independent decisions as to how they were going to vote (F. Millar, *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Roman Republic* [Jerome Lectures 22], Ann Arbor 1998).

²³ L.A. Burckhardt, *The Political Elite of the Roman Republic: Comments on Recent Discussion of the Concepts Nobilitas and Homo Novus*, «Historia» 39 (1990), p. 94, defends the traditional view of personal politics on the basis of the *Commentariolum Petitionis's* assumption that *nobiles* with all their connections possess a great advantage over the *novus homo*.

same time ingratiating himself with the people (41), and similar advice to present himself to senators, to *equites* and other rich men, and to the masses as their reliable supporter (53); 2) the assertion that a good candidate must make commitments that he will probably not keep (47); and 3) the depiction of Rome as a den of intrigue and vice (54). Taylor, in her *Party Politics*, which in spite of its readable nature provides the most thorough presentation of what North would later call the «frozen waste» theory, cites the *Commentariolum Petitionis* frequently on specifics, such as *sodalitates* (p. 36), *clientes* (p. 43), tribes (p. 53), municipalities (pp. 58-60), friends (pp. 64-65), and oratory (p. 116), and in general writes, «The handbook of electioneering prepared by Quintus Cicero when Marcus was a candidate for the consulship indicates how completely personal the whole system was»²⁴. Or in Morstein-Marx's words²⁵:

The *Commentariolum Petitionis* has long been a – perhaps *the* – central text for the theory that Republican politics were determined by private social relations, in particular by personal patronage, which in its manifold forms has been held to have «permeated» the entire population...

So this view of Roman politics relies in part on the acceptance of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* as a useful historical source. But, as Morstein-Marx also points out, those who seek to overturn the «frozen waste» theory in favor of one that discounts the influence of patronage on elections also turn to the *Commentariolum Petitionis* for support. Rouland argues from its mention of *popularis voluntas* (16) that *clientela* was in decline; Paterson cites it nine times in a discussion in which he argues that patronage could never have been adequate to control enough voters to win an election, and that other political resources needed to be tapped; Yakobson cites it (34-35) to argue that *salutatores* were not dependent on the candidate in any way but were offering a voluntary *beneficium* to him; and Brunt accepts its testimony on Cicero's campaign strategy²⁶.

The body of this article will first discuss three specific topics engaged by the *Commentariolum Petitionis* that in my view provide clues to the work's mocking tone: *nomenclatores*, the political exploitation of *amicitia*, and C. Aurelius Cotta (*cos.* 75). Second, I will locate the *Commentariolum Petitionis* within two negative

²⁴ L.R. Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar* (Sather Classical Lectures 22), Berkeley 1949, p. 8. In somewhat the same vein, and based explicitly on the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, is Tatum's very useful description of Roman election campaigns (Tatum, *Patrician Tribune* cit., pp. 22-30).

²⁵ Morstein-Marx, *Publicity* cit., p. 259.

²⁶ Morstein-Marx, *Publicity* cit., p. 260; N. Rouland, *Pouvoir politique et dépendance personnelle dans l'Antiquité romaine: Genèse et rôle des rapports de clientèle* (Collection Latomus 166), Bruxelles 1979, pp. 434, 482; J. Paterson, *Politics in the Late Republic*, in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Roman Political Life, 90 B.C. - A.D. 69* (Exeter Studies in History), Exeter 1985, pp. 27-43; Yakobson, *Elections and Electioneering* cit., pp. 71-74; and Brunt, *Fall* cit., pp. 171, 428 f.

traditions, the first a tradition on the subject of Republican elections, and the second a strain of ancient historiography on the subject of Cicero, dating to the period just before the end of the Republic and continuing thereafter. These first two sections present the argument for the article's thesis, and show how historians should, and should not, exploit this source. Third, I will answer the objection that the work presents a rich trove of information about both individuals and electoral institutions, information that only a contemporary author could have known. Fourth, I will show that other ancient works provide parallels to various characteristics that I find in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. Fifth, I will present my understanding of the general nature of the work. Finally, I will investigate what implications, if any, this thesis has for the traditional questions about authorship and date. However, for the purposes of this article these two issues, which constitute the basis of the authenticity debate, are ancillary to the question of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*' historical reliability.

IV. *Three signs of mockery*

When we read a work that we suspect is not really saying what on the surface it claims to be saying, we look for statements in it that seem exaggerated or «over the top». The irony is not always obvious to all, as is shown by the failure of some eighteenth century contemporaries of Defoe and Swift to recognize that Defoe in his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) and Swift in his *Modest Proposal* (1729) were not really recommending, respectively, the persecution of dissenters (of whom Defoe was one) and the sale of Irish babies for consumption as meat. We can discern the discontinuity between superficial meaning and real message by noticing statements that cannot be serious, for example, Swift's recommendations as to the many ways that the flesh of children can be satisfactorily prepared for the table (9), or his legal pseudo-argument that such food will be proper for landlords, «who, as they have already devoured most of the Parents, seem to have the best Title to the Children» (12)²⁷. I maintain that the reader of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* can spot similar hints that the work is not to be taken at face value, and that it in fact mocks the very advice that it claims to give.

A. *Nomenclatores*

There are three passages in this short work (a little over twenty pages in the OCT) where Auctor emphasizes the importance of knowing voters' names:

²⁷ Quoted by W. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago 1974, p. 108.

1) *Nam qui incipiat Antonius homines adiungere atque invitare ad amicitiam quos per se suo nomine appellare non possit? Mihi quidem nihil stultius videtur quam existimare esse eum studiosum tui quem non noris* (28).

For how would Antonius begin to join to himself and invite to friendship people whom he cannot address by name on his own? Nothing seems sillier to me than to think that someone is your supporter whom you do not know.

2) *Homines municipales ac rustici, si nomine nobis noti sunt, in amicitia se esse arbitrantur... Hos ceteri et maxime tui competitores ne norunt quidem, tu et nosti et facile cognosces, sine quo amicitia esse non potest. Neque id tamen satis est, tametsi magnum est, si non sequitur spes utilitatis atque amicitiae, ne nomenclator solum sed amicus etiam bonus esse videare* (31-32).

The men of the towns and the country, if they are known to us by name, think themselves to be our friends... The others and especially your rivals do not even know these people, but you both know them and will easily recognize them, and that is essential for friendship. However, this is not enough, although it is important, if the expectation of benefit and friendship does not follow, in order that you seem to be not only a name-attendant but also a good friend²⁸.

3) *Quoniam de amicitia constituendis satis dictum est, dicendum est de illa altera parte petitionis quae in populari ratione versatur. Ea desiderat nomenclationem, blanditiam, assiduitatem, benignitatem, rumorem, specie in re publica. Primum id quod facis, ut homines noris, significa ut appareat, et auge ut cottidie melius fiat; nihil tam populare neque tam gratum videtur* (41-42).

Since enough has been said about establishing friendships, I should now speak about the other part of the campaign, which is involved in dealing with the People. It requires knowing names, a winning way, constant attendance, liberality, reputation, and a good appearance in public matters. First, make it apparent that you recognize men, and add to this so that it becomes better every day; nothing seems to me so appealing to the People and so pleasing.

Although it might seem a platitude to say that it is useful for the politician to know people by name, the use of the words *nomenclator* (or *nomenculator*, Greek *onomatologos*) and *nomenclatio* indicates the possibility of a negative connotation that requires closer investigation.

The *nomenclator* was a servant, generally a slave or freedman, whose function was to whisper into the ear of his master or mistress the names of those whom it would be appropriate for him or her to be able to recognize and know by name²⁹.

²⁸ This translation treats the last clause (*ne nomenclator... videare*) as an adverbial purpose clause, following upon the idea that hope of advantage and friendship follows upon recognition, that is, that you provide this hope, in order to be seen not just as a *nomenclator* but also as a good friend.

²⁹ S.R. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of Occupational Inscriptions* (Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture 11), Normal OK 1992, pp. 100, 147, and 180 translates the term as «announcer» or «name teller». J. Kolendo, *Nomenclator, «memoria» del suo padrone o del suo patrono: Studio storico ed epigrafico* (Studi a cura del Dipartimento di storia antica dell'Università di Bologna 10), Faenza 1989 is a full-length study of the *nomenclator*.

This servant could also provide a thumbnail account of the political resources of each person as he was met (Hor. *Epist.* 1.6.50). Since the term appears as an identifying characteristic in inscriptions, we can presume that some *nomenclatores* were not ashamed of their specialty³⁰. Marcus Cicero apparently used one, for he writes Atticus that, when he returned to Rome in 57 B.C., everyone known to his *nomenclator* came out to meet him (Cic. *Att.* 4.1.5). But the literature of the ruling classes often reflects anxiety about the role of these servants. Pliny the Elder, in denouncing the medical profession, holds Romans responsible for their ailments and chides them for their dependence on slaves, specifically litter-bearers and *nomenclatores* (Plin. *Nat.* 29.19):

Alienis pedibus ambulamus, alienis oculis agnoscimus, aliena memoria salutamus, aliena et vivimus opera, perierunt rerum naturae pretia et vitae argumenta.

We walk with others' feet, we recognize people with others' eyes, we make greetings with others' memories, and live by others' efforts, and the valuable things of nature and the reasons for life have been lost³¹.

Perhaps because Romans felt uneasy about using *nomenclatores*, they often criticized them for incompetence, specifically for making up names of people whom they failed to recognize (Sen. *Benef.* 1.3.10; *Epist.* 27.5; Macr. *Sat.* 2.4.15; *Hist. Aug. Hadr.* 20.9). *Nomenclatores* could be like haughty butlers (*nomenclatoris superbiam*, Sen. *Dial.* 2.14.1) or bouncers (Sen. *Dial.* 9.12.6), and could be bribed to admit the unworthy (Amm. 14.6.15). Because they were able to recognize many different people, they were sometimes sent to summon someone for their master or mistress, as one was sent by the orator Afer to chide an ungrateful client (Quint. *Inst.* 6.3.93) or by Caligula to attract customers to his brothel (Suet. *Cal.* 41.1). They could also act as informers or spies; Sulla used one to find rich people to proscribe (Val. Max. 9.2.1). Claudius Maximus, the proconsul of Africa in A.D. 158/59, had *nomenclatores* as agents who could be expected to know who appeared in public (Apul. *Apol.* 59.2). Those whose names were recited by the *nomenclator* viewed the practice no less unfavorably, to judge by Seneca, who portrays a scene in which the underling who has awoken early to salute a powerful man watches the *nomenclator* whisper his name over and over before the object of his attention manages to repeat it (*Dial.* 10.14.4). Most of the ancient sources present a negative view of *nomenclatores*. It may well be that these varied examples convey not so much his-

³⁰ There are forty-one entries under *nomenclator* or variations of the term in Jory and Moore's *CIL* index of inscriptions found at Rome (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Inscriptiones Urbis Romae Latinae* VI, pt. 7, fasc. 4, Berlin 1975, edd. E.J. Jory and D.W. Moore, p. 4200).

³¹ Compare Plin. *Nat.* 33.26, in which Pliny laments the fact that, unlike in more virtuous former times, Roman households contain so many slaves that the master requires the services of a *nomenclator* just to recognize individual slaves.

torical reality as social commonplaces, but it is the stereotypical images of the *nomenclator* that can help us understand the connotations of that image in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*.

The business of knowing voters' names reoccurs in later Latin literature. It was a commonplace in a *gratiarum actio* to an emperor for the appointed person to thank the emperor for allowing him to achieve office without the humiliation of submitting to the indignities of an election³². In this context flattery, bribery, and the business of knowing voters' names seem to be standard examples of such indignities. In 362 A.D. Claudius Mamertinus, in his thanks to the emperor Julian for the consulate, used language that recalls themes from the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (*Paneg.* 3.16.1), specifically the need to know voters' names:

Quis ignorat tum quoque, cum honores populi Romani suffragiis mandabantur, multos fuisse candidatorum labores? Ediscenda omnium nomina, tributim homines atque etiam singuli salutandi, prensandae obviatorum manus, omnibus adridendum, non solum cum infimis sed etiam cum ignotis familiaritatis imago simulanda, multaque alia propter honorem agenda quae alias virum honore dignum facere non deceret.

Who does not know that then too, when offices used to be entrusted to the votes of the Roman people, the candidates' labors were many? One had to memorize everyone's names, one had to greet men by tribe and even individually, one had to shake the hands of those one met, one had to smile at everyone, one had to feign the pretense of friendship not only with the lowly but even with total strangers, one had to do many other things on account of the office which otherwise it was not fitting for a man worthy of office to do³³.

Of this passage, Nixon and Rodgers observantly note, «The themes are from Q. Cicero (or whoever wrote it) *Comm. Pet.* 7.25; 8.30-31; 11.41. Condemning Republican elections is a popular late fourth-century theme in panegyric; cf. 19 below; Symmachus *Or.* 1.9; 3.4; 4.7; Auson. *Grat. act.* 3.13; 9.44»³⁴. Plausible though it is that the Mamertinus passage derives directly from the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, however, I believe that at this point we must keep open the alternative possibility that the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and it derive collaterally from some other source (below, nt. 124). The author goes on to cite a story, also told by Marcus Cicero in the *De Oratore* (1.112; see below, Section V.A), about how L. Licinius Crassus (*cos.* 95) did not want his father-in-law Q. Mucius Scaevola to see him campaign. And shortly thereafter (*Paneg.* 3.19.1-2) the author summarizes some

³² On the theme of the humiliation involved in campaigning, see J. Linderski, *Buying the Vote: Electoral Corruption in the Late Republic*, «Anc. W.» 11 (1985), pp. 87 f. (= J. Linderski, *Roman Questions: Selected Papers*, Stuttgart 1995, nr. 9, p. 107).

³³ Translation by C.E.V. Nixon - B.S. Rodgers (edd.), *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors. The Panegyrici Latini, Introduction, Translation, and Historical Commentary with the Latin Text of R.A.B. Myrns*, Berkeley 1994, p. 417.

³⁴ Nixon-Rodgers, *Praise* cit., p. 417 nt. 106.

main themes of the anti-electoral tradition – the corrupt practices and the power given to the inferior multitude to make bad choices:

An vero, si centuriatis comitiis consul creatus essem, gloriosius mihi universi populi suffragiis declaratus viderer? Minime, siquidem etiam illis priscis temporibus multorum ambitu fuit Campus infamis. Nota divisorum flagitia, notae loculorum praestigiae, tum operarum ad vim et seditionem manus emptae. Nec sane potest in confusa imperitorum multitudine quicquam esse perpensum. Nam cum boni rari sint, improborum vulgus immensum, in Campo autem numerus et turba praepolleat, sine dubio intellegitur eum suffragiis populi magistratum capere quem plures, id est quem peiores, probarunt; unde factum ut maiores nostri viderent Gabinius designatos et repulsos Catones.

Or indeed, had I been made consul at the *comitia centuriata*, would it seem more glorious to me that I had been elected by the votes of the whole people? Not at all, since even in those ancient times the Field of Mars was notorious for widespread corruption. The crimes of men who distributed bribes were well known, tricks with the ballot boxes were known as well, and then bands of thugs were hired for violence and sedition. And of course nothing can be examined carefully in a confused crowd of inexperienced men. Since good men are rare and the mass of bad men is immense, and in the Field of Mars, moreover, numbers and the multitude prevail, one cannot doubt that he who gained a magistracy by the people's votes was he whom the greater number, that is, he whom the worse men, approved; for which reason our ancestors saw men like Gabinius elected and Catos denied office³⁵.

This ridicule of Republican elections is imitated by two other authors, Ausonius and Symmachus³⁶. Ausonius, thanking the emperor Gratian for appointing him to a consulate in 379 A.D., makes fun of many practices connected with elections and campaigns, and refers to one of these ridiculous practices when he says that he «did not when confused by the crowd either fail to address my friends by name in response to their greetings, or call them the wrong name» (*nec salutantium confusus occursum aut sua amicis nomina non reddiderim, aut aliena imposuerim*, Auson. *Grat. act.* 3.13³⁷; see also 9.44). Green rightly notes some humor in Ausonius' treatment of the theme of the *nomenclator*, «on which A.'s joke is no doubt an old one», citing some of the passages discussed above³⁸. The theme of the indignity

³⁵ Translation by Nixon-Rodgers, *Praise* cit., pp. 419 f.

³⁶ Nixon-Rodgers, *Praise* cit., p. 389 nt. 15.

³⁷ On this passage see L.R. Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the Dictatorship of Caesar* (Jerome Lectures 8), Ann Arbor 1966, p. 55.

³⁸ R.P.H. Green (ed.), *The Works of Ausonius*, edited with Introduction and Commentary, Oxford 1991, p. 542. Pliny the Younger in his *Panegyric* delivered to the emperor Trajan in 100 A.D. does not dwell at length on the bad features of popular elections nor specifically on the theme of knowing names. However, he does compliment Trajan on his patience in sitting through ritual that survived from the Republic (63.2). He is more eager to praise the emperor for observing old-fashioned ceremony than to criticize the old-fashioned abuses connected with that ceremony (77.1; 92.3), but the ridicule for elections of old is present, as well as praise for the current emperor.

of elections is also present in Symmachus *Or.* 1.9 (368/369 A.D.). Clearly orators of the fourth century A.D. did not try to disguise the end of popular elections, but rather celebrated it.

Criticism of the use of *nomenclatores* in elections was not an invention of the imperial era. Plutarch writes that Cato the Younger, when he ran (in 68 B.C.) for the military tribunate of 67, was the only candidate who obeyed a law that forbade use of *nomenclatores* in canvassing (Plu. *Cat. mi.* 8). This episode may lie behind a passage in Marcus Cicero's defense of Murena (77, 63 B.C.), in which he teases Cato, a prosecutor in this case, for his use of *nomenclatores*. The well-known verbal similarities between the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and the *pro Murena*³⁹ suggest that, if the *Commentariolum Petitionis* was written after the *pro Murena*, its author was familiar with the speech.

The references to *nomenclatores* in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and the need for candidates to address large numbers of voters by name raise at least the possibility that campaigning for office was seen as an unsavory activity. In reality, Marcus Cicero may have made less use of *nomenclatores* than did most politicians, as he is said by Plutarch to have possessed an exceptional memory not only for the names of notable individuals, but also for their residence in Rome, their country villas, their friends, and their neighbors (Plu. *Cic.* 7.2). It is not surprising that Rome's leading orator had such powers of memory, since extemporaneous speaking was essential to the art of oratory⁴⁰. Even though Cicero himself may have been better able than most to function as his own *nomenclator* (*Comm. Pet.* 32), and thus to avoid the opprobrium described by Pliny the Elder of needing the services of a slave, the references to *nomenclatores* in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* and the application of the term to Cicero himself carry unflattering associations. They also raise the issue of false pretenses to friendship, the second key to gauging the tone of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*.

The reliance on *nomenclatores* is but one example of a larger vice exhibited by candidates during election campaigns that is exposed by the *Commentariolum Petitionis* – namely, *simulare*, or feigning the existence of something that is not there. The word is found four times in this work. Although Marcus is warned to distinguish genuine friends from counterfeits – those who, reacting to his virtue, feign friendship but in fact simply envy him (39) –, he is also advised to let *simulatio* overcome *natura* for the few months of the campaign (1), a sentiment repeated later with the advice that Marcus should pretend to possess what he does not possess by nature (42). Yet pretense (*simulare*) is condemned elsewhere by Marcus as a vice:

³⁹ S.S. Barnhill, *The Authenticity of the Commentariolum Petitionis*, unpublished M.A. dissertation, Emory University, Atlanta 1972, pp. 22-44 lists nineteen such parallels. This dissertation on the authenticity of the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is comprehensive, thoughtful, and overall highly useful.

⁴⁰ M.C. Alexander, *The Case for the Prosecution in the Ciceronian Era*, Ann Arbor 2002, pp. 22 f.

Ergo et Pythius et omnes aliud agentes, aliud simulantes perfidi, improbi, malitiosi (Cic. *Off.* 3.60).

Therefore both Pythius and all those who do one thing, and pretend another, are untrustworthy, shameless, and wicked.

He contrasts permanent glory with the evanescent credit to be gained by *simulatione et inani ostentatione et fictor non modo sermone, sed etiam voltu* (*Off.* 2.43: «pretense and empty display and counterfeit speech and even counterfeit countenance»). Pretending to know the name of a voter when one does not is, by this standard, one manifestation of hollow character.

B. *Amicitia*

Auctor divides the main body of his text into two parts, *studia amicorum* («support of friends», 16-40) and *popularis voluntas* («good will of the People», 41-53). The discussion of *amicitia* is frank. Auctor starts by saying that the word *amicus* has wider application in a campaign than in ordinary life, because anyone who demonstrates support for you in any way can be considered a friend. He goes on to divide friends into three groups: 1) those who are real friends (*ex iustiore causa*, «from a more legitimate cause»), including kin, relatives by marriage, fellow club members, and any kind of connection, 2) others with some kind of connection, such as members of the same tribe, neighbors, clients, freedmen, and even slaves, and 3) famous men (even if their support for Marcus is not whole-hearted), such as magistrates, tribunes of the plebs, and men with influence in the centuries (16-19). Those whom Cicero has protected through his advocacy in the courts deserve special attention, and this is the time to call in a political favor in return (20). Auctor lays down another triad relating to friendship, namely, three things by which men are induced to provide political support: a good deed done in the past, the expectation of a good deed to be performed in the future, and a natural affinity with the candidate (21-24). A candidate is expected to violate the norms of good behavior in order to attract support (25). Auctor then goes on to list potential sources of support for Marcus: senators, knights, people of the city, freedmen, and Italians from outside Rome (30-31). Young men (*adulescentes*, roughly 17 to 30 years of age)⁴¹ deserve special attention (33). Auctor then divides Marcus' followers into another three groups: those who call at his house, those who escort him from his house, and those who stay with him (34-38). The first group has the weakest link to any candidate, and in fact may call at the house of more than one (35). Since most of these so-called friends are not in fact well known to the candidate, the can-

⁴¹ J.T. Ramsey: Cicero, *Philippics: I-II*, Cambridge 2003, p. 131, and T.G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History*, Baltimore 2003, p. 20.

didate must be cautious; *non temere credere* («don't trust rashly») must be the watchword (39).

Three specific passages raise the problem in interpretation as to whether Auctor is sending a signal that the recommendations being attributed to Quintus cannot be taken seriously, or seriously propounding a point of view that is obviously objectionable on the face of it.

Sed hoc nomen amicorum in petitione latius patet quam in cetera vita; quisquis est enim qui ostendat aliquid in te voluntatis, qui colat, qui domum ventitet, is in amicorum numero est habendus (16).

But this word «friend» extends more broadly in a campaign than in the rest of life; anyone who shows some goodwill toward you, who cultivates you, who keeps coming to your house should be considered to be numbered among your friends.

... nam in ceteris molestiis habet hoc tamen petitio commodi: potes honeste, quod in cetera vita non queas, quoscumque velis adiungere ad amicitiam, quibuscum si alio tempore agas ut te utantur, absurde facere videare, in petitione autem nisi id agas et cum multis et diligenter, nullus petitor esse videare (25).

... for among the other burdens a campaign brings with it this advantage: you can honorably join whomever you wish to yourself as a friend, which you cannot do in the rest of life, people with whom, if at another time you were to act so as to consort with them, you would seem to be acting ridiculously, but in a campaign, however, you seem to be no candidate if you do not do so, both with many and in a thorough way.

Qua re hoc quidem facile praeceptum est, ut quod facturum sis id significes te studiose ac libenter esse facturum; illud difficilius et magis ad tempus quam ad naturam accomodatum tuam, quod facere non possis, ut id aut incunde neges <aut etiam non neges>; quorum alterum est tamen boni viri, alterum boni petitoris (45).

Therefore, this is an easy rule, that what you are about to do, you show that you will do it eagerly and willingly; but this is more difficult and more suited to the occasion than to your nature, that what you cannot do, you either decline gracefully <or even do not say no>; the former is the course adopted by a good man, the latter by a good candidate.

A decision as to which reading is better must be based on a consideration of the whole work and details in it.

These three passages are not a collection of political platitudes. Rather, they express a point of view that most Romans would have found dubious and quite possibly repugnant, not because in reality politicians never acted in this manner, or because Romans were surprised to read that politicians acted in this manner, but because the recommendations violated accepted ethical beliefs, as the *Commentariolum Petitionis* itself admits⁴². The section admits that it is not talking about friends in the

⁴² A. Rand, *The Fountainhead*, Indianapolis - New York, 1943, p. 740 has her architect hero, Roark, praise selfishness when he addresses the court toward the end of the novel. «The first right on earth is the right

usual sense of the term. Philosophical discussions of friendship bring out the contrasts between the standard use of the term and Auctor's particular use of it.

Supposing for the moment that this work is what it claims to be, and Auctor is actually identical to Quintus Cicero, it would be particularly useful to know whether it would have been in character for Quintus to have expressed in a serious way this view of *amicitia*. Unfortunately, we do not know his views on friendship. But if the work is what it claims to be, and is thus directed at Marcus Cicero, then one would also expect it to present its advice in terms that would be palatable to Marcus, especially since Quintus could have been expected to have been able to gauge his own brother's likely attitude on the subject. In fact, we do know a lot about Marcus Cicero's views on friendship, and they were not at all in harmony with the viewpoint expressed in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*.

In the summer of 44 B.C. Marcus Cicero wrote the *Laelius de amicitia*, a dialogue set in 129 B.C., in which Laelius spoke about friendship a few days after the death of his great friend Scipio Aemilianus (*cos.* 147, 2.134). Laelius' description of friendship is completely at odds with that presented by Auctor in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. Specifically with regard to elections, Scipio is described as someone who was elected twice to the consulate although he never campaigned for it (11). On a more general level, friendship is described as a very exclusive relationship, rather than the promiscuous and evanescent connection of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. Only three or four pairs of friends have existed throughout history, says Laelius (15), and only good men can be friends (18). Only two people or perhaps a few can be linked by the same friendship (20). Friendship allows no falsehood or pretense (26), and is eternal (32). Friendship requires more than just treating someone else like ourselves; we do things for friends that we would never do for ourselves (57). We should be willing to compromise our own values on a friend's behalf, defending him when his life or fortune is at stake even if his cause is not entirely just (61)⁴³. Still, politics and friendship do not readily mix, because few people are willing to see their friends succeed where they do not, and Laelius gives some examples of friendships that ended be-

of the ego. Man's first duty is to himself. His moral law is never to place his prime goal within the persons of others. His moral obligation is to do what he wishes, provided his wish does not depend *primarily* upon other men». His speech is provocative and shocking not because we are at all surprised at the notion that people *do* act selfishly, but because we are unaccustomed to read that we *ought* to act selfishly. I introduce this analogy to illustrate the point that we might be shocked by a prescription to act in a certain way, even though we know that in reality people often do act in this way. Of course, whereas Rand hopes to convert us to the ethical viewpoint expressed by her fictional hero, I am arguing that Auctor wishes us to reject the prescriptions that he is ostensibly advancing.

⁴³ See J.G.F. Powell (ed.): Cicero, *Laelius, on Friendship (Laelius de Amicitia) & The Dream of Scipio (Somnium Scipionis)*, Warminster 1990, pp. 107 f. for an exegesis of this passage. Cicero may be referring to supporters of Caesar, such as his friend C. Matius.

cause of political disputes (33, 77). Yet both political and apolitical people, and even voluptuaries, crave friendship.

In this work Marcus Cicero takes aim at the idea that friends can expect a personal reward from the relationship. He distinguishes the version of friendship of which he speaks from (*amicitia*) *vulgari(s) et mediocri(s), quae tamen ipsa delectat et prodest* («[friendship] which is common and middling, which nevertheless pleases and is of advantage»; 22, see also 76, 77, 100)⁴⁴. Friendship is like the relationship between parent and child among the animals rather than an arrangement arising from a calculation of self-interest (*cogitatio quantum illa res utilitatis esset habitura* [27], «a calculation as to how much use the thing will have»), and it does not spring from a perception of some missing resource that a friend might provide (29, 46, 51). The majority expect profit from friendship, but the wise do not (79)⁴⁵. In part Marcus Cicero is challenging a philosophical tenet of Epicureanism, to which he was opposed, but the work should not be read as an anti-Epicurean polemic⁴⁶. Overall, while it was written against the background of Academic philosophy, with substantial Peripatetic and Stoic elements, it reflects Cicero's interpretation of his own experiences⁴⁷. The work resonates with Roman social values promoted by him, according to which men can enjoy a sublime relationship devoid of considerations of utility.

This dialogue paints a picture of Roman *amici* that is completely opposed to

⁴⁴ Likewise, in the *De Natura Deorum* (1.122) Cicero distinguishes between *amicitia*, consideration of the interests of those whom we love, on the one hand, and consideration of one's own interests, which he calls *mercatura quaedam utilitatum suarum* («a kind of trafficking in one's own interests»), on the other. See P.A. Brunt, *Amicitia in the Late Roman Republic*, «P.C.Ph.S.» n.s. 11 (1965), p. 1 (= R. Seager [ed.], *The Crisis of the Roman Republic: Studies in Political and Social History*, Cambridge - New York 1969, p. 199); and Brunt, *Fall* cit., p. 352.

⁴⁵ In *Off.* 2.69 Cicero criticizes the inclination to do favors for rich people who do not need them, rather than poor people who do, in order to receive a quicker return.

⁴⁶ Powell, *Laelius* cit., p. 20. For the Epicurean view of friendship and Cicero's critique of it, and for citation of sources, see Powell, *Laelius* cit., pp. 4 and 93. Cicero presents and attacks the Epicurean view of friendship in more philosophical terms in the *De Finibus* (1.66-70; 2.82-85).

⁴⁷ Powell, *Laelius* cit., p. 23: «... it may be seen more clearly that the *Laelius* is a practical and realistic analysis of friendship as Cicero knew it. It is not to be dismissed as a piece of impractical philosophising based on Greek models, with no real relevance to the society in which Cicero lived. It is what it claims to be: a treatise written largely from a common-sense Roman point of view, but with a background of Greek philosophy...». M. Griffin, *Philosophy, Politics, and Politicians at Rome*, in M. Griffin - J. Barnes (edd.), *Philosophia Togata, I. Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, Oxford 1989², republished with corrections (1997), pp. 1-37, analyzes the balance that Cicero struck in terms of philosophy, politics, and personal friendship in his dealings with friends such as C. Matius and Atticus, whose lifestyle and possibly whose philosophy were opposed to his. She agrees with Brunt, *Fall* cit., p. 354, that educated Romans had absorbed Greek philosophy to such an extent that their debates on concrete issues were necessarily framed in philosophical terms (Griffin, above, pp. 32-37). See also Brunt, *Amicitia* cit., p. 3: «A sharp contrast between Greek theory and Roman practice is indeed out of place in Cicero's day. Roman thinking was already permeated by Greek ideas».

the use of the term in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. It seems unlikely that Quintus, if he was the author, would have made his case in a way likely to offend his brother, although it is possible that he held views on friendship quite different from Marcus', and insisted on applying them to the subject of campaigning even though Marcus would have reacted negatively to them. Or possibly Quintus gauged his brother's attitude toward friendship quite correctly in 64, and this attitude happened to change over the next twenty years⁴⁸. It has to be conceded that the two works are functioning on different levels, and also that friendship as analyzed by Cicero in a work of philosophy is necessarily somewhat different from the concept as it operated in the hurley-burley of Roman political life. Nevertheless, as Powell argues, the term *amicus* must have implied more than just «political ally»⁴⁹:

Amicitia may have slightly different connotations from the English word «friendship», but nobody who reads the *Laelius* – or indeed any other Latin literature – can doubt that its primary meaning is essentially the same. It refers properly to a personal relationship involving genuine feelings of goodwill and affection on both sides. It is not in any sense a technical political term. It occurs often in political contexts, precisely because of the convention just outlined, that political alliances were *claimed* to be instances of personal friendship, and that political opposition tended to turn into personal enmity. The claim of friendship could not work as a guarantee of good faith if the actual meaning of the word *amicitia* (or its cognates) had been irrevocably cheapened.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that the *Commentariolum Petitionis* advocates not by implication but by blunt argumentation a version of friendship in which people don an appearance of *amicitia* for the sake of temporary gain. Thus, for those who believe that Quintus actually wrote the *Commentariolum Petitionis* for his brother's benefit, the author's use of *amicitia* poses an obstacle to a non-ironic reading of the work.

But even if Auctor and Quintus are not identical, and the intended audience was not Marcus Cicero, the work's instrumental view of friendship is still a problem for the consensus view that it presents a sober analysis of Roman campaigns, because few Romans could have found it attractive or even acceptable. To be sure, Brunt is undoubtedly correct that the Romans used the term *amicus* to describe a wide variety of relationships, some amounting to little more than polite acquaintance, and even Cicero, while putting friendship on a pedestal in the *De Amicitia* and the *De Natura Deorum* (above, and nt. 44), acknowledges the variety that the term *amicus* does cover. Brunt correctly describes how the word was used⁵⁰. But the

⁴⁸ A.A. Long, *Cicero's Politics in De officiis*, in A. Laks - M. Schofield (edd.), *Justice and Generosity: Studies in Hellenistic Social and Political Philosophy. Proceedings of the Sixth Symposium Hellenisticum*, Cambridge 1995, pp. 221-224, argues that the *De Amicitia*, as well as the *De Officiis* and the no longer extant *de Gloria*, reflect Cicero's concerns in the aftermath of Caesar's assassination in 44.

⁴⁹ Powell, *Laelius* cit., pp. 22 f.

⁵⁰ Brunt, *Amicitia* cit., pp. 7 f. He defends this description of Roman political life with citation from

issue here is whether any Roman, particularly a Roman politician, would have openly and without irony exhorted readers in a prescriptive manner to adopt the *Commentariolum Petitionis*' instrumental view of friendship. To judge by other Romans' comments on friendship, it is hard to imagine that very many of them, other than a few Epicureans, who would almost certainly in any case have eschewed political campaigning altogether (D.L. 10.119), would have reacted positively to the view that candidates for office should be issued a special dispensation to exploit fictive friendships for short-term political gain.

Seneca expresses a doctrine that contravenes the notion expressed in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* that it is acceptable to expect a favor in return for a favor rendered. In his *De Beneficiis*, which must have been completed at least by 64 A.D. since a letter of his written in that year refers to it (Sen. *Epist.* 81.3), Seneca deals with the subject of the «favor», which he defines as *Benevola actio tribuens gaudium capiensque tribuendo in id, quod facit, prona et sponte sua parata* (*Benef.* 1.6.1: «an act of good will bestowing joy and taking joy from bestowing it, and inclined to that which it does and ready on its own account»). Right at the beginning of this long work, Seneca sounds the theme that the repayment of a favor must be voluntary (1.1.3): *Demus beneficia, non feneremus* (1.1.9: «Let us give favors as gifts, not as investments»). He specifically rejects the kind of bookkeeping logic the *Commentariolum Petitionis*' author employs in saying that a candidate should make it clear that the campaign is the time for the voter to pay back what he previously received (*Benef.* 1.2.3)⁵¹. (It is also true that Seneca says that the worst crime is ingratitude [1.10.4], but that does not contradict the voluntary nature of the favor, or of the return for it). Good deeds done out of a sense of obligation, as by a son or wife, are not *beneficia* but *officia*, and those performed by a slave are *ministerium* (3.18.1). However, since any favor bestowed without discrimination on the people does not require any return (6.18.2), election campaigns would not give rise to any obligations. On the other hand, the kind of favor Cicero did for a legal client, even if the result was not successful, would count as a *beneficium* to which a grateful response would be appropriate – but, of course, of an entirely voluntary nature (7.14.3). It must be conceded that Seneca sets a very high standard so as to improve conduct, not to describe it, and that therefore we cannot turn his prescriptions into description⁵². But the *Commentariolum Petitionis* is also a prescriptive work: it purports to advise Cicero the candidate on how he should run his election campaign, albeit on the basis of a realistic account of how Roman election campaigns actually

the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, with the comment, «... even if he be not Q. Cicero, the writer was well versed in the manners of the age» (p. 8). He is here expressing the commonly accepted assumption that the work's goal is to provide an accurate portrayal of Roman campaign politics.

⁵¹ M. Griffin, *De Beneficiis and Roman Society*, «J.R.S.» 93 (2003), p. 99.

⁵² Griffin, *De Beneficiis* cit., p. 94.

work. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it is what Romans said and wrote about political behavior, not what Roman politicians actually did, that is crucial, since this study is attempting to gauge the reaction of Romans to what they were reading in the *Commentariolum Petitionis*.

Griffin argues that both Cicero and Seneca are interested in horizontal relationships (those between equals) more than vertical relationships (those between persons of differing social status)⁵³. In so doing, she modifies the view that relationships between people of different social statuses form the core of this ancient sociology⁵⁴. The well-known story of the candidate who was defeated for the curule aedileship because he insulted a voter by referring to an obvious sign that he worked for a living suggests that at least a pretense of social equality between candidate and voter was expected (Val. Max. 7.5.2)⁵⁵. The voter needed to be treated as someone who bestowed his vote voluntarily as a *beneficium*, regardless of the social reality⁵⁶.

If Cicero's *De Amicitia* and Seneca's *De Beneficiis* subsisted solely within a self-contained world of philosophical argument and were divorced from application to real life, then they functioned on a totally different plane from that of the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, and there is no point in any comparison. But, as Griffin has argued, philosophical vocabulary had permeated Roman political discourse, even for Romans who had no strong allegiance to any one philosophical sect; she rejects the notions that a dichotomy existed between Greek philosophy and Roman practice, and that the Romans had a frivolous attitude toward philosophy⁵⁷. If we accept that Cicero and Seneca express Roman cultural values in their philosophic works, then their viewpoints and modes of expression can legitimately be compared with each other and with the *Commentariolum Petitionis*. The two philosophical works express

⁵³ Griffin, *De Beneficiis* cit., p. 97.

⁵⁴ R. Saller, *Status and Patronage*, in C.A.H. XI, 2000², p. 838, citing Sen. *Benef.* 1.4.2: «Yet patronage, defined as a voluntary, continuing exchange relationship between men of unequal power or status, remained fundamental in Roman society: in the view of the Romans themselves exchange relationships were the glue that held human society together». B. Inwood, *Politics and Paradox in Seneca's De Beneficiis*, in Laks-Schofield, *Justice and Generosity* cit., p. 244, talks of the exchange of favors between members of the same social class and also between members of different social classes, but goes on to refer to patrons and clients («Seneca swam in the sea of patron-client relations...»).

⁵⁵ T.R.S. Broughton, *Candidates Defeated in Roman Elections: Some Ancient Roman «Also-Rans»* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 81 pt. 4), Philadelphia 1991, pp. 40 f., identifies the defeated candidate as P. Cornelius Scipio (Nasica) Serapio (*cos.* 138) or the consul of 111 of the same name.

⁵⁶ E. Deniaux, *De l'ambitio à l'ambitus: les lieux de la propagande et de la corruption électorale à la fin de la République*, in *L'Urbs, Espace urbain et histoire (I^{er} siècle av. J.-C. - III^e siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Actes du colloque international organisé par le Centre national de la recherche scientifique et l'École française de Rome [Rome, 8-12 mai 1985], «Coll. École Fr.»), Roma 1987, pp. 280-282. See also Yakobson, *Elections and Electioneering* cit., p. 216.

⁵⁷ M. Griffin, *From Aristotle to Atticus: Cicero and Matus on Friendship*, in J. Barnes - M. Griffin (edd.), *Philosophia Togata*, II. *Plato and Aristotle at Rome*, Oxford 1997, pp. 86-109.

Roman social beliefs that most Romans, even those who were not skeptical Academics, like Cicero, or Stoics, like Seneca, would find normal.

There are two possible ways to handle any recommendations we find in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* that flagrantly contravene Roman *mores*. First, we could posit that Auctor is being deliberately and earnestly provocative, sincerely adopting the stance that the exigencies of elections require candidates to act in ways that would normally be considered unethical. Second, we can view these contraventions as having likely caused normal Romans to question the validity of the advice being given, and can view Auctor as fostering that reaction. This second reading does not deny that many Romans may have cultivated «vulgar» friendships of the type that Cicero dismisses, or relied on the kind of bookkeeping logic of compulsory reciprocal favors condemned by Seneca. The issue is, however, whether Auctor could have expected bald-faced advocacy of this instrumental view of friendship to persuade his audience of its merit. Certainly he would not have persuaded the later Marcus Cicero of the philosophic dialogues. Neither, probably, would such an approach have won over the Cicero the candidate in 64 B.C.; nor would it likely have prevailed upon the typical Roman candidate, who would have known that a candidate's explicit demand that a voter repay a past favor would have been likely to alienate him, making him less likely to cast a ballot for the candidate, not more likely.

A specific example provided in the *Commentariolum Petitionis* strongly suggests that its readers would not have been expected to react favorably to the doctrine that it presents about the relationship between *beneficia* and political campaigns.

C. *Gaius Aurelius Cotta* (cos. 75 B.C.)

In a passage whose somewhat strained reasoning sets it apart from lucid if simplistic logic of most of the work, Auctor recommends a course of action that, he admits, is characteristic of a good candidate rather than of a good man (45-48), and is opposed to Marcus' nature. The issue is what course the candidate should take if asked to do something dishonorable or harmful. Although the text is somewhat doubtful at this point, it is clear that Auctor describes two courses of action. A good man will politely decline, but a good candidate should make the commitment, because begging off with an excuse – that his friends' business, a more serious obligation, or a previous commitment prevents him from making the promise – will anger the person making the request, who would rather be lied to than turned down. (It is acceptable to plead an *officium necessitudinis*, an obligation arising from an existing relationship). Auctor cites C. Aurelius Cotta (cos. 75 B.C.) as the authority for this point of view. Why does he cite this particular politician?

C. Aurelius Cotta, although from a noble family, had a checkered career. Born in 124 B.C., he was sent into exile by the Varian commission in the early eighties, but by 78 returned as a result of Sulla's victory to serve a praetorship. He was consul

in 75, became governor of Cisalpine Gaul the next year, and was granted a triumph, albeit for no great victory, in late 74 or early 73, but died the day before the celebration of the triumph. Although he had been a supporter of Sulla, as consul he passed legislation that repealed Sulla's prohibition against ex-tribunes running for higher office. This measure gained him popularity among the people but great hatred among the nobility (Ascon. 66-67, 78C; Cic. *Corn. apud* Ascon. 78C). He was a distinguished orator, although he did not publish his speeches.

Although contemporary opinions about Cotta were not uniform, one tradition furnishes substantial evidence that he was thought to be a political operator who was shrewd bordering on duplicitous. Auctor refers to him as *in ambitione artifex* (47: «a master on the hustings»). He writes that Cotta promised his help in response to all requests except those that were contrary to duty (*officium*), but in fact selectively extended aid where he could do so most advantageously (*optime*, advantageously, viz. to himself because they could return the favor). Therefore, he denied his favor to no one, because he often did not need to do what he had promised, or was eventually able to do so easily because he had more free time than expected. He believed that a politician's house would not be filled if he promised only what he thought he could perform, and it was better to anger a few people by not doing what one had promised than to anger many people by refusing them in the first place (47-48).

Another author portrays Cotta in a way that makes him a natural negative *exemplum* for a discussion of campaign tactics: Sallust. Sallust describes Cotta as *promptius, sed ambitione tum ingenita largitione cupiens gratiam singulorum* (Sall. *Hist.* 2.42M: «quicker to act [than his colleague in the consulate L. Octavius], but through then ingrained ambition desiring the favor of individuals by bribery») ⁵⁸. The mood at Rome was tense in 75 because of a shortage of grain, and on one occasion when the consuls were escorting (*deducentis*) a candidate, they were attacked by an uprising, and compelled to seek refuge in the house of Octavius (2.45M). A few days later, Cotta, having changed his dress, probably to the garb worn by defendants at trial, made a pathetic and defensive appeal to the people in a *contio* (2.47M) ⁵⁹. (Since Cicero writes that no speech of Cotta survived [*Orat.* 132], the speech is likely to come from Sallust's pen). He portrays himself as an old man, who had survived great adversity, facing the gravest criminal charges (alleged to be a *parricida*, murderer of a near relative, or a traitor) and ready to give up his life for the sake of the state and to diminish the people's troubles. He claims that

⁵⁸ The text is corrupt here. For other possible readings, see P. McGushin: Sallust, *The Histories*, translated with Introduction and Commentary (Clarendon Ancient History Series) I, Oxford 1992, p. 206. See below, nt. 61.

⁵⁹ On the speech, particularly the theme of *devotio* («self-immolation»), see R. Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic*, Cambridge 2004, p. 262.

Rome faces extraordinary problems of imperial rule in this year, from Spain to Macedonia, Asia, and Cilicia. Of particular interest for this discussion is his description of the balance that he has struck between private favors and the public welfare:

A prima adulescentia in ore vestro privatus et in magistratibus egi; qui lingua, qui consilio meo, qui pecunia voluere uti sunt; neque ego callidam facundiam neque ingenium ad male faciendum exercui: avidissimus privatae gratiae maximas inimicitias pro re publica suscepi, quis victus cum illa simul, cum egens alienae opis plura mala expectarem, vos, Quirites, rursus mihi patriam deosque penatis cum ingenti dignitate dedistis.

From early youth I have lived my life in your sight, both as a private citizen and as a magistrate; they who wanted have made use of my tongue, my counsel, and my money. Nor did I employ my clever eloquence or my talent to do ill. Although I was very eager for private favor, I incurred the greatest feuds for the sake of the state, and when I was defeated by those feuds at the same time as it was, when lacking any assistance from others I was awaiting more evils, you, Romans, gave me back my fatherland and household gods along with major public office.

Because it strikes the same theme of private favors and public welfare as the *Commentariolum Petitionis*, this passage also relates to Cotta as an *exemplum* for the proper use of election promises. But how does it relate?

Two years later the tribune C. Licinius Macer made a speech in which he urged the Roman People to assert their liberty against the ruling élite (Sall. *Hist.* 3.48M). In order to persuade them that they would possess great power if they were determined to assert power, he argues that, even when they were listless two years previously, C. Cotta, *ex factione media consul* («a consul from the heart of the faction») ⁶⁰, was sufficiently afraid of them that he restored some of the rights of the tribunate, against what Asconius tells us was the hostility of the nobles but (here contradicting Sallust, although he had read him) with great enthusiasm among the People (Ascon. 66-67C). The use of this term by Sallust, a historian opposed to the ruling faction, coupled with his initial description of Cotta, has convinced recent scholars that Cotta's speech is not to be interpreted as a call for moderation delivered by a moderate conservative, but as a desperate attempt by a representative of the ruling class to hold onto power. The speech is an «unconvincing apology for *ambitio* and his desire for '*gratia singulorum*'... corruption hides behind honourable names and fair excuses» ⁶¹. This negative assessment of Cotta's reputation is con-

⁶⁰ Not «from the moderate part of the nobility». See P. McGushin: Sallust, *The Histories*, Translated with Introduction and Commentary (Clarendon Ancient History Series) I, Oxford 1994, p. 89.

⁶¹ D.C. Earl, *The Political Thought of Sallust*, Cambridge 1961, p. 109. See also Syme, *Sallust* cit., p. 200, G. Perl, *Die Rede Cotta in Sallusts Historien*, «Philologus» 109 (1965), pp. 75-82, and McGushin, *Sallust* cit. I, p. 211. G. Perl, *Die Kompositionsprinzip der Historiae des Sallust (zu Hist. fr. 2,42)*, in *Actes de la XII^e Conférence internationale d'Études classiques 'Eirene', Cluj-Napoca 2-7 octobre 1972*, Bucharest 1975, pp. 324, 329, provides the following reading on the basis of the palimpsest: *dein L. Octavius et C. Cotta consulatum*

firmed by his support for sending a young and unqualified quaestor to take control of what Sallust calls the new province of Cyrene (Sall. *Hist.* 2.43M)⁶² and the questionable legality of a treaty he concluded with King Hiempsal of Numidia (Cic. *Leg. Agr.* 2.58) without bringing it to the Roman People—a failure that caused later confusion and discussion in the Senate. Sallust portrays Cotta as, in Syme's words, a «master of intrigue»⁶³.

One author's portrayal of Cotta in a negative light is enough to raise the question whether Auctor seriously proposes him as a positive authority on electoral ethics. Can support for this view be found elsewhere? The other main source for Cotta is Marcus Cicero, who offers only lukewarm and guarded praise for his statesmanship, although Cotta clearly needs to be treated with some respect (Cic. *Pis.* 62: ... *vir summo ingenio praeditus*... [... a man endowed with the highest talent...]; Cic. *Corn. apud Ascon.* 66C: ... *hominem summa prudentia spectatum*... [... a man known for the highest practical knowledge...]). Cicero's praise of Cotta's oratory is also guarded. In the *De Oratore* (3.42) he criticizes Cotta's adoption of a harshly rural sound. He notes that Cotta, when prosecuted before the Varian commission, spoke on his own behalf using a text written by someone else, L. Aelius Stilo, and expresses clear disapproval of this reliance by a major orator on someone else's text—disapproval that appeared well-founded, judging by the fact that Cotta was convicted (*Brut.* 205, 207). Finally, in the *De Natura Deorum*, he makes Cotta spokesman for the Academic point of view, a doctrine that, to be sure, was shared by Cicero, who, in this dialogue, at age twenty-nine or thirty is invited by Cotta to his home probably in the latter part of 77 or the first part of 76⁶⁴. But everyone understood that the occasion of a philosophic dialogue could be fictional (Cic. *Fam.* 9.8.1). Nothing in the *De Natura Deorum* other than the epithet *familiaris* for Cotta (1.14) implies an association between Cicero and Cotta, and the dialogue closes with Cicero's statement of philosophic disagreement with Cotta (3.95), a disagreement to which Cicero refers also in the *De Divinatione* (1.8), as does his interlocutor Quintus Cicero (*Div.* 1.9). Although Cicero clearly does not deny any personal association with Cotta, nowhere in his writings does he vouch for him.

In conclusion, C. Aurelius Cotta constitutes a negative example specifically

ingressi, quorum Octavius languide et incuriose fuit, Cotta promptius, sed ambitione tum ingenio largitor et cupiens gratiam singulorum... «Then L. Octavius and C. Cotta entered the consulate, of whom Octavius acted sluggishly and carelessly, Cotta more actively, but by ambition as well as nature a briber and desiring the favor of individuals...». See McGushin, *Sallust* cit. I, p. 206.

⁶² E. Badian, *M. Porcius Cato and the Annexation and Early Administration of Cyprus*, «J.R.S.» 55 (1965), pp. 119 f., and T.C. Brennan, *The Praetorship in the Roman Republic II*, Oxford 2000, pp. 408 f.

⁶³ Syme, *Sallust* cit., p. 200.

⁶⁴ For the dramatic date, see A.R. Dyck (ed.): Cicero, *De Natura Deorum, Liber I*, Cambridge, UK 2003, p. 7.

when it comes to political morality, and the citation of him as an authority on the dividing line between the ethical and the unethical in political conduct made the *Commentariolum Petitionis*' discussion of insincere promises all the more unconvincing. Cotta had the reputation of harboring excessive *ambitio* and, notwithstanding his protests to the contrary, misusing private favors for his own advancement, to the detriment of the common good⁶⁵. The association of Cotta with *ambitio* puts him in a negative light, because *ambitio*, although it can be used in a neutral sense of «campaigning,» often carries a negative connotation of lust for office⁶⁶. The appeal to Cotta's authority on electoral ethics suggests irony.

(to be continued)

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⁶⁵ This negative assessment of Cotta as a political operator is not contradicted by Cicero's bland praise of him, *hominem summa prudentia spectatum* (above).

⁶⁶ For example, in 60 Cicero describes his feeling of loneliness to Atticus in this way: *Nam illae ambitiosae nostrae fucosaeque amicitiae sunt in quodam splendore forensi, fructum domesticum non habent* (Cic. *Att.* 1.18.1, «For those self-seeking and sham friendships are in a certain glory in the Forum, but bring no profit at home»). See J. Hellegouarc'h, *Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la république* (Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Lille), Paris 1963, pp. 209 f.