Roy K. Gibson

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS IN PRINTED EDITIONS OF LATE ANTIQUE LATIN LETTER COLLECTIONS

Abstract: Ancient letter collections possess clear autobiographical elements and potential, since their constituent letters regularly contain fragments of the author's life story. But it is not clear that autobiographical narration was the primary purpose of ancient letter collections. This was a situation of some frustration to early modern editors of ancient letter collections, who regularly supposed that the primary function or use of letters was in fact to tell the author's life story. In the first centuries of print, editors undertook a programme of re-arrangement of ancient letters designed either to intensify the autobiographical elements of letter sequences or – through chronological re-arrangement – to put letters in the sequence of the author's life.

The papers in this volume concentrate on autobiographical elements in a range of late antique authors, including the three great Latin *patres* Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine. My own contribution also looks at autobiographical elements in such texts, but from a slightly different angle. I want to suggest that the autobiographical elements that we detect in late antique literature may sometimes be the creation of modern editors. Specifically, I want to look at late antique letter collections – including those of Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine – and to describe the process by which these letter collections were turned into a form of autobiography by modern editors. In assembling their letter collections, editors had to make decisions about how to order their collections. Should they follow the manuscript? Or should they follow an earlier printed edition? Or should they impose an entirely new order? As we shall see, most editors ultimately chose to impose a chronological order on their letter collections. And chronology and autobiography are intimately connected to one another, at least in the modern and early modern worlds.

1. The first printed editions of Latin letter collections

There are around eighteen extant Latin letter collections between Cicero in the first century before Christ and Augustine and Paulinus of Nola in the early fifth century after Christ. Almost all of these eighteen letter collections were first printed in the years between 1467 and 1475, as follows:

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Letter collection	*Place and date of first publication*
– Jerome	Rome, not after 1467
– Cicero, *Ad familiares*	Rome 1467
– Cicero, *Ad Att., Ad Brut., Ad Quint. fr.*	Venice/Rome 1470
– Horace, *Epistulae*	1470 [no place recorded]
– Ovid, *Epistulae heroidum*	Savigliano 1470
– Ovid, *Epistulae ex Ponto*	Bologna/Rome 1471
– Plinius	Venice 1471
– Cyprian	Rome 1471
– Augustine	Strasbourg 1471
– Ausonius	Venice 1472
– Seneca, *Epistulae morales*	Strasbourg 1475
– Seneca and Paul	Naples/Rome 1475
– Ambrose	Milan 1490
– Symmachus	Venice 1503
– Paulinus of Nola	Paris 1515
– Fronto	Milan 1815, Rome 1823

Publication of letter collections began more than a decade after the publication of the *Biblia Vulgata* of 1454, but only a few years after the 1465 *editio princeps* of the *De officiis* of Cicero. Letter collections, it seems, were a popular choice for early publication in book form, with the vast majority of *Editiones principes* produced of course in Italy. The very first ancient letter collection to be printed was that of Jerome, perhaps around or even before 1467[1], followed by the *Ad familiares* of Cicero in 1467. The last of the eighteen collections to be printed were Ambrose in 1490 (perhaps surprisingly late for one of the three *doctores* of the church)[2], Symmachus in 1503, Paulinus of Nola in 1515 - and of course Fronto[3], who would not be discovered in palimpsest until 1815 (with a later discovery in 1823)[4].

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[1] It is now the consensus that the *editio princeps* of Jerome's letters is not that printed at Rome in 1468 by Sweynheym and Pannartz (and edited by G. Andrea Bussi), but that printed at Rome not after 1467 by Sixtus Reissinger, and edited by Teodoro de' Lelli (and published posthumously by his cousin Gaspare de Teramo); see Pabel 2008, pp. 23-34.

[2] *Editiones principes* of the letters were produced independently from one another only weeks apart in Ambrose's former see of Milan by Cribellus (December 1490) and Dulcinius (January 1491); see Nauroy 2012, pp. 26-29.

[3] Following his appointment as head of the Ambrosian library in Milan in 1811, Monsignor (and later cardinal) Angelo Mai discovered, amongst many other palimpsests, the Ambrosian portion of the Fronto codex, and in 1815 published an edition of the letters found there. On his appointment as head of the Vatican library in 1819, Mai soon discovered both the Vatican portion of the Fronto palimpsest and (more famously) a palimpsest of Cicero's *De re publica*. In 1823 Mai published a new Fronto edition, incorporating both the Ambrosian and Vatican palimpsests. See van den Hout 1988, pp. lxiii-lxxix.

[4] The history of the printing of ancient Greek letter collections begins somewhat later. The *editio princeps* for most pre-fifth century CE Greek collections is the 1499 Aldine edition of the Greek epistolographers, published in Venice by Aldus Manutius and edited by Marcus

2. Early editorial encounters with manuscripts

In printing the first editions of letter collections, editors often faced complex situations in the manuscripts, and had to make some difficult decisions on what to print. This was particularly the case with late antique Latin letter collections, which generally lack book units in their manuscripts. In counterpoint to Greek letter collections of the Hellenistic and imperial eras, which also generally lack book units[5], Latin letter collections of the pre-200 CE era are characterized by their employment of book units, which give predictable order to the letters. Book units are clearly visible in the collections of Cicero, Horace, Ovid[6], Seneca, Pliny and Fronto – with a corresponding general (if not invariable) stability in transmission of their letters. The Latin letter collections of late antiquity show rather more variation as regards the use of book units to articulate collections. The collections of Cyprian, Ausonius, Jerome, Augustine, Seneca and Paul, and Paulinus of Nola lack book units largely or entirely[7], and correspondingly show considerable diversity in the number and ordering of letters included in their manuscript collections. (Even in collections which feature book units – such as Ambrose and Symmachus - manuscripts vary in the extent to which they give book units the prominence they must originally have had in the collections first assembled by Ambrose himself and by the posthumous editors of Symmachus[8]).

By way of illustration of the difficulties that editors faced when producing their editions, we begin with Cyprian - for whom there is no standard ordering of letters or total of letters in the manuscripts, although certain recurrent patterns can be observed in the positioning of individual letters and in the creation and positioning of clusters of letters (*e.g.* on confessors at Carthage and Rome, re-baptism, reconciliation of the lapsed)[9]. The 1471 *editio Romana* of Cyprian was based on a manuscript that lacked some important letters and which intermingled the treatises of Cyprian with his letters, and it was not until fifteen years later that editors began to separate the letters of Cyprian from his treatises, in

Musurus. The remaining collections begin to be printed a few years later, beginning with the two New Testament letter collections published by Erasmus in 1516. On the 1499 Aldine edition, see Sarri - Abad del Vecchio 2022.

[5] Of the thirty-two Greek letter collections extant between Isocrates and Synesius (4th BCE - 4th CE), including the two New Testament collections, only the manuscripts of Alciphron and Libanius carry traces of book units.

[6] The major exception is Ovid's *Epistulae heroidum*, whose original book units appear to have been obliterated by later interpolation; see Gibson 2018.

[7] An *Epistolarum liber* lies at least partially visible within the Z family of Ausonius' mss. (Mondin 1995, pp. XLI-XLIII, 3; see further below), while one late and idiosyncratic ms. of Paulinus (U: Codex Urbinas lat. 45, 15th c.) divides its forty-nine items into five books.

[8] Amongst extant mss. of Symmachus, Parisinus lat. 8623 (P; 9th c.) alone preserves the book divisions of the collection, plus indications of change of addressee within books and *inscriptiones* for individual letters throughout; see Seeck 1883, pp. XXV-XXVI, XXVIII. However, it is evident that several now lost mss. also preserved Symmachus' book units; see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Symmachus*. For Ambrose, see below.

[9] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Cyprian*.

the 1486 Stuttgart edition[10]. As for Ausonius, his letter collections exist in three different forms in the manuscripts, with few overlaps between the three distinct collections[11]. The so-called Z *corpus* was published first, and it was gradually extended as better manuscripts were discovered. The so-called V *corpus* was published later, and then intermingled with the letters of the Z *corpus*[12].

The manuscripts for the letter collections of both Jerome and Augustine resist easy summary, since not only are there many thousands of manuscripts of (most other ancient letter collections exist only in a few hundred manuscripts at most), but these manuscripts exhibit huge diversity in both number and order of letters. For example, shorter collections of Jerome's letters – roughly those containing thirty letters or fewer – are often relatively varied in the letters they assemble and avoid large concentrations of single addressees or themes. There are numerous exceptions – above all some shorter 'specialist' collections which focus (*e.g.*) on letters to and from Augustine[13], or to Marcella and other female correspondents[14], or on the Origenist controversy[15]. Many longer collections are built around recognizable and repeated clusters of letters; even where exact membership and internal ordering of clusters varies between manuscripts, clear family resemblances remain between these clusters. The clusters are generally of two sorts: those built around addressees or groups of addressees, and those featuring more varied sequences which nevertheless show some stability across manuscripts. The most common addressee clusters are those featuring correspondence to or from Damasus, Augustine, Marcella and other female correspondents, and (more rarely) Theophilus of Alexandria; plus a mixed sequence involving Jerome's friends (Heliodorus, Nepotianus, Paulinus, Amandus, Pammachius and Oceanus)[16]. Nevertheless, whatever ordering by correspondent or

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[10] See Diercks 1999, pp. 835-839. For a comparative table on the ordering of letters in the editions from the 15th to 19th centuries, see Diercks 1999, pp. 915-917.

[11] The total number of letters extant across the three collections or types of collection is at least twenty-eight letters. There are thirteen letters in the Z family of mss.; of this thirteen, only two letters (XXVII, 2, 13 Green) are shared with the collection found in ms. V – which contains a minimum of fifteen letters and at least a further four works with epistolary characteristics. The Ausonius and Paulinus collection found in ms. H and relations contains at least nine items, but adds only two new letters to the letters already found in V. None of the letters found in H is shared with those found in the Z family. See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Ausonius*.

[12] Between 1472 and 1558, the published Ausonian *corpus* is essentially that of Z. Items found in the V *corpus* are first published in the edition of de Tournes (Lyon 1558) – on whom see further below. By the time of the edition of Scaliger 1575, the collection found in Z has been abandoned as a structuring principle and letters from the Z and V collections are intermingled to create an entirely new *epistolarum liber* based on arrangement by addressee. See further Dolveck 2017.

[13] Around twelve pre-13th c. shorter collections consist largely of correspondence with Augustine (and Damasus); see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Jerome*.

[14] Female correspondents dominate four smaller pre-13th c. collections as well as three collections of thirty letters or more; see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Jerome*.

[15] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Jerome*.

[16] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Jerome*.

theme is dimly visible across Jerome's manuscripts, the editors of the 1467 *editio Romana* of Jerome's letters made quite different choices in terms of selection and ordering. This edition intermingled the treatises of Jerome with his letters within a three-part structure based on subject matter: 1) works that defend the Catholic faith; 2) works that deal with questions of holy scripture; and 3) works on morals and virtues. The separation of Jerome's treatises from his letters would not become standard until the 1700s[17]. As for Augustine, suffice to say that the manuscript tradition of his letters is no less varied and complex than that of Jerome, while nevertheless exhibiting some elements of deliberate ordering and design, particularly in terms of grouping letters by shared addressee or shared theme[18]. This is in fact the arrangement adopted in the 1471 *editio princeps*, where the editor Mentelin prints around 200 letters out of a modern total of over 300 letters associated with Augustine[19].

The manuscript tradition of Paulinus of Nola is somewhat less complex, not least because there are only six principal manuscripts that carry a substantial collection of the letters[20]. A 'core collection' of thirty-two prose letters plus a sermon and a poem can be discerned across all six of these manuscripts, alongside a further twenty prose letters found as appendages to the core collection in varying numbers and combinations across the manuscripts (including letters sent by Augustine). Up to twelve poems are similarly appended to the core collection in varying combinations; a number of these poems are epistolary in character (including those sent by Ausonius). The 1515 *editio princeps* of Paulinus of Nola reproduces the order of the letters as found in the core collection of the principal manuscripts, albeit with some efforts at consolidation[21].

As for the two late antique collections to feature book units, many manuscripts of Ambrose indicate a lacuna between the end of Book 2 of the letters and the start of Book 4 of his ten-book collection[22]. Early modern editors responded by using some letters from Books 2 and 4 of the manuscripts to create a Book 3 that does not in fact exist in the manuscripts[23]. (Divergences from the ten-book tradition can also be found elsewhere in the manuscripts: two early mss. offer

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[17] On this edition and its influence, see Pabel 2008, pp. 28-34, 117-118, 132-136.

[18] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Augustine*.

[19] On this edition and its relation to the mss., see Folliet 1994.

[20] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Paulinus*.

[21] *E.g.* three letters to Severus isolated from their fellows in the mss. are re-united with the main block of letters to Severus in the core collection; see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Paulinus*

[22] Faller-Zelzer 1990, pp. XVII-XVIII; see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Ambrose*.

[23] In his influential 1490 *editio princeps*, Cribellus printed a collection divided into ten books, but with significant variations designed in part to fill the major lacuna in the first half of the collection. The result is the creation of a new Book 3; the transfer of most of the imperial letters of Book 10 to partner the otherwise anomalous *ep.* 25 (on the death of Valentinian II) within Book 5; and the import of several letters from the so-called *epistulae extra collectionem* into Books 5 and 10. On Cribellus and the ms. tradition, see Ferrari 1976, pp. 52-59; cfr. Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming) s.v. *Ambrose*.

different book divisions, and two further early mss. dispense with book divisions altogether and re-order the letters[24]). The letter collection of Symmachus seems to have circulated in later antiquity and the early middle ages as just over 900 letters also arranged in ten books. Anthologies or *florilegia* of the letters begin to appear from the twelfth century, but the ordering in anthologizing mss. largely reproduces that found in non-anthologizing mss.[25]. The 1503 *editio princeps* of Symmachus was in fact based on a *florilegium* of the collection, and contained only a selection of letters as far as the sixth book[26]. A first complete edition of the letter collection of Symmachus was not published until 1580[27].

3. *The creation and fostering of autobiographical elements by early modern editors*

In responding to the sometimes chaotic or inconsistent presentation of letter collections found in manuscripts or in very early printed editions, the editors of later printed editions occasionally decided to produce versions of a collection that they found personally more satisfying. It is here that we begin to see a preference for fostering or increasing the autobiographical potential of a letter collection.

As already noted, the end of Book 2 and the whole of Book 3 is missing from the manuscripts of the letter collection of Ambrose, and some twelfth-century manuscripts actually re-order the letters of the collection. In this context of chaos and fluidity in the manuscript tradition, Cardinal Montalto – the future Pope Sixtus V– decided that he could re-arrange the letters of Ambrose in a more satisfying order, as part of the eight-volume *editio Romana* of the complete works of Ambrose (1579-1587). Most of the letters appear in the fifth volume of this series, although a significant number of letters are displaced to earlier volumes. Within this fifth volume, the letters are re-arranged into eight books of Montalto's creation[28]. Montalto's first book of letters shows clear divergences from Ambrose's original opening book. The first book of the letters of Ambrose, as it appears in most manuscripts, consists of six letters. Five of these letters are de-

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[24] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Ambrose*.

[25] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Symmachus*.

[26] The edition is cited as F32 in Callu 1972, p. 56, and the *florilegium* on which it is based is cited as F36 (15th c; Vaticanus Barberini 61).

[27] The first non-selective edition of Symmachus was that of Juretus 1580, based on the lost ms. Π and on reports of ms. M and the lost *codex Pithoei*; it introduced book divisions and *inscriptiones* for individual letters. See further Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Symmachus*.

[28] The division and contents of the letters of the Montalto volume are as follows: Book 1 *gesta concili Aq. ep.* 1, *epp. ex.* 4, 6, 5; *ep.* 71, *ep.* Siric., *ep. ex.* 15, *epp.* 39, 70; Book 2 *epp.* 55, 72, 72a, 73, 75, 76; *epp. ex.* 10 and 3; *ep.* 74, *ep. ex.* 1. Book 3 *epp.* 36, 6, 46, 51, 52, 62, *ep. ex.* 14; Book 4 *epp.* 9, 10, 20, ps. Ambr. *ep.* 4, *epp.* 27, 33, 49, *ad Demetriadem*, ps. Ambros. *ep.* 1; Book 5 *epp.* 13, 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 63-67; Book 6 *epp.* 56, 57, 58, 24, 45, 50, 68; Book 7 ps. Ambr. *epp.* 2, 3; *epp.* 77, 30, 25, *epp. ex.* 2, 11; Book 8 *epp.* 5, 33, 26, 32, 35, 7, 38, 41, 42, 43, 47, 53, 59, 60, 61. A relatively large number of epistles are relocated respectively to volume one (*epp.* 1-4, 15, 28, 29, 31, 34, 44, 48, 54, 69), to volume two (*epp.* 7, 11, 12, 17-19, 40), and to volume 3 (*epp. ex.* 12 and 13) of the *editio Romana*. *Ep.* 75a is placed among the sermons.

voted to problems of biblical exegesis, concentrating above all on passages from the Pentateuch. This opening book evidently seemed to Cardinal Montalto unworthy of one of the Doctors of the Church, and he created a new letter collection. The first book of Montalto's new collection preserves only one letter from the first book of Ambrose's own collection, namely letter number one to Iustus on the interpretation of chapter 30 of the book of Exodus. To create a more satisfying opening unit, Montalto imports: three letters written by Ambrose in the name of the council of Aquileia to the emperors Gratian, Valentinian and Theodosius (*epp. ex.* 4, 6, 5); one letter written by Ambrose in the name of the synod of Milan to the bishops of Macedonia (*ep.* 71); correspondence between pope Siricius and Ambrose on behalf of the bishops of northern Italy, on the excommunication of Jovinianus (*ep.* Siric., *ep. ex.* 15); and one letter written by Ambrose, on behalf of the synod of Capua, to Theophilus bishop of Alexandria (*ep.* 70)[29].

There are very few autobiographical elements in the six letters of the first book of Ambrose's letter collection as found in the manuscripts: the emphasis falls on biblical exegesis. Montalto's new selection of letters for his new first book is clearly more obviously autobiographical in its focus. Here we see a series of letters where Ambrose takes a leading role in writing on behalf of his fellow bishops gathered at Aquileia, Milan and Capua. He addresses letters to emperors, popes and other bishops across Italy and the Mediterranean. The concentration of these letters in Montalto's first book creates an image of Ambrose quite different from that found in Ambrose's own first book in the manuscripts. Whereas Ambrose creates for himself the image of an exegete in the mould of Philo and Origen, Montalto creates the image of a powerful bishop who intervenes in specific historical events, including the excommunication of Arians, the appointment of popes and bishops, and the propagation of orthodox beliefs. The (auto-) biographical impulse behind Montalto's rearrangement is clear.

Around two decades before Montalto produced his edition of Ambrose in Rome, de Tournes produced his edition of Ausonius in Lyon, in 1558. The manuscripts, as noted earlier, offer three distinct collections of the verse letters of Ausonius: the Z collection, the V collection, and a third collection that we will call the Ausonius and Paulinus or H collection[30]. The Z collection was discovered and published first, in the Venice *editio princeps* of 1472. The V collection was not published until the 1558 edition of de Tournes. De Tournes preserved the structure of the collection as it was found in Z[31], but added in elements from both the V collection and the H collection. The Z collection seems to preserve

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[29] Montalto also imports *ep.* 39 to Sabinus on a person who has been infected by the heresy of Apollinaris (on the nature of the divinity and humanity of Christ).

[30] For the details of the mss. and the ms. families involved, see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Ausonius*.

[31] The order of the letters as found in Z is: XXVII, 2, 4, 5, 17, 10, 19, 20, 11, 9, 6, 7&8 Green. A further two letters (XXVII, 13, 18 Green) are found separated in Z from the main body of the letters by a number of intervening Ausonian works; see Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Ausonius*.

an *Epistolarum liber* that can be attributed to Ausonius himself - as Luca Mondin has argued[32]. In this Z collection, letters to Paulus clustered at the beginning (XXVII, 2, 4, 5 Green) and at the end of the collection (XXVII, 6, 7&8 Green), and letters to Paulinus are gathered in the middle of the collection (XXVII, 19, 20 Green). Ausonius was clearly aiming to create symmetry in his collection. Furthermore, the Z collection contains only letters written by Ausonius, and excludes any replies from others.

Into this collection, de Tournes inserted material from the V collection and from the Ausonius and Paulinus H collection[33]. De Tournes added into the middle of the collection the famous long verse letters exchanged between Ausonius and Paulinus written after the conversion of Paulinus (XXVII, 22, 24 Green). At the end of the collection de Tournes added the three prose letters exchanged between Ausonius and Symmachus (Symm. *ep.* 1, 31, 1, 32, 1, 25). There are several important changes here. First, the symmetry of the Z collection is now obliterated. Secondly, the collection now includes replies from others – that is, replies from both Paulinus and Symmachus. The result is a book which amplifies the autobiographical potential of the original collection. We can now see and understand the full range of Ausonius' relationship with Paulinus, and we can now appreciate the relationship of Ausonius with Symmachus, the *princeps* of the Roman senate. This is no longer a carefully crafted literary unit centered around Ausonius' literary life in Aquitania (evidently the original purpose of the Z collection), but a collection which lets us see the fuller religious and political relationships that Ausonius had to negotiate.

4. Chronological re-orderings

However, the most significant way in which early modern editors could highlight autobiographical elements within a letter collection was by re-arranging the letters in chronological order. The collections of Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Paulinus of Nola were all chronologically re-ordered between 1568 and roughly 1706. The only two late antique letter collections not chronologically re-ordered were those of Ausonius and Symmachus. The letters of Ausonius are not easily dated, and that is perhaps the reason why no attempt was ever made to re-order his verse letters. Why was Symmachus not re-ordered? One reason is perhaps that the collection of Symmachus preserved its original ordering by

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[32]   See Mondin 1995, pp. XLI-XLII, 3.

[33]   The ordering of the *epistolarum liber* in de Tournes 1558 is as follows (using Green's numeration): XXVII, 2, 4, 5, 17, 10, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, Paulin. *carm.* 10, XXVII, 21, Paulin. *carm.* 10, 11, XXVII, 11, 9, 6, 7&8, 13, Symm. *ep.* 1,31; XXVII,12 [= Symm. *ep.* 1, 32]; Symm. *ep.* 1, 25. It can be observed that: XXVII, 13, 18 - isolated from the main collection in Z - are now placed within the collection; the final correspondence between Ausonius and Paulinus – found in V but evidently known already from other sources – is united with the earlier correspondence between the pair in the collection; and the exchange of three letters between Symmachus and Ausonius found in V (but also known from other sources) closes the collection.

individual books, at least in some mss.[34]. By contrast there are no traces of book units in the manuscript traditions of Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine or Paulinus – and each of these would eventually be re-ordered.

However, the manuscripts of Ambrose preserve their book units, and these were re-ordered in 1690. In fact the first attempt to re-order a Latin letter collection had already been made as long ago as 1555. Furthermore, this collection – the *ad familiares* of Cicero – has well-marked book units clearly visible in the manuscripts[35]. In his short commentary published in 1555[36], Girolamo Ragazzoni describes his purpose in re-ordering the *Ad familiares* as follows:

> *id est, ut, quoniam [epistolae] nullo servato temporum ordine composi-*
> *tae quondam fuerunt, ipsae per tempora sua digererentur, atque describe-*
> *rentur. Quo ex labore cum alia multa commoda consequuntur, tum illa in*
> *primis, ut propter negociorum, temporumque coniunctionem et facilius*
> *alteram ex altera intelligamus, et ipsius Ciceronis, eorumque annorum*
> *contextam historiam habeamus. Quorum non, perinde atque in episto-*
> *lis ad Atticum colligendis factum est, rationem habitam esse demiror.*

The explicit purpose of re-ordering the letters by chronology is to realise the autobiographical potential of the letters. Ragazzoni aspires to a history of Cicero as well as to a history of the times, using the model of the *Ad Atticum* collection.

The first Christian letter collection to be chronologically re-ordered was that of Cyprian. The manuscripts of the letters of Cyprian reveal around ten major different orderings for the letters: there is no standard ordering[37]. Early printed editions of Cyprian's letters, such as those of Rembolt 1512, Erasmus 1520, divided the letters of the *textus receptus* into four books[38]. In 1568, Pamelius pronounced himself highly dissatisfied with such chaos[39]:

> *Ordo quid in re quaque valeat, quantumque ornamenti et decoris addat:*
> *abunde testatum facit confusum illud Chaos rudis (inquam) indigestaque*
> *mundi moles, paulo post a summo rerum opifice Deo ita formata, ita in*
> *ordinem concinnum redactis omnibus condecorata ut ab ornatu kosmon*
> *Greci illam nuncupent.*

Just as God brought order to primordial chaos, so Pamelius must bring order to the letters of Cyprian (with a pointed reference to the opening of Ovid's

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[34] Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Symmachus*.

[35] Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Cicero Ad Familiares*.

[36] *Commentarius: in quo brevissime, quo quaeque earum ordine scripta sit, ex ipsa potissimum historia demonstratur* (1555). For the references in this passage to the touchstones of Pliny *ep.* 1, 1, 1 (*non servato temporis ordine*) and Nepos *Att.* 16, 3-4 (*historiam contextam eorum temporum*), see Gibson 2012, pp. 395-398.

[37] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Cyprian*.

[38] See Diercks 1999, pp. 837-841. The four books of the 1512 Rembolt edition are: Book 1 (*epp.* 60-70); Book 2 (*epp.* 72-51); Book 3 (*epp.* 61-76); Book 4 (*epp.* 6-40).

[39] On the edition of Pamelius, published at Antwerp in 1568, see Diercks 1999, pp. 846-850.

Metamorphoses)[40]. And to Pamelius, the only possible way to bring order to chaos is to re-arrange the letters of Cyprian in chronological order. Once more, the model of Cicero's letters to Atticus is cited as the legitimation of this chronological re-ordering:

> *Neque novo id exemplo primus ego hac tempestate tentavi, sed in Epistolis Ciceronis ad Atticum idipsum praestitit vir citra controversiam doctissimus, Paulus Manutius Aldi filius, quem adeo non dubito ipsum hoc in Cypriano suo facturum fuisse, si laboribus illis quotidianis typographicis occupatissimo fuisset integrum.*

In his edition of 1540 (and commentary of 1547), Paulus Manutius had indeed presented the letters of the *Ad Atticum* collection in chronological order – although this was in fact the sequence found already in the manuscripts, and Manutius' own critical efforts were in truth confined to separating the conjoined letters that afflict the manuscript tradition for books 12 and 13 of the Ciceronian text. By contrast, Manutius' 1563 edition of Cyprian had followed the editions of Rembolt and Erasmus in simply dividing up the letters found in the earliest editions into four books; he had also added a fifth book of previously unpublished letters[41]. In this context, the decision to attempt a chronological ordering does represent a radical intervention in the history of the text of Cyprian's letters[42]. And although Pamelius does not make the point explicitly, the reference to the *Ad Atticum* suggests that the reason behind this re-arrangement of Cyprian has something to do with autobiography. As Ragazzoni made clear, it is only chronological ordering that allows us to see the history of a person.

After these early attempts to re-arrange the letter collections of Cicero and Cyprian in the 1500s, we must wait over one hundred years before the next authors are also re-ordered by chronology. The letters of Paulinus of Nola have a consistent order in the manuscripts, where they are largely arranged by groups

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[40] Ov. *met.* 1, 6-8 *unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,/ quem dixere chaos: rudis indigestaque moles/ nec quicquam nisi pondus iners.*

[41] See Diercks 1999, pp. 741-744, 842-843. Manutius' fifth book consisted of *epp.* 81, 5, 34, 27, 35, 33, 41, 62, 80, 77, 79, 31, 36, 23, 24, 42. However, the posthumous edition of Morel 1564 abandoned the division into books and printed four unpublished letters for the first time – all in an entirely new order; the source of this new ordering is not revealed, but there are some similarities with Parisinus lat. 17350 (12th c.); see Diercks 1999, pp. 844-845.

[42] See Diercks 1999, pp. 846-850. The six chronological sections in Pamelius' edition are: i) letters written immediately after Cyprian's baptism (I *Donati ad Cyprianum*, II *Cypriani ad Donatum*; ii) letters written during Cyprian's two years of «retirement» [*secessus*] (*epp.* 8, 9, 5, 14, 13, 11, 10, 16, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 37, 23, 26, 24, 25, 21, 22, 27, 29, 28, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 30, 32, 38, 39, 40, 7, 12, 41, 42, 43); iii) letters written during the papacy of Cornelius and Lucius (*epp.* 44, 45, 47, 46, 48, 49, 51, 50, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 58, 60, 61); iv) various letters written at different times during a period of peace for the church (*epp.* 64, 62, 2, 4, 63, 65, 3, 1); v) letters written during the papacy of Stephanus, and on the baptism of heretics (*epp.* 68, 67, 66, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 69); and vi) letters written during exile, and towards the end of Cyprian's life (*epp.* 76, 77, 78, 79, 6, 80, 81).

of addressees (in fact the most common method of ordering ancient letters)[43]. However, in 1685, Le Brun des Marettes produced a chronologically re-ordered edition of the letters of Paulinus of Nola. Le Brun has relatively little to say on the motivations behind his re-ordering project: he merely advertises the fact of his re-arrangement, with the remark that:

> *S. Paulini opera secundum ordinem temporum nunc primum disposita,*
> *quem studio et consiliis doctissimi viri investigare sategimus.*

Perhaps the tradition of re-ordering Cicero had made the benefits chronological re-arrangement seem too obvious for detailed comment[44]. For greater openness on the topic we must look to the first chronological editions of the letters of Ambrose, Jerome, and (especially) Augustine. These editions were all produced by the intellectual powerhouse of the French Catholic church, namely the Benedictines[45].

In the early 1600s, the General Assembly of the Clergy of France lamented the fact that «most of the Greek and Latin Fathers […] were printed in London, in Frankfurt, and in Basel, heretical cities». As a direct result it was decided that new editions of the Church Fathers should be produced in Paris[46]. The Benedictines of St Maur, founded in 1621, played a leading role in the flourishing of patristic studies in France, particularly in the last three decades of the 1600s. Chronologically re-arranged editions of the letters of the three Doctors of the Church were produced in this period.

The letters of Ambrose were edited by the Benedictines as part of a complete edition of the works of the saint, published between 1686 and 1690[47]. The editors, du Frische and le Nourry[48], state in their preface that they encountered only disorder and confusion in the editions of their predecessors, and express their dissatisfaction, particularly with the *editio Romana* of Cardinal Montalto:

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[43] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Paulinus.*

[44] The edition of Lebrun 1685 is «the defining moment in the evolution of Paulinus' collection as it stands in the twenty-first century» (Trout 2017, p. 258). Drawing on the historical and chronological research of a contemporary scholar, Lebrun's edition re-ordered Paulinus' letters (and poems) by his understanding of their relative chronology (Trout 2017, pp. 258-260). Although Lebrun's chronology has been revised, both his numbering of the letters and poems and his principle of chronological arrangement have been retained in later editions of Paulinus, up to and including the modern standard reference edition of Hartel 1894.

[45] Some of the material in the closing pages of this chapter is shared with (and supplements) a previous publication (Gibson 2012).

[46] See Pabel 2008, 347 (from whom the quotation in the previous sentence is lifted, likewise the information on the Maurists in the following sentences). On the Maurists, see further Hurel 1997, also Pabel 2008, pp. 347-349, and Knowles 1963, pp. 35-62.

[47] *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi opera, ad manuscriptos codices vaticanos, gallicanos, belgicos, &c. nec-non ad editiones veteres emendata, studio et labore monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti, e Congregatione S. Mauri.*

[48] All quotations are from the Maurist preface as reprinted in Migne PL 16, 886-87.

> *antiquiores editiones* […] *eam exhibent epistolarum seriem, quae neque*
> *ad temporis, neque ad materiae rationem adaptetur.* [… *editio Romana*]
> *nec ullam distinguendorum temporum curam, quam profecto maximam*
> *esse oportebat, adhibuit.*

Here chronology as the default guiding principle for any attempt to order a letter collection is more assumed than argued for (although the altogether more laconic approach of the recent editor of the letters of Paulinus is avoided). But the importance of a chronological order is emphatically underlined. A more thorough investigation of the manuscript tradition (in which the editors claim to find even greater disorder), of course, would have revealed a canonical order modelled (ultimately) on the non-chronological letter collection of Pliny the Younger in ten books. But the Maurists are already set on their task of re-ordering the letters, where possible, strictly by date of composition:

> *Nihil nobis commodius visum est quam ut omnes illas epistolas, quarum*
> *aetatis notam aliquam licuit deprehendere, secundum temporum rationem*
> *quam novimus potissimum probari ab eruditis, distribueremus.*

In reality, given the difficulties of dating Ambrose's (largely exegetical) letters, the letters had to be divided into two classes: letters that could be somewhat accurately dated (*classis* I) and those that could not (*classis* II). The first group began with Gratian's *ep. cupio valde* of c. 379 C.E. (transmitted outside the collection in Ambrose's *De Spiritu Sancto*) and ended with *ep. ex.* 14 to the church of Vercelli of 396 C.E.[49]. This ordering would itself remain canonical until the restoration of the original manuscript ordering in the late-twentieth century edition of Faller-Zelzer[50].

It can be assumed that the editors wished to realise the historical and autobiographical potential of the letters of Ambrose. But for an explicit admission that this is the purpose of a re-arranging editor, we must turn to the Benedictine editors of the letters of Augustine, who participated in a complete edition of the work of Augustine around the same time as du Frische and le Nourry were editing Ambrose[51]. There is no canonical ordering of the letters of St Augustine found in the manuscripts. However, manuscripts do show a pronounced tendency to group letters by shared theme or shared addressee. Earlier printed editions tend to arrange their letters on the same principles. The Benedictine editors of

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[49] The division and contents of the Maurist edition are as follows: *classis* I: Gratian *ep. cupio valde*, *ep. ex.* 12, *epp.* 36, 43, 5, 56, 57, 1, 55, *gesta conc. Aquil. ep.* 1, *epp. ex.* 4, 5, 6, 9, 8; *epp.* 51, 52, 72, 72a, 73, 62, 76, 75, 75a, 77, *ep. ex.* 13, *epp.* 30, 50, 68, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 40, 14, 21, 22, 23, 7, 10, 8, 74, *epp. ex.* 1a, 1; *ep. Sirici, ep. ex.* 15, *epp.* 29, 31, 34, 39, 37, 32, 33, 28, *ep. ex.* 11, *epp.* 45, 25, 26, 38, 70, 71, *ep. ex.* 10, *epp.* 27, 49, 58, *epp. ex.* 2, 3, 14. *classis* II: *epp.* 54, 2, 48, 3, 44, 15, 18, 19, 69, 63, 64, 65, 16, 20, 66, 9, 67, 17, 24, 35, 59, 46, 41, 47, 42, 61, 60, 53.

[50] Faller-Zelzer, 1968-1982-1990. For the genesis of this edition, including a survey of mss. and an account of the revisionary work performed by Zelzer on the earlier efforts of Faller, see Zelzer 1983.

[51] An eleven-volume complete edition of Augustine was produced between 1679 and 1700, and is replicated in Migne's *Patrologia latina*, volumes 32-47.

St Augustine, however, draw a connection between the autobiographical *Confessions* and the letters:

> *Iam quidem in Confessionum libris se ipse luculenter expresserat Augustinus; at non ita, si dicere licet, genuine sicut in Epistolis.*

Augustine may have portrayed himself «splendidly» (*luculenter*) in the *Confessions*, but «not so naturally as in the letters». They add that Augustine's epistolary *corpus* gains further *dignitas* from this simple fact about his letter collection:

> *Epistolarum eius collectio non tantum ipsius privatam, sed et totam fere ecclesiasticam illius temporis historiam complectatur.*

The letter collection covers both Augustine's private history and the history of the church[52]. However, as the editors point out, the reader interested in tracing the life of Augustine or the history of the church will find himself unable to extract what he desires from the letters, owing to the «thoroughly disturbed order» of the letters as presented in previous editions:

> *Verum in superioribus editionibus adeo perturbatus erat Augustinianarum Epistularum ordo, ut non facile quisquam id assequi potuisset absque longa et saepe repetita lectione et meditatione.*

The inevitable follows: it is clearly desirable that Augustine's letters should be: «arranged in their correct order in accordance with a reckoning of time»:

> *Quapropter optandum erat ut Augustini Epistolae in rectum ordinem pro temporum ratione digererentur.*

A connection between autobiography and the re-arranging of the letters is clear: editors wish to realise the autobiographical potential of the letters. And to back their project up, they have an argument which no previous editor covered in this chapter has made so explicitly – or indeed so successfully. And that argument is that Augustine would have chosen this way of ordering the letters himself, had he lived to edit them:

> *Quod procul dubio curaturus fuisset Augustinus ipse, si earum recensionem quam susceperat, ei absolvere licuisset. Quippe in Retractationum suarum proemio optare se testatur, ut opera sua eo quo scripta sunt ordine perlegantur, eique rei daturum se operam, quo demum intelligant lectores quomodo scribendo profecerit.*

The reference here is to a work of 427 C.E., in which Augustine reviewed his many published works by chronological order and in the light of their progressive conformity over time to Catholic orthodoxy. In a useful contextualisation provided by one critic, «In many of Augustine's later writings, and most dramatically

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[52] The *res gestae* of the Donatists and Pelagians are singled out as benefiting from full chronological documentation in the letters: *ut studiosus lector ea quae ad haereses Donatistorum et Pelagianorum pertinent, uno fere conspectu ac tenore percipiat.*

in the *Retractationes*, the sense of change and progress first seen in the *Confessions* becomes a dominant current flowing through the entire oeuvre»[53]. Augustine, with his distinctive understanding of personal change and development, virtually writes later editors a license to order his letters chronologically. There is no other epistolographer of whom something similar might be said so convincingly.

A Benedictine edition of Jerome – including the letters – began to appear a few years after the first Benedictine volumes of Ambrose and Augustine. Here a chronological rather than thematic arrangement of Jerome's letters was initiated by Jean Martianay in the 1693-1706 five-volume Maurist edition of Jerome undertaken with Antoine Pouget (who died after the publication of the first volume). Volume four (1706) records Martianay's assertion that he had been the first to publish the Jerome's letters in chronological order[54]. Martianay's edition of Jerome's epistolary *corpus*, however, was soon judged to be unsatisfactory, and it was supplanted by Domenico Vallarsi's Verona edition of 1734-1742 (revised and augmented some thirty years later in the Venice edition of 1766-1772)[55]. Vallarsi established the current numeration of the letters, and distributed them within five time periods: 1) 370-381 C.E.; 2) 382-385 C.E.; 3) 386-400 C.E. 4) 401-420 C.E.; 5) undatable items[56].

It is evident from recent study of the manuscripts of Jerome that a standard ordering of the letters of Jerome can be found in around thirty-five manuscripts of the ninth to twelfth centuries[57]. In this standard ordering, the collection typically opens with the letters to pope Damasus to Augustine, and it typically ends with a sequence of largely female correspondents, particularly Marcella. As in the case of Augustine, this ordering by addressee is of no interest to the editor of the letters. In the preface to his edition, Vallarsi echoes at times almost word for word statements made by the Benedictine editors of Ambrose, albeit with subtle changes of emphasis. Thus, for example, previous editors of Jerome are taken to task for adopting a method of arrangement which takes account of subject matter but not time, whereas earlier editors of Ambrose had been criticized for ignoring both:

> *Veteres nempe Editores eam exhibent Epistolarum seriem quae non ad temporis, sed ad materiarum rationem aptetur magis.*

And, like the editors of Augustine, Vallarsi praises the letters of his subject for their wide embrace not only of personal matters, but also of scriptural exegesis and church history:

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[53] Hermanowicz 2008, p. 17, with further bibliography on the *Retractationes* cited at Hermanowicz 2008, p. 17, note 3. Ironically, Augustine's emphasis on reading his works chronologically for a sense of personal progression was challenged soon after his death by the production of an *Indiculum* which listed his works by subject rather than chronology; see Hermanowicz 2008, pp. 14, 26, 57-60.

[54] Pabel 2008, p. 132.

[55] On the history of the editions of Martianay and Vallarsi, see Pabel 2008, pp. 132, 348-351. The preface to Vallarsi's edition of the letters does not refrain from exposing the weaknesses of the Maurist edition.

[56] Cain 2009, p. 16, note 13.

[57] See Gibson-Morrison et al. (forthcoming), s.v. *Jerome*.

> […] *non privati hominis modo erudita negotia eius Epistolae complectuntur, sed insigniores fere quaestiones: eximia ad Scripturarum explanationem monumenta, imo etiam totam ferme eius saeculi Ecclesiasticam historiam, dogmata, resque gestas* […]

But in order to realise the autobiographical potential of the letters fully, the letters must be re-arranged into chronological order. However Vallarsi could have pushed his argument even further, with just a little more reflection. Jerome is known to have had interests in chronology himself as the translator and editor of a work of historical chronology[58]. Indeed Jerome, like Augustine, also took care to list his own works according to chronology (but partly also according to genre) in a published work (*De viris illustribus* 135)[59]. Despite this, Vallarsi produces no detailed argument that Jerome himself would surely have arranged his own letters in chronological order, had the opportunity been given him[60].

5. Conclusions

In sum, late antique letter collections may have autobiographical potential. Modern editors felt they could only realise that potential by re-arranging the letters in the order of the life. In this sense, ancient autobiography has been created by modern editors. But what is the broader context for all this editorial activity on the letters of the church fathers[61]? Perhaps relevant here is a shift documented in French early eighteenth-century letter collections by Janet Altman. Here, collections of letters by contemporary individuals apparently begin to be published for the first time in carefully marked chronological order. Indeed the editors advertise the innovation prominently[62]:

> The presentation and organization of Bussy's and Sévigné's letters[63] in the early 18th century editions […] reveals a profound shift towards historical narrativity as a primary value. The letters are carefully dated and organized chronologically to tell as complete a story as possible […] In their prefaces, the early editors of Bussy's and Sévigné's letters call attention to this chronological ordering as an innovation which is necessary to help the reader 'understand' the letters.

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[58] *I.e.* the *Chronicle* of Jerome, a translation and supplementation of the work of Eusebius.

[59] On the combination of chronology and genre in this passage, see Pabel 2008, pp. 115-117.

[60] For an ancient letter book produced by Jerome which may well have adopted internal chronological order, see Cain 2009, pp. 13-42.

[61] Coincidentally, members of the Maurist order would later be involved in successive editions between 1750 and 1818 of a monumental work of chronology known as *L'art de vérifier les dates des faits historiques, des chartes, des chroniques, et autres anciens monuments, depuis la naissance de notre seigneur*. For an overview of the whole subject, see Grafton 2009, pp. 114-36.

[62] Altman 1986, pp. 52-53. On earlier humanist letter collections, however, some of which evidently were arranged in chronological order, see Clough 1976.

[63] Roger de Rabutin, Comte de Bussy (1618-1693), Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, marquise de Sévigné (1626-1696).

Altman interprets the innovation as a response by editors to a readership «whose expectations and interests have been profoundly altered by new developments in narrative forms between 1670 and 1735, particularly in the novel»[64]. However, quite apart from the low literary prestige of the novel by comparison with poetry and drama, we may doubt on other grounds that the Maurists were adapting their editions of the letters of the Church Fathers to meet changes in taste amongst the novel-reading public. But clearly something important was afoot in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century France.

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