


Letters to the Editor: Friendship and Self-Fashioning in a Fifteenth-Century Humanist Epistolary Collection

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This article explores Poggio Bracciolini's letters to Niccolò Niccoli from a variety of perspectives: it looks at what imitation meant for Poggio, examines the letters' commentary on the manuscript culture of the early Quattrocento, discusses Poggio's efforts to craft a personal voice, and traces the interplay of optimism and pessimism in the letters, an interplay common to humanist texts of this period. By bringing together these different perspectives, the article articulates the range of ways in which one scholar used his epistolary collection to shape his own persona, connect himself to Ciceronian precedents, and create norms and expectations for a developing intellectual community.

INTRODUCTION

THE HUMANISTS OF early fifteenth-century Florence and Rome would be pleased. They enjoy a degree of attention accorded to few intellectual avant-gardes, a popularity that is particularly noteworthy given their scholarly proclivities. Anyone who has attempted to engage twenty-first-century undergraduates with the project of reviving Ciceronian prose style appreciates how unsexy humanism sounds to modern audiences. Yet in spite of this, excellent work on Leonardo Bruni, Leon Battista Alberti, Lorenzo Valla, and their contemporaries continues to appear.

Most scholars, especially in the Anglophone world, now accept Paul Oskar Kristeller's definition (originally presented in the 1940s) of humanism as the revival of a group of ancient disciplines: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry,

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and moral philosophy.¹ However, even as this definition has created useful consensus, it has encouraged fragmentation in the study of humanism. Political historians examine the implications of the humanist movement for government in and beyond Florence, challenging and correcting Hans Baron's vision of civic humanism.² Literary scholars explore the moral and psychological thought of the humanists, emphasizing their cynicism and satire rather than a Burckhardtian celebration of man.³ Philologists and classicists focus on the humanists' practical skills. How did they edit and emend the manuscripts they found?⁴ How did they comment on both familiar and newly discovered ancient texts?⁵ What were the guiding principles behind their translations of Greek works?⁶

Each of these bodies of scholarship has illuminated the humanist project, but their juxtaposition can divide the movement into a series of distinguishable, even independent, intellectual endeavors. The humanists' own literary production has abetted, or at least not precluded, this division. Histories and political polemics seem to call for a different mode of analysis than moral dialogues, which in turn suggest different modes of reading than technical, philological projects. Yet many, if not most, humanists engaged in all of these enterprises. How can twenty-first-century scholarship reintegrate intellectual endeavors that, today, fall into different academic disciplines but that were, in the early fifteenth century, intertwined? And how can it highlight the multiple registers in which humanists sought to imitate their ancient models? Michael Baxandall elegantly demonstrated how "pastiche Cicero" led to a new understanding of art, but few other studies have traced the implications of early Ciceronianism so carefully.⁷

In *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, Christopher Celenza explores how modern disciplinary divisions discourage a full appreciation of the humanist project.⁸ Drawing on Bourdieu, he emphasizes the communal nature of Quattrocento humanism and urges modern scholars to think about their subjects relationally, as sharing a common *habitus*. Although he does not cite or reference Celenza, Arthur Field offers a response to the challenge of *The Lost Italian Renaissance* in his recent study of Poggio Bracciolini, Niccolò Niccoli, and the party ideology of the Medici, situating humanist writings and humanists themselves firmly

¹ Kristeller. See also Campana. On the acceptance of Kristeller's definition, see Celenza, 2004, 16–57; Grafton, 1998.

² Maxson; Baker; Jurdjevic; Najemy, 2006; Hankins; Gundersheimer et al.

³ Exemplary works include Kircher, 2012; Marsh; Blanchard, 1995; Quint.

⁴ See Rizzo, 1984; and more recent studies in *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*.

⁵ The literature on responses to Virgil is especially rich. Kallendorf, 2007; Kallendorf, 1999. See also Palmer; Pade, 2007; Pade, 2005.

⁶ Butcher, Czortek, and Martelli; Der Haan; Botley.

⁷ Baxandall, 5.

⁸ Celenza, 2004.

within their political and social milieu.⁹ Covering some of the same source material as Field, this article offers a different approach to a social history of intellectuals. It undertakes a close reading of Poggio Bracciolini's (1380–1459) letters to Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437), analyzing the range of ways in which Poggio adopted, adapted, and challenged the tropes of Ciceronian *amicitia*. The article argues that the collection can serve as a guide for understanding both the interconnections of the humanists' intellectual projects and the relational nature of their ideas and experience.¹⁰ The collection does not serve as a compendium of what humanism was in the 1430s; instead, it offers Poggio's self-conscious and status-conscious commentary on how he wanted others to see the movement—and his own role in it.¹¹

In 1437, Poggio published eighty-eight letters to Niccolò, accompanied only by a dedicatory epistle to Francesco Marescalco and his own funeral oration for Niccolò. Whereas most humanists (including Poggio himself in his later correspondence) addressed a range of fellow scholars, patrons, and other acquaintances, in the first volume of his letters Poggio privileges a single relationship.¹² Poggio's decision to publish a collection of letters to one friend was more than a sign of his loyalty to the controversial Niccolò.¹³ Poggio was following the model of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, which he had copied for Salutati as one of his first scribal projects.¹⁴ Poggio

⁹ Field.

¹⁰ For studies of how Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger critiqued the humanist project in his epistolary collection, see Kircher, 2018; McCahill, 2004.

¹¹ Cf. Blanchard, 1990. For a rich array of new perspectives on Poggio's varied projects, see the volume *Poggio Bracciolini and the Re(dis)covery of Antiquity*, listed in the Gaisser entry.

¹² In volumes 2 and 3 of Poggio's correspondence (Bracciolini, 1984), the greatest number of letters (seventeen) is addressed to Guarino Veronese, but they are interspersed throughout the collection. In total, Poggio published more than five hundred letters.

¹³ In this article, as in other discussions of publication prior to the printing press, "publish" indicates a broad and intentional circulation of a particular text in a particular form. For the importance of printing in spreading interest in letter collections, see Clough. On disjunctions between premodern and modern understandings of public and private letters, see Henderson, 2002. On the centrality of letters to the literature of the later Renaissance, see Guillen; Burke.

¹⁴ See Harth's introduction in Bracciolini, 1984, civ. In 1425, Poggio asked Niccolò to send a manuscript of the Atticus letters so that he could correct his copy. Bracciolini, 1984, 143 [Bracciolini, 1974, 88–89]. Because I have made changes to Gordan's translations, this article includes references to both the Latin and English texts of Poggio's letters to Niccolò; the square brackets indicate the English translation. Whereas Gordan arranges the letters by chronological order, Harth maintains Poggio's original organization of the letters, an editorial principle that Kircher has recently reaffirmed. Kircher, 2018. Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Bracciolini, 1984 refer to volume 1 of Harth's edition.

makes the connection between himself and Cicero explicit in a letter from 1425:

Cicero asked Atticus to buy certain books for him and the most learned man of all said that he wished to prepare a haven for his old age. Hence, if that man, with such learning, such wisdom, and with such a supply of books desired this most of all and he renewed his pleas very often, so that he seemed to want nothing more, what should I, a little man of no intelligence, do in my eagerness for and lack of books, especially books of my own? . . . For sometimes doctors do not cure the body but books always cure the soul.¹⁵

Here, Poggio uses the example of Cicero to justify the bibliomania that gripped the humanist community. If he is a new Cicero, Niccolò assumes the role of Atticus. Because Atticus's replies to Cicero's letters did not survive, the *Letters to Atticus* were an appropriate model for letters to Niccolò, who refused to preserve any of his writings due to his exacting standards for correct Latin.¹⁶ Poggio takes advantage of Niccolò's literary silence to create a text that, like Cicero's collection, offers one side of an extended dialogue.¹⁷ In a period when publishing Latin letters was becoming a standard part of a humanist's curriculum vitae, Poggio managed both to follow scholarly trends and to stake out a claim to originality.¹⁸

Throughout his letters to Niccolò, Poggio picks up themes or elements from Cicero's letters to Atticus, but, just as frequently, he deviates in significant ways from his model. Whereas Cicero presents his friendship with Atticus in a positive light, Poggio suggests that his interlocutor often fails to live up to ancient standards of friendship. Whereas the majority of the Atticus correspondence deals with Cicero's political career, Poggio argues that he and Niccolò should avoid political issues and devote themselves

¹⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 159–60 [Bracciolini, 1974, 98].

¹⁶ Niccolò's surviving literary legacy consists of two letters in the vernacular and one wish list of books. Stadter; Foffano.

¹⁷ On the publication of Cicero's letters to Atticus, see White, 31–61; Phillips.

¹⁸ After Petrarch discovered the letters *Ad Atticum* and *Ad Quintum fratrem* in 1345, he decided to create his own epistolary collection in imitation of Cicero; see Eden and the works cited therein. On Petrarch's editing and organization of his letter collections, see Velli; Bernardo, 1960; Bernardo, 1958. In this, as in many other areas of scholarship, the next two generations of humanists followed Petrarch's lead; Najemy, 1993, 25–31. For a call to a generational approach to humanist intellectual history, see Celenza, 2018. On continuing indebtedness to the *ars dictaminis* in humanist guides to letter-writing, see Henderson, 1993.

instead to literary *otium*.¹⁹ Poggio turns a minor thread of Cicero's letters—the consul's desire to form a library—into the principal focus of the correspondence.²⁰ Rhetorically, this topic gives Poggio an opportunity to demonstrate his skill at elaborating a Ciceronian theme far beyond his ancient model. As he dwells on each quotidian challenge of manuscript copying, editing, and, most especially, borrowing, Poggio asserts his commitment to recovering and preserving ancient texts. He also connects himself to Niccolò Niccoli's prestige, which depended, first, on his collection of manuscripts and, second, on his status as an exacting editor.

Yet for all Poggio's efforts to create a classical refuge that he and Niccolò can share, other realities intrude. In his discussions of *amicitia*, Poggio indicates the importance of his friendship with the Medici, as well as with Niccolò. In the quest for recently discovered texts to copy, the two friends have to rely on a broader network of manuscript enthusiasts. Most importantly, Poggio's desire for Niccolò's literary approval depends not just on the personal bond between the two men but also on their status in the fledgling humanist movement. Poggio's efforts to escape the struggle for place show just how inescapable this struggle was.²¹ In the letters to Niccolò, Poggio records his own frustrations with the humanist project even as he insists on his own special role in this project. Whereas Petrarch memorably scolded Cicero for failing to live up to his own philosophical ideals, Poggio suggests that such ideals may be unattainable.²² Like modern scholarship on Quattrocento humanism, Poggio's letter collection suggests that the movement included competing, even contradictory, priorities and beliefs. Cicero urged orators to demonstrate their ability to argue *in utramque partem*, or for and against any given position. One of the main purposes of publishing an epistolary collection was to demonstrate one's ability to actualize this rhetorical principle not just in writing but in social, political, and professional life, as well as in personal philosophy.

¹⁹ For an atypical letter, in which Poggio discusses his role in a papal controversy with Florence's Observant Franciscans, see Bracciolini, 1984, 91–95 [Bracciolini, 1974, 154–58]. Poggio's disgust with Florentine politics is particularly pronounced in the letters about the war with Lucca. Bracciolini, 1984, 107–08, 197–200 [Bracciolini, 1974, 165–66, 170–73]. See also Bracciolini, 1984, 57–59, 204–05 [Bracciolini, 1974, 75–77, 183–84]. For one instance when Poggio mentions political matters without saying that he and Niccolò should avoid them, see Bracciolini, 1984, 167 [Bracciolini, 1974, 105].

²⁰ Cicero expresses concern for his library mostly in the early part of his correspondence. See Cicero, 1999, 1:34–35, 44–45, 122–25, 136–37, 308–11 (*Ad Atticum* 1.7, 1.11, 1.20, 2.1, 4.4a).

²¹ Kircher, 2018; Celenza, 2004, 115–33.

²² Petrarch, 3:317–18 (*Familiares* 24.3).

WRITING FAMILIARLY

In his dedication letter to Francesco Marescalco, written in 1436, Poggio takes care to emphasize that his correspondence with Niccolò Niccoli is familiar, in the manner of Cicero. “I wrote about various domestic and private matters in these letters as occasion and the nature of my labors dictated, and I included whatever came to my tongue, so that I occasionally even used words in the *volgare* for diversion. The letters contain not only what I was doing or saying but even my worries and reflections, as if I were writing to my other self. I wrote them for the most part on the spur of the moment and quickly, with neither the leisure nor the intention of recopying them.”²³ In this first letter, Poggio claims to be sharing both passing fancies and his innermost thoughts. He describes Niccolò as Cicero did Atticus: as another self.²⁴ The hurried, unstudied nature of the correspondence is as important as its intimacy, or, rather, it is an essential component of the intimacy. The letters, according to Poggio’s dedication, form a sort of diary (albeit incomplete because some of the letters were lost) of his own experiences and reflections.²⁵

Poggio’s emphasis on the unstudied nature of his writing cannot be accepted literally and indeed presents a sort of riddle.²⁶ Like other humanists, he edited, rearranged, and revised his letters substantially before publishing them.²⁷ However, the dedication letter does speak to Poggio’s stylistic enterprise.²⁸ In the early Quattrocento, Ciceronianism did not yet demand the exact imitation of Cicero’s vocabulary and periodic sentence structure that became the ideal by the early sixteenth century. Poggio and his contemporaries favored a more general style of imitation, one that was loosely classicizing.²⁹ Poggio’s prose frequently adhered to medieval usages, but such usages also occurred in the

²³ Bracciolini, 1984, 3 [Bracciolini, 1974, 21].

²⁴ Poggio: “sed etiam tamquam ad me alterum scriberem.” Bracciolini, 1984, 3 [Bracciolini, 1974, 21]. Cicero: “ego tecum tamquam mecum loquor.” Cicero, 1999, 2:338–39 (*Ad Atticum* 8.14). On the extent to which this convention was about self-fashioning, even in antiquity, see Henderson, 2002.

²⁵ Poggio’s published letters to Niccolò include few from the periods 1416–20, 1424–26, and 1430–31. See Harth’s introduction in Bracciolini, 1984, xi–xiii. On Petrarch’s adoption of Cicero’s familiar style, see Eden, 49–61.

²⁶ Najemy, 1993, 32–33.

²⁷ Poggio sent some letters to multiple friends, as well as the intended recipient, before including them in his collection. See Harth’s introduction in Bracciolini, 1984, xix–xxiv, cii–civ.

²⁸ See Harth’s introduction in Bracciolini, 1984, cii–civ. On Poggio’s style more generally, see Field, 276–95.

²⁹ Witt, 392–442.

Latin of his most vociferous critic, Lorenzo Valla.³⁰ The modern editor of Poggio's dialogues argues that his colloquial style represents a conscious choice. Poggio's inclusion of vernacular words and phrases furthered his more general enterprise of reconnecting spoken and written Latin and demonstrating that, in antiquity, Latin belonged to all Romans, not just to a narrow elite.³¹ Thorough analysis of Poggio's epistolary Latinity and its relationship to classical models is a topic for another essay, but even a brief comparison of his letters with those of Cicero to Atticus shows that Poggio's sentences are notably shorter than Cicero's and his style less restrained. Again and again, Poggio uses superlatives where Cicero would, at most, employ a simple adjective. The use of superlatives is one way in which Poggio suggests that literary *amicitia* does not come to him as naturally as it did to Cicero.

If Poggio's imitation is not, primarily, about prose style, how, then, does he show his consciousness of Cicero as a model? He sprinkles clues, besides his initial insistence on a familiar approach, throughout the collection. For example, Cicero's first surviving missive to Atticus (68 BCE) begins with lamentations on the death of his cousin Lucius, and Poggio starts his collection with a letter on the loss of Salutati. Yet in spite of this similarity of topic, the two letters suggest different constellations of relationships. Cicero claims: "All the pleasure that one human being's kindness and charm can give another I had from him [Lucius]." Yet he devotes only a few sentences to his loss, quickly turning to other relationships. He writes of Atticus's sister (married to his brother, Quintus), a "certain person" (identified by Bailey as L. Luceius), and Tadius, also sending love from Terentia and Tullia.³² Thus, from the very beginning of the surviving correspondence, Cicero makes clear that his letters to Atticus represent more than a negotiation of a two-way relationship. Instead, and far more markedly as the correspondence progresses, they show the orator attempting to manage a range of increasingly complex interactions, most notably his own dealings with Pompey, Caesar, and Octavian.³³

By contrast, in his letter about Salutati and in most of his letters to Niccolò, Poggio prioritizes their relationship. He mentions other individuals in passing, usually because he wants Niccolò to pass on his good wishes (often to members of the Medici family) or because he hopes Niccolò will sympathize with his

³⁰ Rizzo, 2004. For the most thorough analysis of the fight between Poggio and Valla, see Camporeale, 90–94, 311–403. See also McLaughlin, 126–46.

³¹ Canfora.

³² Cicero, 1999, 1:29–33 (*Ad Atticum* 1.5).

³³ On the literary nature of Cicero's letters, in spite of the fact that he did not personally collect them for publication, see White, 89–115. On the publications of *Ad Atticum* see Beard, 116–18.

sense of ill-usage.³⁴ The Niccolò letters thus navigate a much smaller world than that of Cicero, and one more focused on the two correspondents. In 1420, Poggio writes, “I want to know what you are doing now, and how your spirits are, and what you are resolving on for the future.”³⁵ The sentence continues with more specifics, but Poggio’s desire to hear about Niccolò is the crucial point. Conversely, although Cicero too frequently insists, “I want to know,” his queries always involve the machinations of others. He wants to know what his allies and his opponents are doing, and he wants to know how Atticus interprets their actions. The correspondence is premised on the idea that, at a fundamental level, Cicero already understands Atticus.

As his own political position grew weaker and more embattled, Cicero appears to have taken delight in sharing the minutiae of his life with Atticus. At one point, he comments on his own letter: “What a ragbag this is! But that was just what I liked about your letter.”³⁶ Often, especially in times of distress, Cicero claims that writing to and receiving letters from Atticus serves as his sole comfort and the sole means of filling the void left by their separation.³⁷ Yet if Cicero sometimes describes the correspondence (and the friendship) as an end in itself, he also repeatedly refers to intimate details of his life or the lives of others for some practical purpose. Time and again, he asks for Atticus’s help, his oversight of some project, his political or financial support, and his advice.³⁸ In addition to requesting Atticus’s assistance with his library, Cicero also begs his friend to help him procure statues and bronzes.³⁹ He tells Atticus to oversee some brickwork, to take care of his estates, to watch over his finances, and to guide him through the quagmire of late republican politics. He asks for gossip when he is bored and for news when he is striving to negotiate his public role.⁴⁰

As he bewails the cowardice of Pompey, shudders under his exile as governor of Cilicia, discusses the progress of his literary works, and sticks doggedly to the rising Octavian, Cicero sees one thing as constant: Atticus’s affection for him. Early in the correspondence, in 61 BCE, Cicero emphasizes his dependence on his friend. “In short, whether working or resting, in business or in leisure, in

³⁴ On Poggio’s use of Niccolò as an intermediary in his relationship with the Medici, see Kircher, 2012, 115.

³⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 6 [Bracciolini, 1974, 34].

³⁶ Cicero, 1999, 2:122–23 (*Ad Atticum* 6.1).

³⁷ See, for example, Cicero, 1999, 2:226–33 (*Ad Atticum* 7.11, 7.12). Cicero begs Atticus to come to him most often in the early part of the correspondence. See, for example, Cicero, 1999, 1:46–47, 56–57, 96–97 (*Ad Atticum* 1.4, 1.12, 1.17).

³⁸ At one point, Cicero says that he feels Atticus is with him because he knows that his friend is busy with his business. Cicero, 1999, 4:48–49 (*Ad Atticum* 12.5a).

³⁹ Cicero, 1999, 1:36–41 (*Ad Atticum* 1.8–1.10).

⁴⁰ Cicero, 1999, 2:156–61, 3:170–73 (*Ad Atticum* 6.5, 10.14).

professional or domestic affairs, in public life or private, I cannot for any length of time do without your affectionate advice and the delight of your conversation.”⁴¹ Cicero reiterates this sense of dependence again and again in different situations. He says that there is no one else whom he finds so congenial, insists that time spent writing letters has been excellently invested because of the pleasure it has brought him, and claims that even in his grief at Tullia’s death he wants to be guided by Atticus.⁴² He expresses his reliance on Atticus’s devotion when the two are gossiping pleasantly and when his entire political future is at stake. At particularly difficult moments in his career, Cicero becomes querulous, but except for a few brief expressions of insecurity or complaints about perceived neglect, he appears to be contented with his loyal friend.⁴³

Cicero sometimes suggests that the primary purpose of Atticus’s assistance, and, indeed, of all interaction between those associated with Atticus or himself, is to increase the intimacy of the two *amici*. Denying that he supports the idea of a divorce between his brother Quintus and Atticus’s sister Pomponia, Cicero writes, “So far from wishing the bond between us to be in any way relaxed, I should welcome as many and as intimate links with you as possible, though those of affection, and of the closest, exist already.”⁴⁴ Yet if Cicero repeatedly emphasizes the importance of his attachment to Atticus, he also makes it clear that he sees their shared interest in *negotium* as a component of their intimacy, not a threat to it.⁴⁵ A letter written after Cicero’s return from exile reflects his understanding of the intertwining of practical services, affection, and political engagement. “Having, in the early days shared my error, or rather infatuation, and participated in my false alarm, you felt our severance most keenly and devoted a vast amount of time and zeal and patience and labour to bringing about my return. And so I sincerely assure you that in the plenitude of longed-for joy and congratulation one thing has been wanting to make my cup flow over: to see you, or rather to hold you in my arms. Once I win that happiness, if ever I let it go and if I do not also claim all the arrears of your delightful company that are owing to me, I shall really consider myself hardly worthy of this restitution of my fortunes.”⁴⁶ Here, rather than suggesting dichotomies

⁴¹ Cicero, 1999, 1:92–101 (*Ad Atticum* 1.17). Cicero discusses his relationship with Atticus at much more length than is usual in this letter, and he says that he is doing so because of troubles caused by Quintus.

⁴² Cicero, 1999, 2:16–17, 104–05; 3:326–29 (*Ad Atticum* 4.18, 6.1, 12.31).

⁴³ See Cicero, 1999, 1:248–57 (*Ad Atticum* 3.15), for an unusual expression of frustration with Atticus.

⁴⁴ Cicero, 1999, 2:133 (*Ad Atticum* 7.10).

⁴⁵ In fact, Atticus’s lack of involvement in politics may have been one of the preconditions for the “true” friendship that he shared with Cicero. Hutter, 134–35, 150–53.

⁴⁶ Cicero, 1999, 1:284–85 (*Ad Atticum* 4.1).

between service and friendship or between public and private life, Cicero emphasizes their interconnectedness.⁴⁷ His affection for Atticus stems, in part, from Atticus's support and advice, support and advice that come, in their turn, from Atticus's affection. In other words, Cicero presents his familiar style not as a literary convention but as a consequence of his relationship with Atticus, a relationship that includes many elements—financial, familial, political, literary, and cultural.⁴⁸

At various points in the main body of the collection, Poggio expresses affection for Niccolò that recalls Cicero's affection for Atticus. When Niccolò is planning a trip to Rome, Poggio can hardly contain his excitement: "We will talk together, we will live well night and day, we will unearth all vestiges of antiquity and converse about various things. Jupiter himself will not be happier than we. . . . There is nothing, my Niccolò, which would delight me more. O how happiness would be perfect and complete in every way, if Niccolò and Poggio could be in Rome together. Truly, I would rather have one of our chats than the papacy."⁴⁹ Here, Poggio insists that he considers Niccolò a unique partner in his love of all things ancient. In Rome especially, they will have an inexhaustible store of scholarly material to share and will be true intellectual brothers. Yet even as Poggio envisions an idyll of intimacy like that Cicero describes, he reminds the reader that he and Niccolò inhabit a different era. In a similar passage, Cicero says that he would rather forego the "Blessed Isles" than spend a whole day without Atticus.⁵⁰ Poggio not only translates this sentiment from a pagan to a Christian (and a Greek to a Neo-Latin) context but also displays his penchant for irony: little in his oeuvre suggests that he sees the papacy as either an enviable or a blessed position.

A letter of January 1420 contains several familiar Ciceronian tropes: Poggio claims that he is writing, although he has nothing new to report, because doing so brings him closer to what he really wants—a comfortable chat. At the same time, he begs Niccolò to write, as nothing brings him more delight than Niccolò's letters, and the longer they are, the better.⁵¹ By June, though, Poggio is frustrated with his correspondent. "I was somewhat angry with you because you did not reply to my letters. Since I did not know the reasons for your silence, I decided to stop writing as well, returning tit for tat. . . . To be

⁴⁷ Compare Cicero's theoretical statement of the role of services in friendship. Cicero, 1923, 138–41, 160–63 (*De amicitia* 8.26–28, 14.49–51).

⁴⁸ White, 18–29.

⁴⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 72–73 [Bracciolini, 1974, 84–85].

⁵⁰ "μακκάρων νησολ": Cicero, 1999, 3:263 (*Ad Atticum* 12.3).

⁵¹ Bracciolini, 1984, 6 [Bracciolini, 1974, 35].

silent for a long period harms a friendship. It wastes away, or at least cools, when friends are apart unless it is sustained with frequent letters and mutual confidences. Although the love between us is not the type that would suffer even from the longest silence, the rules of friendship must still be preserved.”⁵² Cicero occasionally exhorted Atticus to write, but Poggio’s complaints about Niccolò’s lack of responsiveness reappear frequently throughout the collection.⁵³ So too does the type of emotional argumentation *in utramque partem* exhibited in the prior passage. On the one hand, failure to write damages a friendship. On the other hand, the friendship of Poggio and Niccolò is so strong that it does not depend on letters. Nevertheless, Niccolò still has a duty to write. Cicero advocated this rhetorical style; in *On the Orator*, Crassus praises the ability to argue for and against a variety of positions as one of the essential skills of a true orator.⁵⁴ The letters to Atticus include such argumentation, especially when Cicero is trying to decide on a political move, but the former consul almost never expresses conflicting emotions about his friend.⁵⁵

Poggio’s periodic expressions of frustration with Niccolò grow more pronounced as the correspondence develops and his own professional position becomes more secure.⁵⁶ From 1420 to 1422, while Poggio is in England working for Cardinal Henry Beaufort, he seeks Niccolò’s advice about whether he should return to Italy and about his career prospects there.⁵⁷ In these eighteen letters, he is struggling to find his way financially, socially, and intellectually, and most of his complaints involve other friends.⁵⁸ Poggio may have been generally satisfied with Niccolò’s attentiveness, but, in the early 1420s, he looks to Niccolò as a mentor whom he wants to impress. In one letter, he notes that he has been pestering Niccolò with the same questions and concerns. “But I do this primarily from a desire to speak to you and to discuss my affairs and if we were together you would not wonder or judge me fickle because I seem to change my mind so often.”⁵⁹ Once Poggio returns to Italy and his

⁵² Bracciolini, 1984, 10 [Bracciolini, 1974, 37].

⁵³ See, for example, Cicero, 1999, 3:31 (*Ad Atticum* 9.7).

⁵⁴ Cicero, 1997, 84–87 (*De oratore* 3.27.107–09).

⁵⁵ A letter from Thessalonica serves as a notable exception. Cicero, 1999, 1:248–57 (*Ad Atticum* 3.15).

⁵⁶ Poggio worked as a member of the Curia, first as scribe and then, from 1403 to 1415, as secretary, but when John XXIII was deposed by the Council of Constance, he lost his position. On Poggio’s career, see Bigi and Petrucci.

⁵⁷ Poggio’s hesitation about whether to stay in England or return to Italy forms the central topic of eighteen letters and recalls Cicero’s waffling about whether and when to follow Pompey. Bracciolini, 1984, 5–59 [Bracciolini, 1974, 33–77].

⁵⁸ For one querulous passage, see Bracciolini, 1984, 40 [Bracciolini, 1974, 52].

⁵⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 32 [Bracciolini, 1974, 66].

post as papal secretary, he writes with less deference and seems to regard himself as Niccolò's equal.⁶⁰ As his self-confidence grows, so too does his willingness to criticize his correspondent.

Increasingly, Poggio objects not just to the infrequency of Niccolò's letters but also to their tone. Niccolò, Poggio suggests, was absurdly touchy, ready to take offense at the slightest perceived insult and unwilling to tolerate any difference of opinion. His excessive sensitivity made the correspondence into a minefield, as Poggio indicates in the following passage. Apparently, Niccolò was displeased with the tone or manner in which Poggio asked for some parchment:

Either your ears (which are averse to whatever they hear unwillingly) are too tender or, worn out with grief, you wrote a letter somewhat more vehement than usual, or you were annoyed by my letter because there were some words in the *volgare*. Yet why was it suitable to write such a long tragedy and undertake such empty work because of some parchment, which I would rather burn than bring you such vexation? You absolve yourself and you attempt to show that you acted well, repeating some old things, which I do not remember writing and which I know were meant as a joke. Why do you need to make such a harangue? When I next write to you, I will use a plumb line to measure out my prose, or I will set up a scale to weigh individual words, and I will say nothing that is not friendly, polite, refined, and humble.⁶¹

Although Poggio's request for parchment apparently precipitated Niccolò's ill humor, here Poggio does not focus on the importance of services in supporting a friendship. Instead, he bewails Niccolò's sensitivity and faultfinding. Because Poggio cannot speak his mind freely, he cannot share himself. In other letters, Poggio asserts more explicitly that Niccolò's touchiness threatens the openness appropriate to their intimacy and that it represents both a literary and a social danger.⁶² Poggio cannot write with Ciceronian familiarity to an addressee who does not understand the rules of familiar letters. Whereas Cicero suggests that Atticus makes him better than he would otherwise be, Poggio presents himself as the exemplary friend, at least in dealing with the practical services that are a key component of a Ciceronian friendship.⁶³

⁶⁰ Upon his return to the Curia, Poggio served as a papal secretary for more than thirty years, amassing a fortune that was equivalent to that of Florence's oligarchic families. Martines, 123–27.

⁶¹ Bracciolini, 1984, 192 [Bracciolini, 1974, 133].

⁶² Bracciolini, 1984, 175 [Bracciolini, 1974, 112].

⁶³ Cicero, 1999, 2:140–41 (*Ad Atticum* 6.2).

At times, Poggio attempts to include Niccolò in quotidian details of his life, just as Cicero did with Atticus. But the older scholar fails to reply with sympathy. In one letter, Poggio describes a day of inscription hunting at Ferentino, a topic that seems likely to interest Niccolò given their shared study of ancient epigraphy.⁶⁴ Much to the amazement of the local inhabitants, Poggio reads an inscription high up on a tower and covered with vines. Two girls ease his labors; “I very often directed my tired eyes to them, looking at them as if at a mirror to invigorate my gaze.”⁶⁵ Niccolò seems to have returned an unfavorable reply. In his next letter, Poggio expresses irritation as he defends his preference for copying inscriptions in attractive company. “You are certainly a tasteless and churlish man, who always interprets whatever I write in the worst possible way. I did not write about the young girls to deceive you but to explain what happened. Are you a Stoic in such a matter and would you have turned away your eyes in time? . . . Do you see me doing anything without humanity and benevolence? If you are uncultivated and rude, keep to your own habits. I am a man more inclined to gentleness and friendship.”⁶⁶ Here, as so often, the absence of Niccolò’s responses and the sculpted nature of Poggio’s letters frustrate the (modern) reader, forestalling any conclusions about the real nature of the dialogue between the two men. But the theme of Niccolò’s unsociability, his desire to separate himself from frivolous behavior, and his criticism of it in others reappears throughout Poggio’s letters. For example, Poggio writes happily of the small party he held to celebrate his fiftieth birthday, but in the next letter to Niccolò he defends the event, accusing his correspondent of being stingy and inhospitable.⁶⁷

In the last several decades, historians of Florence have examined the difficulties of maintaining friendships in a patronage-based society. Analyzing the letters of the Florentine notary Lapo Mazzei to the merchant Francesco di Marco Datini (written between 1390 and 1410), Richard Trexler emphasized the notary’s sense of inferiority in his dealings with his richer friend.⁶⁸ Other scholars have traced the ways in which the Medici used the language of friendship to consolidate their political power; expressions of affection were not confined to social relationships in this period but, instead, acted as a lubricant to political,

⁶⁴ Humanist minuscules were based on pre-Gothic models; for the majuscules, Poggio and others looked to ancient inscriptions, and in 1429, Poggio published the *Sylloge*, a collection of inscriptions he had seen and recorded. On the later development of Poggio’s inscription work, see Stenhouse.

⁶⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 181 [Bracciolini, 1974, 129].

⁶⁶ Bracciolini, 1984, 183 [Bracciolini, 1974, 130].

⁶⁷ Bracciolini, 1984, 171 [Bracciolini, 1974, 109].

⁶⁸ Trexler, 131–58.

financial, and religious dealings.⁶⁹ In fact, terms like *faith* and *love* tend to appear more frequently in letters from men of lower social status to patrons or potential patrons.⁷⁰ As aptly summarized by Ronald Weissman, “‘True’ friendships were utilized for advancement, as one was entitled to do; but reciprocity often became a problem and a cause of shame and resentment when the deficit grew too large. Remaining and maintaining friends in a patronage-based society was a continuous problem.”⁷¹ Whatever the toll of balancing emotional intimacy and more pragmatic considerations may have been, it was a challenge that Renaissance Florentines shared with late republican Romans.⁷² Romans had an elevated conception of friendship, but they employed the same emotional language of intimacy and affection when they were writing to their clients, their political enemies, and their personal friends.⁷³

Poggio’s letters to Niccolò demonstrate that love for the *studia humanitatis* did not magically heal the tensions and divisions of epistolary *amicitia*. In spite of Poggio’s poignant image of himself and Niccolò gamboling lightheartedly through Rome’s ruins, enthusiasm for classical scholarship bred distrust, animosity, competition, jealousy, and even hatred at least as frequently as it promoted idealized friendship.⁷⁴ Dialogues present interactions between scholars as restrained, cordial, and removed from practical concerns.⁷⁵ In his letters, Poggio offers a grittier picture of relations between humanists.⁷⁶ To a certain extent, this distinction mirrors that between the *Letters to Atticus* and Cicero’s dialogue *On Friendship*; Cicero’s letters show him putting his idealized model of friendship into action at the same time that he pursues a myriad of other goals. Although his relationship with Atticus may have approached or even reached the ideal described in *On Friendship*, Cicero’s letters maintain a practical, quotidian tone and only occasionally focus on the tropes of intimacy. As just described, Poggio rarely experiences the perfect harmony with Niccolò that Cicero claims to share with Atticus. The following section explores Poggio’s discussion of manuscripts, tracing the ways in which the desire for

⁶⁹ McLean, 90–169; Molho; Kent, 1978, 83–135.

⁷⁰ McLean, 114–20.

⁷¹ Weissman, 56. Cf. Kent, 2009, 1–14.

⁷² For similar dynamics in the later republic of letters, see Goldgar.

⁷³ Hall, 127–29; Hutter, 133–74.

⁷⁴ Poggio was one of the most vituperative and prolific authors of invectives, but he had many compatriots in this genre.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Bruni, 1994; Bracciolini, 1994, 1998, and 2008. Alberti’s dialogue about friendship in book IV of *I Libri della Famiglia* offers a considerably less idealized image of friendship than that found in *De amicitia*. Hyatte, 172–94.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kircher, 2018; McCahill, 2004.

ancient texts both strengthened his ties to Niccolò and increased tension between the two *amici*.

A HAVEN FOR BOOKS

In asking for Niccolò's assistance with building a library, as in his discussions of epistolary friendship, Poggio draws on a theme of the Cicero-Atticus correspondence. However, it is a minor theme. In one of his first letters, Cicero praises Atticus's collection, and on a few occasions, he requests that Atticus procure scrolls for him.⁷⁷ One of the most efficient ways of expanding a library in the late republic was to obtain the collection of someone who had died, and in 60 BCE Cicero was eager for Atticus to procure the holdings of one Servius Claudius.⁷⁸ However, Atticus's assistance represents more than simply a practical favor. "Now if you love me and know that I love you, do make every possible effort, through your friends, clients, guests, even your freedmen and slaves, to see that not a page goes astray. I badly need both the Greek books and the Latin—I know he left the latter and suspect the former. More and more the longer I live I find relaxation in these studies in whatever time I have to spare from my legal work. I shall be most, *most* grateful if you will take the trouble over this you always do take when you think I really care about something."⁷⁹ Here, as elsewhere in the collection, Cicero transforms his requests to Atticus from mundane practical matters into emotional declarations. In ensuring that no page goes astray, Atticus will make Cicero's leisure possible and thus enact the tie between the two men. Practical assistance of any sort becomes the evidence for and, in fact, the substance of affection. However, most of Cicero's library-related requests are briefer. In 67 BCE he writes, "Please give some thought to how you are to procure a library for me as you have promised. All my hopes of enjoying myself as I want to do when I get some leisure depend upon your kindness."⁸⁰ Here again, Atticus's services demonstrate his concern for Cicero, but Cicero only mentions this in passing.

Because of the paucity of Cicero's library references, with this topic Poggio can flaunt his ability to elaborate on and embellish a classical source. At the same time, at least in the original letters on which the published collection was based, he was negotiating the access to manuscripts that was essential to his scholarly reputation. The Niccolò letters undoubtedly represent a literary

⁷⁷ Cicero says that if he can make Atticus's books his own, he will be richer than Crassus. Cicero, 1999, 1:48–49 (*Ad Atticum* 1.4).

⁷⁸ For more on Cicero's book borrowing and lending, see Dix.

⁷⁹ Cicero, 1999, 1:122–25 (*Ad Atticum* 1.20).

⁸⁰ Cicero, 1999, 1:34–35 (*Ad Atticum* 1.7).

exercise, but they also provide a window onto the manuscript culture of the early Quattrocento, a milieu long prone to exaggerated characterizations.⁸¹ As discussed below, many of Niccolò's contemporaries condemned him as a cruel pedant who stifled literary production. Conversely, drawing on the earlier testimonies of Poggio and Giannozzo Manetti, Vespasiano da Bisticci extolled Niccolò's library as the hub of Florence's classical revival.⁸² More recently, Stephen Greenblatt has offered a romantic account of Poggio's manuscript hunting and the discovery of Lucretius's *On the Nature of Things*.⁸³ Poggio's letters to Niccolò provide a useful corrective to such idealized accounts and a more quotidian picture of life in the trenches of classical scholarship. The practical details of sharing, copying, and editing also appear in the letters of contemporary scholars, but they do not explore these topics in as much detail as Poggio. Leonardo Bruni circulated more letters to Niccolò than to any other individual, and his occasional brief mentions of manuscripts highlight the specificity and level of detail in Poggio's discussions.⁸⁴

Poggio's letters to Niccolò do not record his searches for lost texts during the Council of Constance, his most productive period of manuscript hunting.⁸⁵ Niccolò may indeed have lost the letters from this period (as Poggio intimates in a letter not included in the official collection), but Poggio may also have chosen to emphasize later letters in which he was no longer an errand boy and enjoyed a greater degree of equality with Niccolò.⁸⁶ In missives from England (1418–22), Poggio complains about British libraries and replies irritably to Niccolò's apparent urgings for further investigation; he will not follow every rumor that reaches Niccolò and should be trusted to make accurate assessments of the value of libraries' holdings.⁸⁷ On his return trip to Italy, Poggio mentions a copy of book XV of Petronius, which he had copied while he was in Cologne.⁸⁸ In a 1429 letter, he announces his discovery of a treatise by Julius Frontinus on aqueducts and an incomplete text of Firmicus

⁸¹ See Field; Holmes, 1–105.

⁸² On Niccolò's library, see Manfredi; Stadter and Ullman.

⁸³ Greenblatt, 2011, 1–50, 110–81, 203–18.

⁸⁴ Davies, 109.

⁸⁵ In addition to *De rerum natura*, Poggio found ten previously unknown orations by Cicero, Asconius's commentary on five Ciceronian orations, a complete Quintilian, Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*, and texts by Silius Italicus, Manilius, Statius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Tertullian, Petronius, and Propertius. Reynolds and Wilson, 136–38; Sabbadini, 1:75–84, 191–93. For Poggio's letter to Guarino on the discovery of Quintilian, see Bracciolini, 1984, 2:154–56. For a transhistorical contextualization of Poggio's book-hunting, see Gaisser.

⁸⁶ Bracciolini, 1984, 230 [Bracciolini, 1974, 186].

⁸⁷ Bracciolini, 1984, 14, 26–27 [Bracciolini, 1974, 42, 59–60].

⁸⁸ Bracciolini, 1984, 65 [Bracciolini, 1974, 79].

Maternus's *Mathesis* at Monte Cassino.⁸⁹ For the most part, however, Poggio's letters deal with texts that are already available, at least to some members of the humanist community.

In Poggio's letters, Niccolò does not appear as an openhanded patron. Instead, he is often as stingy with his books as with other favors. In spite of this, Poggio persists, writing to Niccolò repeatedly with pleas for manuscript loans. The following passage encapsulates Poggio's cajoling:

I am waiting for *Against Apion the Grammarian*, which I will add to the history. Take care about this so that I have it before Christmas. The first and second books of the fourth decade (of Livy) are so brief that they do not exceed seven folios. Write me if the same is true in your copy. I know that you do not need Cicero's orations right now. I, however, need them very much, for they are my only copy. I also know that you do not write in winter. If, nevertheless, you want to have them at all times, I will send the volume that you prefer first, and when you have finished, I will send the other. In this way, we can both be satisfied.⁹⁰

Poggio not only wants but also expects Niccolò to share his manuscripts. He claims to know what Niccolò is reading and copying; anything else, in his mind, should be available for his own use. Florence was a major center of parchment production, and Poggio occasionally asks Niccolò to send him shipments of parchment so that he or the scribes he hires can copy Niccolò's precious manuscripts.⁹¹ More often, he simply asks to borrow a particular manuscript. Although Poggio attempts to be accommodating in the passage just quoted, at other times he berates Niccolò for a lack of promptness and attention.⁹² His complaints may reflect real frustration, but, in the context of the collection, they also contribute to Poggio's overall self-portrayal. By emphasizing Niccolò's negligence and his own patience, Poggio offers additional proof of his literary commitments; he implies that no one but a true classical enthusiast would put up with Niccolò's ill humor, even for the sake of his precious library.

Poggio does not write about manuscripts simply to record Niccolò's negligence, however. He also presents his correspondent as a partner in the vast project of enlarging and editing the classical corpus.⁹³ In the early

⁸⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 210–11 [Bracciolini, 1974, 146–47].

⁹⁰ Bracciolini, 1984, 193 [Bracciolini, 1974, 134].

⁹¹ On Florentine parchment, see Rizzo, 1984, 14. At least sixteen letters contain parchment requests, such as Bracciolini, 1984, 148 [Bracciolini, 1974, 91–92]. Poggio gives directions about the binding of manuscripts less frequently. Bracciolini, 1984, 112, 212–13 [Bracciolini, 1974, 118–19, 147–48].

⁹² Bracciolini, 1984, 89–90 [Bracciolini, 1974, 153–54].

⁹³ On the influence of Niccolò's carefully compiled list of manuscript desiderata, see Stadter, 747–59.

1400s, humanist scholars and their patrons eagerly sought new texts and rare manuscripts; these volumes were prestige items, valuable for the cultural cache they offered as well as for their insight into the hallowed world of antiquity.⁹⁴ According to Poggio, he and Niccolò are unique, or at least highly unusual, in their ability to value manuscripts accurately. Although Poggio urges Niccolò not to long for imagined riches, he is hardly immune to the excitement of new discoveries.⁹⁵ In February 1429, he reports on a library inventory from Nicolas of Cusa; the most exciting item is a volume with twenty comedies of Plautus.⁹⁶ In April, Poggio writes in more detail of his eagerness to see the manuscript. “When the letter of Nicolas was shown to me, instantly when I came to the names of the comedies of Plautus, I cried out that a great discovery had been made, and immediately taking up a pen with a swift hand I wrote a list, which I send to you with this letter. The others at first considered this nothing, but alerted by me as to what they were ignoring, they began to value the comedies greatly, as is the custom of the unlearned.”⁹⁷ Poggio does not identify these “unlearned” men; presumably, because he is writing from Rome, they are members of the Curia. However, unlike Niccolò, they are too steeped in the habit of the ignorant [*mos imperitorum*] to appreciate the importance of the Plautus discovery.

As it happens, this happy moment is only the beginning of the Plautus saga. In July, Poggio writes that Nicolas has still not come to Rome and that Cardinal Orsini has refused to send someone to fetch the manuscript. In May 1430, Nicolas finally brings the Plautus manuscript (though with only sixteen comedies, twelve of which are unknown) to Rome. Unfortunately, as of September, Cardinal Orsini still refuses to lend it for copying.⁹⁸ In January of the following year, Poggio has given up hope of reading the manuscript.

So far, I have not been able to use the Plautus, and now if I could, I would not wish to, and I promise you that I will not ask for it again from the cardinal, and I will not read it for more than three years even if it is given to me. It is being transcribed and will be sent as a gift to the duke of Milan, who asked for it by letter. The Marquis of Ferrara also seeks it; it will be given to them, but corrupted, so that truly it seems to return home by way of an ignorant people. Our man (Cardinal Orsini) wants honor from this book, as if its recovery were a triumph or as if he discovered it by his own zeal or expense.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Grafton, 1997, 11–52.

⁹⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 35–36 [Bracciolini, 1974, 49–50].

⁹⁶ Bracciolini, 1984, 78–79 [Bracciolini, 1974, 135–36].

⁹⁷ Bracciolini, 1984, 206 [Bracciolini, 1974, 138].

⁹⁸ Bracciolini, 1984, 215, 104, 107 [Bracciolini, 1974, 149–50, 160–61, 164–65].

⁹⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 97 [Bracciolini, 1974, 174–75].

The community of Italian bibliophiles was small, elite, and closely interconnected. Although he cannot match the wealth of dukes and cardinals, Poggio insists on his superiority as a reader and editor. After noting that Orsini has added some lines of his own and asked Antonio Loschi to write an introduction to the manuscript, Poggio insists that “No one, believe me, can transcribe Plautus well if he is not most learned.”¹⁰⁰ This unhappy ending is the (chronologically) last mention of Plautus in the Niccolò letters; the saga spans almost two years of correspondence, a period which accounts for twenty-two of the eighty-eight letters.¹⁰¹ By including letters about the Plautus manuscript in his collection, Poggio suggests his special role within the humanist community; after all, the crotchety arbiter of Florentine humanism looks to him for news about important manuscript affairs. Unfortunately, in this instance at least, Niccolò did not treat Poggio as a privileged player. Poggio eventually got his hands on the Plautus manuscript, but more than two years after Niccolò had copied the treasured text.¹⁰²

Although Niccolò did not share the Plautus manuscript with his friend, the two collaborated in editing other ancient texts and in reforming the script in which they were copied. Even before his manuscript discoveries, Poggio won a place for himself in humanist circles by his skill in copying manuscripts using the new *litterae antiquae*.¹⁰³ The letters contain little explicit discussion of script or of editing, but these concerns run as an undercurrent throughout the correspondence. By the time of the Niccolò correspondence, Poggio was copying manuscripts for himself, not for hire, and he also employed scribes, a constant source of tribulation. “I have a scribe with a rude intellect and rustic manners. Now for four months I have done nothing other than teach him, so that he might learn to write, but I fear that I am plowing the seashore. He is copying Valerius, in which he shows his ignorance, and each day he becomes more stupid. Thus I shout, I thunder, I scold, I rebuke, but his ears are blocked. He is leaden, a blockhead, a dolt, an ass, or whatever term there is for someone yet more stupid and inept. The gods curse him! He is tied to me for two years, perhaps he will improve.”¹⁰⁴ Although this is an especially harsh critique, Poggio tends to speak negatively of his scribes. He assumes that Niccolò will

¹⁰⁰ Bracciolini, 1984, 97 [Bracciolini, 1974, 175].

¹⁰¹ Poggio mentions the Plautus manuscript in seven letters.

¹⁰² Niccolò copied the Plautus in 1431, while it was on loan to Lorenzo de' Medici. On his emendations, see Cappelletto. Poggio only obtained access to it in 1433 or 1434, and at this point he corrected the text. Questa, 184–207. Not all of Poggio's manuscript wishes came to fruition, however. On his efforts to retrieve the lost *Decades* of Livy, see Rubinstein.

¹⁰³ De Robertis; De la Mare; Meiss; Ullman, 21–58.

¹⁰⁴ Bracciolini, 1984, 112 [Bracciolini, 1974, 119].

sympathize with this exasperation and his exacting notion of how a text should be copied. One of the principal criteria is a good humanist hand; in another letter, Poggio mentions teaching a scribe the “*litteras antiquas*,”¹⁰⁵ and he rejects one exemplar from Niccolò because it is written in a Lombard script and is thus “for the most part, illegible.”¹⁰⁶

Although Poggio does not mention script and scribal issues as often as he makes manuscript requests, he still wants Niccolò to be involved in his progress. Manuscript production constitutes his chief connection to his correspondent even when he does not need assistance. For example, one letter discusses an editing project.¹⁰⁷ “I have been correcting the *Philippics* of Cicero with this ancient manuscript, which was written so childishly, so erroneously, that what I have written in it was not the work of conjecture but of divination. No girl is so ignorant, so silly, that she could not have written more correctly; but you know that I am keen enough in such matters. I was not able to correct it all, however, because the last two speeches are wanting and some parts are missing in the remaining ones. We have gained much nevertheless . . . I will bring my *Philippics* with me when I come so that you may use it as long as I am with you.”¹⁰⁸ This passage suggests the care devoted to emendation; in addition to correcting errors of spelling and word division, Poggio also collated the exemplar he was reading with another copy of the *Philippics*.¹⁰⁹ This painstaking process was often a collaborative effort, involving the comparison of various manuscripts as well as the sharing of corrections. In their article on the *Carmina* of Catullus copied (they suggest) by Poggio, Albinia de la Mare and Douglas Thomson distinguish two separate efforts by Salutati to emend his copy: the first set of corrections was copied directly into the text and the second set added later.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Lucia Labardi, looking at a manuscript of Valerius Flaccus, identifies corrections by Poggio, Niccolò (who made corrections on at least two separate readings), and (perhaps) a third corrector.¹¹¹

The above summary sketches the manuscript issues that Poggio includes in his letters to Niccolò but does not illustrate their pervasiveness. Almost all of the letters (especially those written after Poggio’s return from England) contain some mention of manuscript matters, and often they are the primary topic.

¹⁰⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 156 [Bracciolini, 1974, 96].

¹⁰⁶ Bracciolini, 1984, 83 [Bracciolini, 1974, 117].

¹⁰⁷ Correcting might occur before or after copying. Rizzo, 1984, 259.

¹⁰⁸ Bracciolini, 1984, 177 [Bracciolini, 1974, 126].

¹⁰⁹ Rizzo, discussing Poggio’s editing of the *Philippics*, notes only one mistake in his corrections. Rizzo, 1984, 337. See also Magnaldi.

¹¹⁰ De la Mare and Thomson. McKie challenges this assertion and argues that Salutati did not make two separate sets of corrections in the Catullus exemplar. See McKie.

¹¹¹ Labardi, 190–94.

Philologists, epigraphers, and historians of manuscripts have worked painstakingly to reconstruct the techniques and assumptions that humanists used as they produced copies of classical texts. Poggio's letters provide a narrative to accompany these careful analyses. Although they do not give the same detail as close study of the manuscripts that Poggio and Niccolò used, they offer insight into the experience of undertaking such work. Poggio's frustration with the Plautus affair, his disgust with unlearned scribes, and his impatience with Niccolò's dilatory loans all illustrate the challenges of being part of an avant-garde movement that was seen by many as excessively pedantic.¹¹²

Poggio spends little time discussing the significance of the texts he works so hard to procure. He does not analyze individual works at any length, but occasionally he speaks about the benefits of a library, which will provide him a *praesidium* or *suppellectilem*, a safe and comfortable space to which he may retreat.¹¹³ Although the sentiment is Ciceronian, the word choice is not. Cicero writes of a library as bringing pleasure and peace, but Poggio employs a more defensive and tangible terminology.¹¹⁴ "For I want to prepare some stock of books for myself so that someday I may live quietly with these things, which we desire. Therefore I consider that, with the useless cares of these burdening affairs dismissed, our spirit should be born to our studies, and, especially when present events are displeasing, be free for past things, which lead one a little from these upsetting matters. I, in the manner of our Terence, have resolved in my spirit that many adverse things will happen; to these things I have resigned myself without anxiety, if anything comes contrary to hope, thinking it a gain."¹¹⁵ At some points, Poggio emphasizes the evils of the times. At others, he argues that the fault is human nature, which seeks disquiet. But throughout the letters, his philosophical musings always emphasize the need to distance oneself from the wider world. In part, this reflects the Stoic philosophy that Poggio and his contemporaries learned from Cicero and Seneca.¹¹⁶ Occasionally, there are religious overtones to Poggio's call to withdraw from the world.¹¹⁷ A few of Poggio's evocations of peace and reflection sound especially personal. On his fiftieth birthday he writes at length about his determination that this occasion should mark the beginning

¹¹² Holmes, 1–67.

¹¹³ Bracciolini, 1984, 72, 159 [Bracciolini, 1974, 84, 98].

¹¹⁴ This theme is particularly pronounced in Poggio's letters from England but continues even once he returns to Italy. For an example from London, see Bracciolini, 1984, 57–58 [Bracciolini, 1974, 75–76].

¹¹⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 200 [Bracciolini, 1974, 173].

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Bracciolini, 1984, 137 [Bracciolini, 1974, 86].

¹¹⁷ Bracciolini, 1984, 174 [Bracciolini, 1974, 111].

of his liberation from the vices and worldly cares that plague men.¹¹⁸ The last letter of the collection offers the promise that at “some point I shall live for myself alone, removed from public cares.”¹¹⁹

Yet in spite of such pronouncements, the correspondence as a whole does not suggest a strong desire on Poggio’s part to disengage from public affairs and sequester himself in study of antiquity. Hans Baron argued that, at least until the 1420s, Poggio shared with Niccolò a fascination for antiquity that led him to disdain his own era.¹²⁰ However, it is difficult to pin a date to Poggio’s attitudes about public and private affairs. His calls for scholarly leisure often appear in the letters in which he deals most explicitly with contemporary events—his own efforts to return to the Curia, Niccolò’s fights with other scholars, the dismissal of Paolo Fortini as chancellor of Florence, the possibility of his own promotion, Florence’s war on Lucca. Thus, the dream of *otium* seems more like a response to frustration or the equivalent of a modern-day New Year’s resolution than like a coherent philosophy.

NICCOLÒ NICCOLI AS EDITOR

Even if an Elysium in the company of the ancients were possible for Poggio the reader, the correspondence implicitly acknowledges its impossibility for Poggio the writer. The act of publishing his letters to Niccolò demonstrated Poggio’s determination to advertise and promote his own scholarly reputation in the small but burgeoning literary marketplace. His addressee, though dead, played a vital role in this enterprise, since he was revered as an exacting arbiter of good Latin. Because scholarly honor was a particularly fragile commodity in the period before humanists had established regular positions in universities, chanceries, and courts, Niccolò’s critiques proved even more damaging than those of the typical exacting reviewer.¹²¹ One of the most evocative descriptions of Niccolò comes from Poggio’s dialogue *On the Unhappiness of Princes* (1440). Asked about his attitude to other scholars, the character Niccolò replies, “Many bother me, seeking to have me praise their stupidity. They bring something that they have produced—something tasteless, chaotic, inelegant, worthy only to be taken out to the latrine—and they want my opinion. I make a habit of speaking freely—for I cannot praise a poet if he is bad—and I tell the truth. I warn them not to publish, I forbid it, I reveal the work’s faults, I insist that their writings are not eloquent, weighty, stylish, prudent, written in good Latin or correct.

¹¹⁸ Bracciolini, 1984, 99–101 [Bracciolini, 1974, 161–63].

¹¹⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 215 [Bracciolini, 1974, 150].

¹²⁰ Baron, 404–09.

¹²¹ Grafton, 2000, 31–70. On humanist rivalry more generally, see De Keyser; Celenza, 2004, 115–33; Blanchard, 1990.

But some, shameless in their self-inflation, go away angry, complaining under their breath that I am moved by envy.”¹²² Here, Niccolò appears as an uber-critic, determined to reform the Latin of his day. In the most stirring modern defense of the ornery scholar, Ernst Gombrich argues that Niccolò’s apparent pedantry represented a vital stage in the development of humanism. His passion for standardizing script and spelling offered concrete ways in which humanists surpassed the schoolmen, paving the way for a small literary movement to become a Europe-wide phenomenon.¹²³

Whether or not Poggio approved of Niccolò’s editorial tone, he, like most of his contemporaries, sought the approbation of the man he described as the “censor of eloquence.”¹²⁴ Poggio’s maintenance of such a lengthy correspondence offers powerful, if indirect, testimony of Niccolò’s approval, and Poggio’s detailing of Niccolò’s complaints reminds the reader of the high standards of the letters’ original recipient. Furthermore, the theme of editorship again relates Poggio’s correspondence to his ancient model. Cicero repeatedly asks Atticus for feedback on his written works.¹²⁵ These requests, however, tend to be offhanded, whereas Poggio makes clear his respect for and fear of Niccolò’s judgment. In 1422, when Poggio is considering a job working for Piero Lamberteschi, he writes to Niccolò, “Read my letters [to Piero] and, if it seems to you that something in them should be changed, do as you think best; for I put both myself and my affairs in your hands.”¹²⁶ Poggio also asks Niccolò to vet two letters to Cosimo de’ Medici, one composed at the time of his father’s death and the other on the occasion of his exile; he tells Niccolò to tear up the former letter if he finds it unworthy rather than forwarding it covered with corrections.¹²⁷ However, it is Poggio’s account of Niccolò’s response to the dialogue *On Avarice* that best illuminates the latter’s editorial practice. Poggio repeatedly expresses his eagerness for and anxiety about Niccolò’s reaction to the dialogue. He admits that it does not approach the eloquence of the ancients but claims that Niccolò will approve of it if he judges it by contemporary standards.¹²⁸ When he finally receives Niccolò’s verdict, he writes, “Because I know your judgment to be acute and excellent in such

¹²² Grafton, 2000, 56–57. Davies describes this passage as Niccolò’s “authentic voice”: Davies, 128.

¹²³ Gombrich, 93–110. See also Manfredi.

¹²⁴ Bracciolini, 1964b, 273.

¹²⁵ On the role literary discussion plays in Cicero’s letters, see White, 89–115.

¹²⁶ Bracciolini, 1984, 45 [Bracciolini, 1974, 67].

¹²⁷ Bracciolini, 1984, 81 [Bracciolini, 1974, 137].

¹²⁸ Bracciolini, 1984, 207 [Bracciolini, 1974, 139]. In three additional letters, Poggio expresses his anxiety as he waits for Niccolò’s verdict. Bracciolini, 1984, 114, 194, 208–09 [Bracciolini, 1974, 139–42].

matters and because I have convinced myself that you love me, I decided that I would publish nothing without your approval: thus I attribute more weight to your judgment alone than to that of all other scholars.”¹²⁹ He then goes on to discuss Niccolò’s criticisms at some length and to defend his authorial choices.

Helene Harth, drawing on Poggio’s letters and two versions of the dialogue, argues that Niccolò commented on Poggio’s original text at a variety of levels and that Poggio made most of the revisions his friend recommended.¹³⁰ He changed the prominence of certain characters, removed attributions of ideas to patristic and medieval thinkers, and made some stylistic edits. Poggio’s responses to Niccolò’s comments are interesting in part for what is absent. Niccolò does not seem to have written anything about the nature of the argument, the structure of the work, or the moral positions involved. Instead, his concerns apparently centered on the portrayal of contemporary figures or stylistic issues. Thus, both Niccolò’s editing of *On Avarice* and the topics Poggio includes in his letters indicate that Niccolò was more interested in detailed editing than broad literary themes. Profound as Gombrich’s argument for Niccolò’s importance in Renaissance Florence remains, one can imagine his contemporaries growing annoyed by his insistence that it was the rediscovery of diphthongs, not the discovery of man, which represented the greatest intellectual achievement of the age.¹³¹

Although Poggio accepted most of Niccolò’s criticisms of *On Avarice*, in his letters he repeatedly insists on his independence from his mentor.¹³² Poggio was fifty-seven when he began circulating multiple copies of the Niccolò collection, with the letters organized as they are in Harth’s edition. It was one of the first works he chose to publish and considerably longer than *On Avarice* (1428), his comparison of Scipio and Caesar (1435), or *Whether an Old Man Should Marry* (1436).¹³³ Poggio’s intimacy with Niccolò was well known, and the recent death of the older scholar made it particularly important, in 1437, for him to clarify his own intellectual and professional persona. Niccolò’s detractors included some of the scions of early Quattrocento humanism, and Poggio could not afford to alienate them, or at least not all of them. The subsequent volumes of his correspondence demonstrate his ongoing efforts to negotiate relationships with Guarino Veronese and Leonardo Bruni, two of Niccolò’s fiercest critics, both before and after Niccolò’s death.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Bracciolini, 1984, 115 [Bracciolini, 1974, 143].

¹³⁰ Harth.

¹³¹ Gombrich, 110.

¹³² Field, 276–319; Fubini, 89–139.

¹³³ Bigi and Petrucci.

¹³⁴ McCahill, 2015, 131–41.

As modern scholars have noted, the attacks on Niccolò were coherent; some of them were probably rewritings of others.¹³⁵ Guarino, Brunì, Francesco Filelfo, and Alberti all devoted their literary talents to rebutting or belittling Niccolò; they accused him of bad language, vanity, envy and derision of true scholarship, using others to promote his own fame, a passion for minutiae, ingratitude, sexual improprieties (specifically with his housekeeper, Benvenuta), and, worst of all, the use of his library as a cloak to cover his ignorance. Filelfo, not known for mincing words, wrote, "For his [Niccolò's] hard and furious mind is not able to bear excellent and famous men. How can black vice be in harmony with bright virtue? How can the shadow bring light? Ovid is good for little nuggets; Statius bleats barbarous things; you are crazy, Lucan, with your trumpet. The muse of Vergil proclaims nothing excellent if it does not harmonize with you, great Priapus; Cicero himself is blamed for his eloquence; the shoe is sewed perversely and the cloth, if you do not hold the reins."¹³⁶ Although Filelfo is more vitriolic and direct than Guarino, Brunì, and Alberti, in all the invectives Niccolò appears as a Scrooge-like character, hoarding manuscripts rather than money. Niccolò's idea of Latin, according to his critics, was as narrow, crabbed, and finicky as the scholastic works that he and other humanists deplored. He was a barrier to creativity and literary progress, wanting only to dictate, never to offer constructive criticism.

Given the mixture of awe and dislike that surrounded Niccolò, there were strategic reasons for Poggio to present himself in his letters as Niccolò's devoted, single-minded protégé and also as a loyal but critical colleague. When writing in other genres, however, Poggio adopted a different stance. His invectives against Filelfo lambaste not only Filelfo himself but, by extension, all Niccolò's detractors.¹³⁷ The invectives emphasize Niccolò's virtue and learning; thus, the praise and blame prove mutually reinforcing. "There is no greater testimony of your crimes than that you dare to harm with bad words the man most ornamented with modesty and continence of all those who live. It is a common vice of the wicked that they hate the good, that they attack with evil words those whom they recognize to be superior in virtue and fame."¹³⁸ In short, Poggio uses the invectives to make moral pronouncements about the relation of good and evil, although he devotes more space and energy to accusing Filelfo of all sorts of sexual deviance. Rather than defending Niccolò's editorial style, Poggio focuses on his friend's good character.

¹³⁵ Davies offers an especially convincing account of these scholarly and social dynamics. See also Ponte; Baldassarri.

¹³⁶ Baldassarri, 27–28.

¹³⁷ On the accusations Poggio and Filelfo leveled against each other, see De Keyser.

¹³⁸ Bracciolini, 1964a, 165–66.

Poggio's most extended discussion of Niccolò, his funeral oration, offers a point-by-point response to Bruni's criticisms of the dead man.¹³⁹ In the oration, Poggio presents Niccolò as a model sage.¹⁴⁰ He was "a man of the most honest life, of singular modesty at every age, who joined knowledge of sacred letters with study of the humanities; he applied everything he read to cultivating a better life and to virtue."¹⁴¹ In his youth, Niccolò chose to study with Luigi Marsili and learned from him the importance of virtue as well as the richness of the *studia humanitatis*. Once he got older, he began collecting books, which he shared with all scholars. But he did not simply lend books. Thanks to his offices, Chrysoloras came to Florence to teach Greek, thereby bringing back knowledge of the richest part of the classical legacy. "O true parent of all learned men and hub of learning, how much Latin eloquence, learned men, how much those who study letters owe to your name!"¹⁴² Poggio goes on to praise Niccolò's prudence, continence, and probity and to claim that all devotees of the *studia humanitatis*, even those who did not know Niccolò, loved him. He ends by celebrating his friend's bequest of his books to San Marco as a public library.

Even to those familiar with the ferocity of academic infighting, the extent of the ire and adulation that Niccolò inspired seems extraordinary. Arthur Field has argued that it was their Medici partisanship, as much as or more than their ideas of correct Latin, which made Poggio and Niccolò controversial figures in Quattrocento Florence.¹⁴³ Niccolò's critics, most especially Bruni and Filelfo, supported the Florentine oligarchy. In attacking the refined bibliophile, they were attacking the radical culture he and other Medicean intellectuals promoted, one that condemned the writers of the Trecento as worthless, celebrated antiquity, and sought to share it with a non-aristocratic audience. Field argues that *On Avarice* represented a trial balloon and that Poggio began actively contributing to Medici ideology through his dialogues around the time of Niccolò's death.¹⁴⁴ Publishing his letter collection, and thus advertising his connection to Niccolò, can be interpreted as one more sign of Poggio's growing adherence to the Medici cause.

¹³⁹ For this reading of Poggio's funeral oration, see Wotke, 300–01.

¹⁴⁰ On the similarities between Poggio's praise of Niccolò and funeral orations for other humanists, see McManamon, 125–52.

¹⁴¹ Bracciolini, 1964b, 270.

¹⁴² Bracciolini, 1964b, 275.

¹⁴³ Field, 233–319. For studies of how other Quattrocento humanists used classical models to further their political and moral agendas, see Ianziti; O'Brien; Meserve, 65–116; Blanchard, 2007; D'Elia.

¹⁴⁴ Oppel makes a similar argument about the Scipio-Caesar debate between Poggio and Guarino, but Field's study offers a rethinking of the whole landscape of early Quattrocento Florence.

Political allegiances alone do not explain why Poggio chose to bring together his conflicting portrayals of Niccolò in one publication. In the context of the letter collection, the funeral oration seems exaggerated and, perhaps, hypocritical. The differences between the two texts serve, however, as a reminder of how important genre was, especially in the first few generations of Italian humanism. Throughout his literary career, Poggio sought to establish new modes of discourse, modes that he saw as witty, humane, and suited to the humanist movement.¹⁴⁵ The Niccolò letters can be read as a challenge to push the ancient idiom of epistolary friendship beyond a miscellany and into a more focused collection, one that develops themes (like friendship) and topics (like manuscript hunting) in discussion with one correspondent. Furthermore, by bringing together familiar letters and a funeral oration, Poggio models the rules of different rhetorical forms. The adulatory language of a funeral oration would be as inappropriate in letters between friends as grumbling about Niccolò's bad behavior would be in a text designed to celebrate its protagonist. Just as Niccolò wanted to correct errors in spelling, so Poggio sought to correct elisions between the familiar style of letters and the formality of epideictic. In a world in which the language of friendship was used to address patrons, as well as social equals, the mixing of these particular genres may have seemed like a particularly acute problem.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps Poggio was trying to warn contemporaries against resorting to overly servile language in their efforts to win endorsement. Perhaps he was suggesting that Medici partisans knew how to calibrate their language and were sensitive to literary as well as political decorum.

Yet at the same time that Poggio provides his contemporaries with lessons in the use of genre, he simultaneously demonstrates how destabilizing genre can be. By bringing together his complaints about Niccolò with his praise of him, Poggio suggests that character, that all-important Ciceronian category, is as subject to genre as any other topic.¹⁴⁷ Poggio does not present one Niccolò but many Niccolòs. It is still tempting to look for the authentic one, but in doing so readers may miss one of Poggio's key points. Niccolò Niccoli, like all historical actors, can be seen not just from two but from many sides. In fact, if he had not existed, his contemporaries might have had to invent him. No one else, in the early Quattrocento, served as such a fertile subject for rhetorical experimentation. The Niccolò of Poggio's funeral oration provides exactly the kind of moral and scholarly exemplar for whom humanists hoped. But the juxtaposition of him with the Niccolò of the letters undermines

¹⁴⁵ McCahill, 2013, 79–96.

¹⁴⁶ McCahill, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ On the importance of character in Cicero's letters, see Eden, 11–27. On his borrowing of Aristotelian rhetorical divisions, see Wisse, 222–49; May, 1–12.

the confident assumption that a revival of ancient rhetoric and ancient ideas about exemplarity will entail a revival of virtue.¹⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

In his oeuvre as a whole, Poggio presents different Niccolòs as he explores the demands of various genres. However, in his letters to Niccolò, he presents a reasonably consistent figure: an ornery bibliophile who enjoys his creature comforts.¹⁴⁹ What is the significance of pairing this figure with Cicero's Atticus? Poggio's epistolary portrait suggests that even the most devoted classicist of the age could not offer the type of dedication, love, and loyalty exhibited by Cicero's friend. In his seminal article on Bruni's *Dialogues*, David Quint argued that part of the energy and innovation of early Quattrocento humanists consisted in their willingness to doubt and disparage the confident time travel of Petrarch.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps antiquity was not accessible. Perhaps, even if accessible, it could never be equaled. Poggio's letters to Niccolò suggest a similar disillusionment. But to what extent is this disillusionment about an inability to equal the ancients? And to what extent does it entail a more radical doubt about antiquity's own ideals?¹⁵¹ In Poggio's letters, the comfort of *amicitia*, the delight of epistolary friendship, and the joy of writing familiarly are pleasures doomed to failure. Letters cannot, in fact, make the absent present. No one can be "another self." And this failure is not due simply to a lack of goodwill but to the fact that both the person writing and the person receiving the letters are rhetorical constructions.

In Cicero's *On Friendship*, the principal speaker, Scaevola, repeatedly insists that likeness is the principal basis of friendship; the friend is a sort of image of the self.¹⁵² Thus, at least in its most idealized form, Ciceronian friendship implies a similitude of character.¹⁵³ Poggio insists that he is a more loyal friend than Niccolò, but if his loyalty to Niccolò does not fluctuate, everything else about him does. He longs for the Curia. He wants only to get away from it. He claims that he wants his letters back because "this will bring us some honor and fame."¹⁵⁴ He insists that Niccolò's opinion is the only one that truly matters.¹⁵⁵ Tensions between *otium* and *negotium*, between inclusion

¹⁴⁸ Zak; Struever; Gray; Trinkaus.

¹⁴⁹ Field, 236–57.

¹⁵⁰ Quint.

¹⁵¹ Fubini, 89–139.

¹⁵² Cicero, 1923, 132–63 (*De amicitia* 7.23–14.14).

¹⁵³ For contextualization of Cicero's view on friendship, see Konstan, 122–35.

¹⁵⁴ Bracciolini, 1984, 230 [Bracciolini, 1974, 186].

¹⁵⁵ Bracciolini, 1984, 136–37 [Bracciolini, 1974, 86].

and exclusivity, between wanting to spread the revival of learning and wanting to keep it as a treasured private space, run throughout the correspondence. In exploring these tensions, Poggio evokes recurrent themes of Cicero's letters to Atticus.¹⁵⁶ But it is much less clear what he is saying about himself and, indirectly, about Cicero. Does Poggio the individual lack all firm convictions or is he simply showcasing his ability to argue *in utramque partem*? Is Poggio mirroring or mocking Cicero's vacillations? Do letters provide insight into character or are they simply a rhetorical exercise?

In *The Swerve*, Stephen Greenblatt presents Poggio as a "midwife to modernity" and, at the same time, as a strangely simple soul.¹⁵⁷ Against all odds, he makes his fortune thanks, first, to his handwriting and then to a passion for manuscripts that saves him from the cynicism natural to one immersed in the corruption of the papal court.¹⁵⁸ This article has argued that Poggio's book mania, far from being "unguarded, candid and authentic," represents an early example of the self-fashioning that Greenblatt himself made a hallmark of the English Renaissance.¹⁵⁹ As Poggio writes to Niccolò, as he imitates Cicero, as he longs to find a true Atticus, it becomes unclear whether Poggio himself has any identity that does not contain "within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss."¹⁶⁰ Yet, at least in his letters to Niccolò, Poggio does not seem to despair. The collection serves as an extended commentary on the relationship between scholarship, imitation, collaboration, intimacy, and personal experience, a commentary that is purposefully unresolved. Like Poggio's other writings, the Niccolò letters are less a model than an invitation to join a transhistorical conversation—with plenty of warnings that this conversation is not for the fainthearted.

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¹⁵⁶ For an instance where Cicero says that the *bona studia* should be shared, see Cicero, 1999, 2:302–03 (*Ad Atticum* VIII.11). For an example of his presentation of literary pursuits as an exclusive retreat, see Cicero, 1999, 1:170–73 (*Ad Atticum* II.13).

¹⁵⁷ Greenblatt, 2011, 13. For a thoughtful critique of Greenblatt's account of Poggio, see Rundle.

¹⁵⁸ Greenblatt, 2011, 115–213.

¹⁵⁹ Greenblatt, 2011, 153.

¹⁶⁰ Greenblatt, 1980, 9. Cf. Martin.

pontificates of Martin V and Eugenius IV, projects in which Poggio Bracciolini plays a key role. Currently, she is writing a book on Pope Leo X and the ideological messaging of his court, with a focus on ceremony and rhetoric. She is contributing to the *Cambridge History of the Papacy*, with an article entitled “Papal Patronage and the Reception of Classicism in Medieval and Renaissance Rome.”

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