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ANGELO POLIZIANO

♦ ♦ ♦
LETTERS

VOLUME I • BOOKS I-IV

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Hieronymus Donatus Ioanni Pico Mirandulae s. d.

- 1 Quae meae partes esse debuerant, eas omnes tibi sumpsisti, Pice doctissime, te ipsum apud me negligentiae insimulans et in eo crimine, cuius ego apud te maxime reus sum, excusationem quaerens. Parum tibi videtur alios ingenio et eruditione praecellere, nisi modestia quoque et humanitate vincas non solum alios, sed te ipsum. At vero, obsecro, harum virtutum munera ita amplectaris ut nobis quoque aliquam obeundi officii nostri occasionem relinquant, ne dum harum omnes tibi partes vindicas, nos inhumani atque inciviles habeamur, qua ego in re (quae mea est impudentia) iam non excuso negligentiam meam, sed accuso humanitatem tuam.
- 2 Quod scribis te non temporariam mecum sed perpetuam amicitiam statuisse, non solum ea causa tibi me plurimum debere intelligo, verum etiam recte mihi amicitiam definisse videris, quae temporaria cum sit, iam amicitia esse non potest. Illud scito: me eam in meorum ornamentorum delectu seposuisse. Quid enim mihi accidere potest praeclarius quam a tanto viro non laudari solum sed etiam amari?
- 3 Hermolaus noster incredibilem doctrinarum tranquillitatem et studiorum φιλοπονίαν curat, maxima utilitate eruditorum. Video esse summum ac rarum quiddam quod sperare possunt literae, eo incolumi. Eius ego consuetudinem, quam mihi tantopere invidis, eadem peno servo qua et amicitiam tuam. Nihil praeterea adeo θαυμαστόν censeo quod assequi ingenio et eruditione non possis, praesertim quia audio te τῆς ἑλληνικῆς παιδείας χάριν

Girolamo Donà to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

Most learned Pico, you have taken for yourself the entire role that should be mine, for you accuse yourself of negligence in my regard and seek forgiveness on the very charge of which I myself am enormously guilty regarding you. To you it seems too little to surpass others in genius and learning unless you outdo not just others but even yourself in modesty and kindness. But I beg you to embrace the duties connected with these virtues in such a way that you leave us too some possibility of fulfilling our obligations, lest, while you claim for yourself all aspects of said virtues, we be regarded as rude and unkind. On which score, such is my impudence that I no longer excuse my own negligence but, rather, accuse your kindness.

As for the fact that you write that you have established with me not a temporary friendship, but a permanent one, not only do I realize that I owe you a very great deal on this account, but you also seem to me to have properly defined friendship, which, when it is temporary, can no longer be friendship. Know this: I have reserved friendship for the choicest category of my badges of honor. For what more glorious thing can happen to me than by so great a man not only to be praised, but to be loved?

Our friend Ermolao fosters an unbelievable detachment for learning and industriousness for study, to the great profit of the erudite. I see that there is something lofty and rare for which literature can hope, as long as he is around. I store his intimacy in the same inner chamber in which I keep your friendship. Furthermore, I consider nothing to be so astonishing that you cannot achieve it by your genius and learning, especially since I hear that you have left home to go there for the sake of a Greek education. I

istuc demigrasse. Quod ego consilium ita laudo ut magis laudare non possim. Nam οὐδὲν γλυκύτερον ἢ πάντ' εἰδέναι.

4 Ego Politianum tibi invideo, hominem fertilissimi et facundissimi ingenii, cuius Rusticum nuper legi. Visus est mihi splendor aetatis nostrae et πᾶν ἐπ' ἀλαθείᾳ πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος, cui ea de me polliceri te meis verbis postulo quae ab homine amicissimo expectare potest. Utor autem te internuntio in auspicianda mihi cum eo benivolentia, cum fretus humanitate tua, tum quod τῶν Μουσῶν καπυρῶ στόμα per te, qui eruditissimus es, me conciliari convenit.

5 Vale, et puta nihil mihi tuis literis esse iucundius. Plura laxiore ocio ad te scribam.

Venetiis, xvii Kalendas Ianuarias MCCCCLXXXIII

: X :

Angelus Politianus Hieronymo Donato¹ suo s. d.

i In epistola quadam tua ad Picum nostrum cum me pleraque delectassent, tum ut ad te scriberem subinvitavit iudicium quod affers² de Rustico nostra,³ utinam quidem tam verum quam honorificum, quod ego tamen non iudicium adeo de me sed studium potius in me ac beneficium interpretor.⁴ Neque enim ita mihi sum inexploratus ut tibi, amicissimo homini, atque⁵ ob id minus integro iudici, plus de me credendum statuam quam ipse⁶ mihi, nisi forte ita me ludit illa poetarum (quod Horatius inquit) amabilis insania ut

so commend this decision that I cannot commend it any higher. For "nothing is sweeter than knowing everything."²

I envy you Poliziano, a man of most fertile and fluent genius, whose *Rusticus*³ I recently read. He struck me as being a shining light of our age and "a tender shoot all shaped by Zeus in line with truth."⁴ I ask you, on my behalf, to pledge to him from me those things he can expect from a very friendly person. I shall use you as intermediary in inaugurating friendly relations with him for me, not only relying on your kindness, but also because, since you are most erudite, it is only fitting that I be commended to "the clear-sounding voice of the Muses"⁵ through you.

Farewell, and calculate that nothing is more delightful to me than a letter from you. I shall write you more things when I have a more extensive break.

Venice, December 16, 1484

: X :

Angelo Poliziano to his dear Girolamo Donà

Although numerous things in a recent letter of yours to our friend Pico caused me pleasure, it was the opinion you offer of my *Rusticus* that gave me the nudge to write to you.¹ If only it were as true as it is flattering! I understand it, however, not so much as an opinion about me as, instead, support for me, and a favor. I am not such a stranger to myself as to decide that, on the subject of myself, more than I trust myself I should trust you, who, being a very friendly person, are for this reason a less impartial judge. Unless by chance, to use Horace's words, that "gentle madness" of the poets so "makes sport of me" that I never come to grips with myself and never return the knapsack from my back to my chest.² But

nunquam congregiar mecum, nunquam de tergo in pectus mantiscam revocem. Quod si poetice sequitur, velut umbra corpus, 'caecus ille amor sui,' qui *φιλαυτία* dicitur quaeque plerosque infatuat, 'et tollens vacuum plus nimio gloria verticem,' fateor iam nunc, piget me candidatum poetice haberi, tam ingrata vice, tam tristi ac poenitenda mercede. Alioqui ne Lycius quidem ille me stultior *χρύσεια χαλκείων* demutaverit *ἐκατόμβοια ἔννεαβοιῶν*.

- 2 Caeterum nihil minus debemus tibi, vel sentienti de nobis vel sentiri ab aliis postulanti quae nec agnoscat conscientia nostra nec ferat pudor. Sive enim, ut caeteros fallas, ne tua quidem ornamenta, hoc est laudum tuarum suppellectilem, mihi invides, sive ipse falleris potius, meaque te vel vitia delectant, utrunque amoris est, et quidem non vulgaris, siquidem Achilles quoque Patroclus sua arma induit, et Alcaeus vatem naevus etiam in articulo pueri delectabat. Quare, si me amas, id quod scio, iam scilicet dubitare non potes quin ego te redamem, siquidem aiunt amorem nullo magis emi quam se ipso. Neque tamen sicut amantem mutuo amo, ita laudantem vicissim te laudo; quippe in reponendis beneficiis lex est illa Hesiodi custodienda, ut eadem mensura reddas, aut etiam cumulatiore, si possis. Sed cum tu (quas habes orationis divitias), cum tu, inquam, isto ingenio vir, istaque doctrina, in me unum e medio homunculorum laudes tantas, ipso (quod aiunt) horreo, congereris, qui possum ego, de redivo maligni incultique soli, saltem alterum tantum tibi, nedum⁷ plus aliquid, remetiri, nisi tamen, velut Echo illa, tuas tibi voces regeram atque refundam? Sed

if, like a shadow after a body, that "blind self-love" (which is called *philautia* and which makes a fool of many a person) "and vainglory lifting its empty head beyond excess"³ follow poetic art as its consequence, then—let me say for the record—I'm vexed to be considered poetry's nominee, so thankless is the office, so depressing and regrettable the reward. If I were not, then not even that Lycian who traded "gold for bronze, a hundred oxen's worth for that of nine"⁴ would be stupider than me.

However, my debt to you is no smaller because you hold opinions about me (or ask that they be held by others) which neither my conscience can acknowledge nor my sense of propriety bear. Whether, in order to fool others, you do not grudge to see me decked out in your own equipment (i.e., that of your accomplishments), or, alternatively, you yourself are fooled and admire even my defects, both are attributable to love—indeed, no common love, since Achilles too dressed Patroclus in his own armor, and Alcaeus admired even a mole on his boyfriend's knee.⁵ And so, if you love me, as I know you do, then you surely can no longer doubt that I love you back. For love, they say, costs nothing more than—itself. Nevertheless, though I in turn love you loving me, I do not in the same way reciprocally praise you praising me. My reason? In repaying favors, one must maintain observance of that law of Hesiod, according to which you should give back in equal measure, or even, if you can, in more abundant measure.⁶ But since you, given the wealth of expression you have, since you, I say, a man in possession of that genius and that learning of yours, have heaped upon me, a single insignificant person from the crowd, so much praise—a whole barn-full, as they say⁷—how can I measure back even just an equal amount, to say nothing of something extra, from the yield of my barren and uncultivated soil, unless, in spite of it all, I reflect your words and send them flowing back to you, like Echo?⁸ But I worry that, if I forfeit whatever you have given me and send you back those words of praise which I possess

vereor ne si quaecunque dederis resignavero, tibi que laudes tuas quas precario possideam remisero, nudum ipse me statuam et, ut illa Aesopi cornicula plumis ablatis, moveam risum.

3 Atqui tamen nec illud saltem me potes ingrati reum peragere, cum vicariam pro me solutionem sponte suscipiat ac meas parteis sublevet sacer hic—Picus dicam, an Phoenix?—cuius tu semper in ore illo es, Musarum Gratiarumque pleno, quo scilicet inspirante nos quoque impellimur ad te, supra etiam quam valemus, sed tamen adhuc infra quam cupimus,⁸ efferendum. Nam par quidem tanto perferendo oneri ipse est solus. Nos autem de eo sic pendemus ut de magnete⁹ Platonis anuli ferrei, ipseque in nos vim quandam arcanam depluit, quasi ἐνθουσιασμόν, qui plus etiam posse nos cogit quam sponte possumus. Ipse quasi pausarius modos et incitamenta dat nobis laudandi tui, laudandi una tecum Hermolai Barbari, hominis, ut mihi quidem videtur, unius ex reliquiis aurei saeculi, quamvis ipse longe doctior, et non illi sanctiores. Sed ingressos plerunque nos super vobis aliquid ῥαψωδεῖν, tam multa in caelum aura levat ut Icarium quandoque casum formidemus. Vides autem nunc quoque me, quasi νυμφόληπτον, etiam in epistola nescioquid exhibere διθυραμβικώτερον. Quid tu igitur frontem obducis? An scilicet te fugit indulgendum hoc mihi, quicquid est furoris, vel quod omnis paulo humanioris iuxta adamo ac sum (quod dicitur) amussis alba, vel quod tibi quoque non abhorrens videor a Musis, Picoque item ipsi, et fortasse Hermolao, triumviris scilicet literariis, qui si me vel tantillum probatis, iam nunc medium ostendo digitum, non popello tantum, et litera-

by your permission, I shall put my naked self on display and, like that crow of Aesop stripped of its feathers, shall make people laugh.⁹

At least, however, there's one thing you cannot do—prosecute 3 me for ingratitude—since this divine Pico (or should I say Phoenix?¹⁰), on whose lips you always are and who is full of Muses and Graces, undertook payment on my behalf, of his own free will, and lightened my share of the load. Needless to say, it is by his inspiration that I too am driven to extol you even beyond my capacity, though still less than I would like. For he is the only person equal to the task of carrying this heavy responsibility. I am as dependent on him as Plato's iron rings are on the magnet.¹¹ And he in turn rains down into me a certain secret power, a kind of divine possession that forces me to have capabilities in addition to those I have on my own.¹² Like a boatswain, he marks time and spurs me on, showing me how to praise you¹³ and, along with you, Ermolao Barbaro, one of those people (it seems to me) left over from the Golden Age,¹⁴ although he is more learned by far, and they were no more virtuous. But often, having set out to rhapsodize something about the three of you, so much of a breeze lifts me toward heaven that I fear sooner or later an Icarian fall.¹⁵ Even now, you see that I, more or less under a spell even in a letter, am producing something rather dithyrambic.¹⁶ Why then are you frowning? Could it possibly escape you that I must be indulged in whatever kind of frenzy¹⁷ this is, either because I am equally in love with everyone who is a little more than minimally civilized and am, as they say, an "unmarked ruler,"¹⁸ or because I do not seem hideously incompatible with the Muses from your point of view either, just as I do not seem so to Pico or (I hope) Ermolao—in other words, to the Triumvirs of Letters. If you three are showing me even a modicum of approval, then I am already giving the finger not only to the rabble and the schoolmasters, but even to

toribus, sed philosophis adeo ipsis, ne excepto quidem Platone, sed Florentino.

Vale.

: XI :

Hieronymus Donatus Angelo Politiano suo s. d.

I Ego vero, Politiane doctissime, tui erga me amoris fructus gratissimos et iucundissimos cepisse me sentio, neque aliunde uberiores honorificentioresque proventus expecto. Nam et in amicitia respondisse te video αὐτῷ τῷ μέτρῳ λώϊον, et te (id quod nunquam dubitavi) non Politianum modo, verum et πολιτικώτατον esse percipio, sociata tam rara exactaque eloquentia infinitae prope humanitati atque modestiae. Quod si rationes negotiorum meorum excussero atque invicem retulero, nihil me ab eo die quo ad Picum novissime scripsi praestantius lucrifecisse comperiam tua hac epistola — dii boni, quantum Attica, erecta, exulta, quantum denique amabili, ut in ea summus amor, summa eruditio contendere videantur, neque facile utrum excellat dignosci possit. Utriusque rei evidentissimas causas coniectari facillimum est. Eruditio enim divino ingenio, studio infatigabili, tota ex te ipso summa est. Benivolentia vero non ingentissima esse non potest qua me, Pico auctore, complexus es. Ego tamen iam antea amare te coeperam, sed defuit illa εἰς πάντων συνάγουσα ὁμιλία, qua tamen in posterum beneficio literarum non indigebimus.

the philosophers. Not even Plato is spared — unless he be the Florentine one.¹⁹

Farewell.

: XI :

Girolamo Donà to his dear Angelo Poliziano

I am truly aware, most learned Poliziano, that I have gathered I fruits of your love for me that are most welcome and delicious, and I do not expect more copious harvests, or ones which do me more honor, from any other source. For I see that, even with respect to friendship, you respond “with the same amount, and even more.”¹ And I recognize that which I have never doubted, namely, that you are not only Poliziano, but also pure Politeness, since such rare and perfect eloquence has been united with almost boundless kindness and forbearance. Indeed, if I scrutinize the ledger of my transactions and record each value in turn, I shall discover that, since that day on which I most recently wrote to Pico, I have received as profit nothing more impressive than this letter of yours. Dear gods, how Attic,² elevated, refined, and, finally, how affectionate! To the point that, in it, supreme love seems to contend with supreme erudition, nor is it easy to tell which is winning. It is a very simple matter to deduce the reasons for each of these, since they are extremely obvious. Given your divine intellect and tireless study, your erudition is supreme entirely as a consequence of you yourself. On the other hand, the friendly feeling with which you have embraced me cannot fail to be huge — since Pico is responsible for it. Mind you, I had already begun to love you, but that “communion fusing into one”³ was missing, which, however, we shall not lack from now on, thanks to letters.

2 At tamen meminisse te suspicor (fere enim quinquennium agitur cum apud nos versabar) te Hermolao ac mihi, tunc parentis et patruī morte squalido ac pullato, carmen illud aureum de sacrilega ac sanguinaria Iuliani caede recitasse, ex quo nunquam apud me eruditorum hominum mentio facta est quin mihi ex omnibus primus occurreres. Mox in tua illa Rustico elegantissima, magnus a me semper habitus, maior inventus es. Quamobrem id tibi persuasum velim: ea te mecum amoris et officium fundamenta iecisse ut nullo casu ruere, nulla vi convelli possint, cuius fructus candidissimos et mihi omnium longe gratissimos, hoc est literas tuas, expecto. Neque solum literas, sed interdum quoque amoenissimas Musas, quae cum ad me venerint, tunc maxime Theocriti carmen illud suavissimum cantabo:

τὰς μοι πᾶς εἴη πλείος δόμος, οὔτε γὰρ ὕπνος
οὔτ' ἔαρ ἐξαπίνας γλυκερώτερον, οὔτε μελίσσαις
ἄνθεα, ὅσσον ἐμοί Μῶσαι Πωλιτιανοῦ φίλαι.

3 Vale, et me ama, a quo amaris plurimum.
*Venetiis, vi Idus Iunias MXXV*¹

: XII :

Hieronymus Donatus Angelo Politiano suo s. d.

1 Salve, Politiane mi. Tam diu humanissimis literis tuis respondere distuli ut putem me nunc potius ad te scribere quam rescribere.

Yet I suppose you remember — to be sure, nearly five years have 2
passed since you stayed with me — that you read to Ermolao and
me, when I was dressed in black and filthy over the deaths of my
parent and uncle, that golden poem about the sacrilegious and
bloody murder of Giuliano.⁴ From that point on, no reference to
“erudite men” was made in my presence but that you first of all
sprang to mind. Soon thereafter, having always been considered
great by me, you were found to be greater in your very elegant
Rusticus. Please, therefore, rest assured that you have laid such
foundations of love and obligation with me that they cannot
crumble from any calamity, cannot be uprooted by any violent
power. I await their fairest fruit, for me by far the most welcome
of all — namely, letters from you. And not just letters, but, now
and then, those most delightful poems too. Especially then, after
these have reached me, I shall sing that most gentle song of
Theocritus:

Of this may all my house be full. Not sleep
nor spring's surprise more sweet, nor blooms to bees,
than dear to me is poesy — Poliziano's.⁵

Farewell, and love me, by whom you are loved best. 3
Venice, June 8, 1485

: XII :

Girolamo Donà to his dear Angelo Poliziano

Hello, my dear Poliziano. I have put off for such a long time re- 1
sponding to your very kind letter that I suppose that, rather than
writing you back, I'm now just writing you, period. Please ascribe
this either to public responsibilities or to private laziness, as long

Imputabis sive occupationes publicas sive privatam desidiam, modo abdicis omnem aut oblivionis aut arrogantiae suspitionem. Equidem, Politiane mi, nullum ego thesaurum comparari¹ posse censeo amico qui et probus et doctus sit. Nec aliunde homini locupletior felicitatis proventus accedit quam ex vera incorruptaque amicitia quam virtus probitasque conciliat. Quo fit ut ego saepissime vestram istam, sub parente patriae Laurentio, Academiam absens mirari et amare maxime soleam, in qua praeclara simul optimarum artium morumque pretia contra pertinacissimas animi sordes, vitium atque inscitiam, conspiraverunt. Quorsum haec?² Ut facile tibi persuadeas me, quanquam tardius rescripserim, sumopere tamen delectatum esse humanissimis et eruditissimis literis tuis. In iis praeclarum istud vestrum ocium intueri licet, et doctrinarum quietem vobis invidere. Nam nos et publica et privata dstringunt, et nostra fere sunt temporis furta, non studia. Gratulor vobis amoenissimas Musas, literatissimum ocium, quibus absens impense faveo, subscribo et bene opto, cum vestra, tum bonarum artium causa. Sed haec satis.

² Scio istic apud vos esse conplura Alexandri Aphrodisei volumina in variis generibus doctrinarum, praecipue vero in philosophia naturali. Sunt item apud me hic nonnulla illius opera, mire erudita et gravia. In his habentur duo volumina Περὶ ψυχῆς, quae per hos dies perlegi. Alterum ex his voluminibus principium habet eiusmodi: Περὶ ψυχῆς τί τ' ἐστὶ καὶ τίς αὐτῆς ἢ οὐσία. Is libellus apud me fere post principium mutilus est. Cupio me certiore reddas numquid apud vos in delectissima ista Medicum bibliotheca totius atque incolumis sit. Quod si, ut spero, illaesus et

as you forswear any suspicion of either forgetfulness or disrespect. For my part, my dear Poliziano, I think one should compare no treasure to a friend who is a man of integrity and learning. Nor does a richer supply of good fortune accrue to a person from any other source than genuine, unadulterated friendship which virtue and integrity have secured. Thus it happens that I, from afar, have the constant habit of admiring and loving, to the greatest possible extent, that Academy you have under Lorenzo, father of his country, in which the magnificent rewards of the finest arts and the finest morals act together in harmony against the most stubborn stains of the mind: vice and ignorance. In short, I am hoping that you will easily convince yourself that, although I have been rather late in writing back, I nevertheless took tremendous pleasure in your most kind and erudite letter. In it one could observe that magnificently tranquil existence you all share and envy you the serene setting of your studies. Here, both public and private matters pull us in every direction, and what we have are basically stolen moments, not studies. I congratulate you all for your most delightful poetry and most literary leisure, which, from afar but without restraint, I support, endorse, and lend my best hopes, not only for your sake, but also for that of the liberal arts. But enough about this.

I know that, in your house, there are numerous volumes of Alexander of Aphrodisias,¹ on various kinds of learned subjects, but especially on natural philosophy. Here where I am² there are several works of his which are wonderfully erudite and substantial. Among these are two volumes *On the Soul* which I read through over the course of the past few days. One of these volumes begins like this: "Regarding the soul, what it is, and what is its essence . . .".³ This booklet, the one I have here, breaks off practically just after the beginning. I want you to let me know whether you have there at home, in that very choice library of the Medici, something more complete and undamaged. But if, as I hope, it is

integer, mihi gratissimum facies si primum eius libri caput transcribi feceris, et ad me mitti curaveris. Si negocium librario commiseris, neque praeceleris, vix horam absumet.

3 Vale. Picum meum salvere iube. Cum dico Picum, doctos etiam omnes intellego.

Iterum vale.

Mediolani, pridie Calendas Apriles MCCCCLXXX

: XIII :

Angelus Politianus Hieronymo Donato suo s. d.

1 Etsi literarum tuarum semper incredibili desiderio teneor, propterea quod mihi ex eruditione fructus, ex elegantia¹ voluptas, ex auctoritate summus honos conciliatur, facile tamen id ego differri nonnunquam patior, vel ne te a studiis avocem potioribus, vel certe ut exemplum mihi tuum, sexcentas iam debenti epistolas, patrocinetur. Roges causas tanti debiti. Non inficior desidiam esse primam, quae mihi semper, nescio quo pacto, fuit in deliciis. Sed tamen et occupatiunculae, vel trichae² potius ineptae quaedam molestaeque nimis, ocium omne meum pene inter se scripulatim partiuntur.

2 Nam si quis breve dictum quod in gladii capulo vel in anuli legatur³ emblemate, si quis versum lecto aut cubiculo, si quis insigne aliquod, non argento dixerim, sed fictilibus omnino suis desiderat, illico ad Politianum cursitat, omnesque iam parietes a me, quasi a

inviolate and intact, you will do me an enormous favor if you will have the first chapter of this book copied and see to it that it is sent to me. If you entrust the job to a professional copyist, even a relatively slow one, it will take him scarcely an hour.

Farewell. Tell my friend Pico to take care. When I say "Pico," I mean, in addition, *all* learned men. Again, farewell.

Milan, March 31, 1490

: XIII :

Angelo Poliziano to his dear Girolamo Donà

1 Although I am under the constant power of incredible longing for your letters, for the reason that I am granted fruit from their erudition, pleasure from their elegance, supreme honor from their author's prestige, nevertheless I easily tolerate occasional deferral, either because I do not want to distract you from more important pursuits, or because I doubtless want to use your example as an excuse for myself, since by now I too owe people a thousand letters. You may ask what the causes are of such a large debt. I shall not deny that the first of these is laziness, which in one way or another has always been one of my favorite things. Nevertheless, it is also the case that tiny responsibilities—or better still, inane and very irritating bits of nonsense—divide up my free time piecemeal.

2 For if anyone wants a motto fit to be read on the hilt of a sword or the signet of a ring, if anyone wants a line of verse for a bed or a bedroom, if anyone wants something distinctive (not for silver, mind you, but for pottery pure and simple!), then straightaway he dashes over to Poliziano. And already you can see that every wall has been smeared by me (as if by a snail) with diverse themes and inscriptions. Someone, for example, pesters me for some clever

limace, videas oblitos argumentis variis et titulis. Ecce alius Bacchanalibus Fesceninorum argutias, alius conciliabulis sanctas sermocinationes, alius citharae miserabiles naenias, alius pervigilio licentiosas cantilenas efflagitat. Ille mihi proprios amores stultus stultiori narrat, ille symbolum poscit quod suae tantum pateat, caeterorum frustra coniecturas exerceat. Mitto scholasticorum garritus intempestivos, versificatorum nugas, seque et sua de more admirantium, quae cottidie cuncta demissis auriculis perpetior. Quid plebeculam dicam, vel urbanam vel agrestem, quae me tota urbe ad suum negotium quasi naso bubalum trahit. Ergo⁴ dum proterve instantibus negare nihil audeo, cogor et amicos vexare caeteros et (quod molestissimum est) ipsius in primis Laurentii mei Medicis abuti facilitate. Quare adeo mihi nullus inter haec scribendi restat aut commentandi locus ut ipsum quoque horarium sacerdotis officium pene (quod vix expiabile credo) minutatim concidatur. Postremo cum nihil faciam, nunquam sum tamen ociosus; immo dum cuiusvis esse compellor, nec meus esse plane nec cuiusquam possum. Proinde sicubi distulero posthac aut omisero ad te responsum, scito me statim, sicuti soleam, nugas agendo fuisse occupatum.

3 Laurentius Medices noster, vel ex epistolis tuis, quas ei semper honoris mei causa recito, vel ex huius magni Pici testimonio, qui tibi plurimum tribuere solet, ita te iam diligit ut nobiscum fere contendat. Hermolaum vero ipsum Romae, hoc est quam⁵ oculatissimo loco, legatum fore mire gavisus est, etiam studiorum nomine, quem sic expectamus avide ut spe iam totum pene contrive-

turns of Fescennine verse to use at a Bacchanal,¹ another, for a pious script to use at meetings, another, for some tear-jerking dirges for the cithara, another, for some dirty little tunes for an all-night party. One fool (but I'm a bigger one) tells me all about his own love affairs; another requests a cypher which will reveal itself only to his girlfriend and keep others busy conjecturing in vain. I omit the ill-timed chatter of the rhetoricians and the nonsense of the versifiers—in awe of themselves and their own work, as is typical—all of which I put up with every day, my ears drooping.² Why mention the rabble (from the city or the country, take your pick), which throughout the city drags me over to its own problems, like a buffalo by the nose.³ Thus, as long as I do not dare deny anything to the people aggressively pressuring me, I am forced both to bother my other friends and in particular (this is the really annoying thing) to take advantage of my dear Lorenzo de' Medici's good nature. As a result, so little space among all these things is left to me for writing or commenting that even my hourly priestly office is pared away practically bit by bit—something scarcely forgivable, I think.⁴ In short, although I am doing nothing, all the same I am never at leisure. On the contrary, as long as I am compelled to belong to everybody, I can never really belong to myself—or to anyone.⁵ So then, if at any point in the future I put off or skip altogether a response to you, know that, as usual, I was immediately kept busy doing nonsense.

Our friend Lorenzo de' Medici, as a consequence either of your 3 letters, which I always read to him in the interest of my own good name, or of the testimony of this great man Pico, who regularly attributes a very great deal to you, so esteems you already that he nearly competes with me. He was marvelously pleased, also in the name of scholarship, that Ermolao will be sent on an embassy to Rome, that is to say, to a place in everyone's eyesight.⁶ We so eagerly look forward to seeing him that we have practically worn him out with our expectation. But if, once he has been given hospital-

rimus. Quod si, semel in itinere exceptus, abire a nobis properabit, iam nunc dico atque edico, 'Vae hominis togae, vae laciniis!'

4 Alexandri vero quos ais De anima libros, nullos ipsi prorsus hic habemus. Sed nec extare quidem suspicabamur, quod ex indice quoque ipso quem Seraticus at te misit animadvertes. Quin rogamus ego et Picus ut, cum Venetias (quod propediem fore nuntiant) remeaveris, eius describendi copiam Laurentii Medicis librario facias.⁶ Equidem nonnullas Alexandri huius peracutas in philosophia quaestiones, anno iam tum superiore, Latinas feci. Sed et te quaequam scriptoris eiusdem narrat Seraticus interpretari. Tum Grimanus proxima aestate missurum se mihi exemplar alterum, quod tibi pridem commodaverat, ultro est pollicitus. Qua de re coniecturam facio potuisse illud accidere ut eundem uterque, forte fortuna, librum converterimus. Hoc si non falso ratiocinor, iam scilicet spongiam cogito,⁷ rogoque mihi de eo quam primum significes, ut ipsum saltem limae laborem lucrifaciam.

5 Vale, meque Iacobis duobus, Volterrano et Antiquario, hoc est humanitatis ac probitatis geminis exemplaribus, commenda.

Florentiae, x Calendas Maias MCCCCLXXX

: XIV :

Hieronymus Donatus Angelo Politiano suo s. d.

1 Accepi *Miscellanea*. Percurri. Iucundissima lectio, in qua delectari et iuvare vel doctissimus quisque possit. At, inquires, praeceps iudi-

ity along his way, he will be in a hurry to leave us, well, right now I declare and decree a bad day for the man's robe, a bad day for his hem!⁷

As for the books of Alexander which you say are *On the Soul*, we 4 ourselves have absolutely none of them here. But I did not even think they were extant, which you can observe as well from the very list that Seratico sent you.⁸ Pico and I instead ask you, when you have returned to Venice (any day now, they tell us), to make it available to Lorenzo de' Medici's copyist for duplication. I myself, already last year, put a number of very sharp philosophical questions by this same Alexander into Latin.⁹ But Seratico reports that you too are translating something or other by the same writer. Furthermore, Grimani,¹⁰ without my asking, has promised to send me, this summer, a second manuscript, one which he had earlier lent to you. From all this I am guessing that it could have happened that, by complete chance, both of us have translated the same book. If my reasoning is not wrong then I am of course thinking already about the sponge, and I ask you to let me know about this as soon as possible, so that I can at least save myself the actual work of the file.¹¹

Farewell, and put in a good word for me with the two Jacopos, 5 the one from Volterra, and Antiquari,¹² twin paragons of humanity and integrity.

Florence, April 22, 1490

: XIV :

Girolamo Donà to his dear Angelo Poliziano

I have received the *Miscellanea*. I raced through it. Very enjoyable 1 reading, in which anyone even of extraordinary learning would be able to find pleasure and profit. But, you will say, judgment is

cium est quod obiter fertur. Sed cum de re literaria agitur, iudicare de te possumus, abdicatis iuris solemnibus, etiam stantes, adeo cuique securum est de eruditionum controversiis cum Politiano in tenebris quoque dimicare. Mihi autem in eo opere tantum tribuis quantum nec agnosco nec postulo. Perge (quod facis) iuvare bonas artes, neque formides blatteratorum et sciolorum aculeos. Nunquam caruere invidia egregii fortesque conatus. ἀλλ' ὅμως (κρέσσων γὰρ οἰκτιρμῶν φθόνος) μὴ παρίει καλά νόμα δικάίῳ πηδαλίῳ Latinas literas. Fortasse enim ii maxime ex opere profecturi quibus id magis sordescere videbitur.

Vale.

Mediolani, vi Calendas Novemb. MCCCCLXXXVIII

: XV :

Angelus Politianus Hieronymo Donato suo s. d.

- 1 Non est is auctoritatis meae rigor ut invidentium flatus¹ quasi ventorum tuto possit excipere, nisi vestris paucorum testimoniis, velut adminiculis, ipsa per se decidua fulciatur. Equidem multorum accepi literas, ex quo *Miscellanea* publicavi, laudantium scilicet (ut fit) et gratulantium. Sed nescio quo pacto, de tuo, de Barbari, de Pici, de istiusmodi perpaucorum iudicio, sic ipse me censeo ut tum denique stare videar, cum puncta omnia tulerim suffragii vestri. Quanquam etiam istinc reddita mihi nuper epistola est, Iacobi

hasty if it comes right away. But when the matter before us is a literary one, we can deliver a judgment about you while still on our feet, courtroom formalities set aside. Indeed, no one worries about engaging Poliziano on matters of learned controversy, even when the contest is in the dark.¹ In that work, however, you ascribe to me more than I either recognize or request. Continue (as you are doing) to foster the liberal arts, and do not worry about the stings of windbags and smatterers. Bold and illustrious undertakings have never been spared envy. "All the same (better envy than pity) neglect not fair deeds, but with a just rudder, steer"² Latin literature. Indeed, those who will derive the most profit from this work may well be those who will turn their noses up at it.³

Farewell.

Milan, October 27, 1489

: XV :

Angelo Poliziano to his dear Girolamo Donà

The strength of my authority is not such that it can endure without damage the gale-force exhalations of envious persons, unless, ready to fall on its own account, it be propped up, as if on struts, by the testimonials of a few of you. Since publishing my *Miscellanea*, I have in fact received letters from many people, offering, as is usual, praise and congratulations, but somehow it is as a result of your judgment and that of Barbaro, of Pico, and of very few others of your caliber that I value myself highly enough to seem then, finally, to stand upright, having swept your votes. Another letter from your parts, however, was recently delivered to me, from Jacopo Antiquari. It was wonderfully substantial and erudite. Although the man was otherwise barely known to me personally,

Antiquarii, mire gravis et erudita, quem mihi virum minime alio-
qui facie notum, saepenumero tamen Laurentius Medices meus a
literis, a moribus, a prudentia commendaverat. In ea profecto epis-
tola, nec honestam indolem, nec expressam quandam vetustatis
imaginem, nec textum illud operosius, quale vestrum est, nec ul-
lum denique stili cultioris ornamentum requisiveris, ut admitti, ni
fallor, in istam quasi praerogativam tribuum iure debeat. Sed de
hoc ipsi videritis.

2 Epistolam vero ad me tuam legit idem Laurentius, et quidem
non incuriose, lectamque verbis exquisitissimis laudavit sic ut mihi
quoque apud illum magna accesserit de tuo felici calamo commen-
datio. Nam quanquam mihi ille vir plus meritis semper tribuit, ta-
men ut tuas legit literas, visus est nescio quo pacto favere propen-
sius iudicio de me suo, et pluris aliquanto me post eam diem
facere, quam antea consuevisset. Iamne igitur sentis quantopere
isto literarum nomine debeam tibi, per quem factum sit ut sibi
iam Laurentius ipse placeat, quod ego non displiceam? Quare te
rogo, cum tibi a re publica ocium fuerit, scribas aliquando ad Poli-
tianum tuum, putesque te non epistolas ad ipsum sed stipendia
mittere, sed sacerdotia,² sed honoris titulos, omniaque denique
vitae humanae commoda. Quorum cum semper auctor ei Lauren-
tius unus extiterit, tanto subinde potiora collaturus videtur,
quanto eundem gratiorem vobis, hoc est religiosisimam artium bo-
narum censoribus, intellexerit.

3 Ioannes Picus Mirandula, lux omnium doctrinarum, salutem
tibi adscribit, et ut item Merulae Puteolanoque nunties uterque
rogamus.

Vale.

Florentiae, Calendis Decemb. MCCCCLXXXVIII

nevertheless my dear Lorenzo de' Medici had often recommended
him as a man of letters, a man of character, a man of wisdom.
And in that letter one certainly does not look hard for noble tal-
ent, or images modeled on antiquity, or that elaborate embroidery
that is your shared fashion, or, in short, any ornament of the more
refined style, with the result that, unless I am mistaken, he should
by all rights be inducted into the first rank of electors. But I leave
that up to you.

The same Lorenzo read, not without great interest, the letter 2
you sent me,¹ and when he had finished he so praised it for its
very choice wording that I too, being there, was treated to a great
eulogy of your fortunate pen. Indeed, although that man has al-
ways attributed to me more than I deserve, nevertheless, as he read
your letter, he seemed more inclined to support his own judgment
about me, and from that day on to rate me somewhat higher than
had been his custom previously. Do you, therefore, now under-
stand how much I am in your debt on account of your letter,
through which it has come to pass that Lorenzo is now pleased
with himself because I do not displease? For this reason, I ask
you, when you have a break from affairs of state, to write now and
then to your Poliziano, and to consider that you are sending him,
not letters, but a salary, and benefices, and marks of honor—in
short, all the comforts of human life. Although Lorenzo has al-
ways been for him² the one source of these, he seems from now on
ready to grant ones that are greater by the same measure by which
he understands the same man to find new favor with you, that is,
with the most conscientious censors of the liberal arts.

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, light of all learning, appends 3
his greetings to you, and we both ask that you communicate the
same to Merula and to Puteolano.³

Farewell.

Florence, December 1, 1489

• NOTES TO THE TEXT •

2. invidiae . . . occaecati *Ald* : invidia ac livore onerati *P*
3. iam *Ald* : *P* omits
4. delectant *Ald* : oblectant *P*
5. *P* adds sed

LETTER VI

1. inscitiam *Ald* *R* : ignorantiam *Leoniceno*
2. maxime *R* *Leoniceno* (and *Pliny*) : *Ald* omits
3. quae . . . elegantia *Ald* *Leoniceno* : quae est in tuis literis elegantia *R*
4. quam *R* (and *Ovid*) : qua *Ald* *Leoniceno*
5. Graeci *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *R* omits
6. ocimi is my emendation : ocymi *Ald* *R* *Leoniceno*
7. *Leoniceno* adds Florentiae, die iii Ianuarii MCCCCLXXXI.

LETTER VII

1. capessendam *P* : capescendam *Ald* *Leoniceno*
2. deprehendere *Ald* *P* : reprehendere *Leoniceno*
3. magis *Ald* *P* : *Leoniceno* omits
4. quae . . . appellatur *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
5. quoniam *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
6. pati *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
7. tunc *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
8. *P* adds in
9. et *Plinius* ipse *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *Plinius* *P*
10. aliquando *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
11. aliquanto is my emendation : aliquando *Ald* *P* : aliqn. *Leoniceno*
12. ex Serapionis . . . *Plinio* *Ald* *Leoniceno* : *P* omits
13. Vale *Ald* *P* : *Leoniceno* adds much more (see note on the translation)

• NOTES TO THE TEXT •

LETTER X

1. Hieronymo Donato *Ald* : Domino Hieronymo [*Ieronimo* *R*] Donato Veneto Patritio *R* *V*
2. affers *Ald* : facis *R* *V*
3. nostra *Ald* (presumably in agreement, as *Du Bois* notes, with an understood silva; cf. 2.11.2) : nostro *R* *V*
4. sed . . . interpretor *Ald* *R* : *V* omits
5. atque *Ald* *V* : adque *R*
6. ipse *Ald* : ipsi *R* *V*
7. nedum *Ald* : ne *R* *V*
8. cupimus *Ald* *R* : cupiamus *V*
9. magnete *Ald* : magneti *R* *V*

LETTER XI

1. MXVD *Martelli* : M·xii·D *Ald* 1485 *V* : The *Aldine* date of 1488 cannot be right, since it is impossible that three and a half years separate this letter from *Donà's* original letter to *Pico* (2.9) that sparked the triangulated exchange. *Martelli* (p. 257), who also notes the inconsistency between the date given and the letter's reference to a quinquennium since *P's* visit to *Venice* (1480), emends as indicated, plausibly supposing a misreading of v as ii, though the error could also spring from a misread arabic numeral somewhere along the way; the date of 1485 is, in any case, confirmed by *V*.

LETTER XII

1. comparari is my emendation : comparare *Ald*
2. hec *Ald*

LETTER XIII

1. elegantia *Ald* *V* : indulcentia *M*
2. See note on 1.11.1.
3. legatur *Ald* *V* : *M* omits

• NOTES TO THE TEXT •

4. ergo *Ald V* : ego *M*
5. quam *Ald M* : *V* omits
6. facias *V M* : faciat *Ald*
7. cogito *Ald V* : agito *M*

LETTER XV

1. flatus *Ald* : proflatus *V*
2. sacerdotia *Ald* : sacerdotii *V*

BOOK III

LETTER I

1. *R* adds a laudato viro
2. *V R* add te

LETTER II

1. poterant *Asc* : poterat *Ald*

LETTER III

1. condicto *Asc* : condito *Ald*
2. excogitari *Asc* : excogitare *Ald*

LETTER IV

1. *R V* add Preceptori Ducis Urbinatis
2. *Ald* adds enim
3. lassare *Ald* : laxare *R V*
4. *V* adds inter amicos
5. superstitiosam probationem *Ald* : superstitionem *R* : superstitiosam ac curatam probationem *V*
6. est est . . . amicitiae examen *Ald* : ad manum quo amicum examinem *Lidius lapis R* : est ad manum quo amicum examinem *Lydius lapis V*

• NOTES TO THE TEXT •

7. *V* adds uno tamen excepto Demetrio, communi preceptore nostro, quem equidem audacter cum quovis veterum conmiserim. Is ita amorem erga nos libravit suum ut nescias uter magis ab illo, sed scias tamen utrumque maxime amari.

LETTER VI

1. illex *Ald V* : ille *R*
2. myrothecii *Asc* : mitheci *Ald R V*
3. *V* adds et quam de se promovit expectationem pervertitur
4. seculi *R V* : saeculis *Ald*
5. scatens *Ald V* : sentiens *R*
6. niti *Ald R* : uti *V*
7. is *R V* : his *Ald*

LETTER VII

1. me *M R* : *Ald* omits
2. tibi *M* : *Ald R* omit

LETTER VIII

1. ut eius pene *Ald* : ut eius plane *R* : at enim plane *V*
2. atque *Ald V* : adque *R*
3. *R V* add nunc

LETTER IX

1. *R V* add uni
2. noster *Ald R* : *V* omits

LETTER X

1. quadraginta is my emendation : quandringentis *Ald* : see note to translation
2. dedit is my emendation : iit *Ald*

what proves to be a nonexistent earlier discussion. P. takes the blind reference as the real source of Leoniceno's objections (this is not true in the *De Plinii erroribus*, but we do not know how Leoniceno made the case in the earlier text; the fact that P. felt the need to recapitulate Leoniceno's arguments suggests they were not entirely clear, at least to P.) and will propose eliminating the problem by marking a full stop after *hypocisthis* and attaching *quam inter herbas diximus* to the beginning of the sentence which begins at 24.82, where it would instead modify *cissos*. P.'s subsequent arguments largely seek to minimize the (correct) impression that Pliny's description at 16.145 cannot be of ivy.

6. Ovid, *Heroides* 3.1: *Quam legis a rapta Briseide littera venit . . .*
7. Ovid, *Heroides* 4.1: *Quam nisi tu dederis caritura est ipsa, salutem, / mittit Amazonio Cressa puella viro*. The double sense of *salus* is virtually untranslatable: Phaedra sends Hippolytus her *salus* ("hello"), but she will lack *salus* ("health") unless he gives her back her *salus* (both senses).
8. Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 16.145.
9. Theophrastus, *Historia Plantarum* 3.18.6.
10. A play on Pliny's name, Gaius Plinius Caecilius *Secundus*.
11. See note on 1.11.4.
12. P.'s use of *alea* to refer to evaluation (and the fluctuating values it produces) is probably inspired by Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* Pref. 7. Compare Guarini's language in 1.19.2 (where Pliny is the certain source).
13. See note on Letter 3.1. P.'s meaning is, of course, aggressively ethnocentric (vindicating the authority of Greco-Roman science), but note that the English "barbarian" is more strongly pejorative than the Latin; "foreigner" is in some ways a closer translation.
14. The text published by Leoniceno adds, *Florence, January 3, 1491*.

LETTER VII

1. Johannes Serapion (Ibn Sarâbî) "the Younger," Arab author, ca. 1100, of a widely influential pharmacological compendium, translated into Latin in the thirteenth century as the *Liber aggregatus in medicinis simplicibus*, first printed in Venice in 1479, later also known in vernacular translations.

2. Barbaro's *Castigationes Pliniana*e would first be printed in 1492–93, in Rome.
3. The list probably was not included in the letter proper and, in any case, is not included in the published correspondence. It doubtless provided the basis for (and may in fact be identical to) Leoniceno's *De Plinii et aliorum in medicina erroribus* (see note on previous letter).

LETTER VIII

1. Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, major humanist of the Aragonese court in Naples.
2. Ferdinando I (Ferrante) of Aragon, King of Naples, died January 25, 1494.
3. An ancient prayer uttered at the beginnings of things.
4. Alfonso II of Aragon, King of Naples for less than a year, abdicating in favor of his son in January 1495.
5. He replaced his father as Duke of Calabria upon the latter's ascent to the throne of Naples; upon his father's abdication he became Ferdinando II (Ferrandino), King of Naples, ruling until his death in October 1496.
6. Federico of Aragon, another son of Ferdinando I, becoming King of Naples upon the death of his nephew, Ferdinando II.
7. City on the easternmost point of Italy's "heel," conquered in 1480 by the Turks under Mehmed II, reconquered by the Aragonese in the following year.

LETTER IX

1. Girolamo Donà (or Donato), Venetian poet, humanist, and widely active political figure.
2. Line from a lost Greek comedy, known to Donà through its quotation by Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 4.11.2.
3. The second of P.'s *Silvae*, delivered as the introduction to P.'s 1483 course on the *Works and Days* of Hesiod and immediately printed, available in the ITRL in Charles Fantazzi's edition (2004) of the *Silvae*.

4. Theocritus, *Idylls*, 7.44.
5. Theocritus, *Idylls*, 7.37, slightly modified.

LETTER X

1. An echo of Cicero, *Ad familiares*, 7.1.6, where *subinvitare* makes its only appearance in classical Latin, also in reference to writing (and to *amor*, later theme of P.'s letter).
2. P. mingles numerous sources here. The quotation is of Horace, *Odes* 3.4.5–6 (*me ludit amabilis / insania*), though P. possibly is also thinking of the same author's *levis insania* at *Epistulae* 2.1.118. The image of the poet deluded about his own talent, however, comes not from these passages, though it is frequent in Horace (see *Epistulae* 2.2.105ff., and the *Ars Poetica* generally); P.'s most conspicuous source is instead Catullus 22 (on the bad poet Suffenus, see Pico's letter to P., 1.3), which ends with the Aesopian image of the knapsack (*mantica*; see Phaedrus 4.10), likewise deployed by Horace, *Satires* 2.3.299, and again by Persius, *Satires* 4.24, though neither is referring specifically to poets. The same poem by Persius is, in turn, a possible inspiration for P.'s general theme of self-knowledge, continued from the previous sentence (*mecum congregiar* perhaps paraphrases *in sese . . . descendere* of line 23).
3. P. is quoting Horace, *Odes* 1.18.14–15. But also on his mind is *Letters to Atticus* 13.13.1, where Cicero gives his revision of his own *Academica* a rave review, *nisi forte me communis φιλαντία decipit*.
4. Homer, *Iliad* 6.236.
5. P. thus represents Donà's *amor non vulgaris* with a pair of homoerotic images. Achilles lends his armor to his beloved Patroclus in Homer, *Iliad* 16.129ff. (P. takes up the question of the lovers' relative ages in *Miscellanea* I, 45.) P.'s source for the *naevus in articulo* (this last word can properly refer to any joint) is Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 1.79, quoting what presumably is a Latin translation of a (now lost) Greek original by Alcaeus, early lyric poet from Lesbos.
6. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 349–50, though P. may be thinking of Cicero's paraphrase at *De officiis* 1.48.

7. Plautus, *Menaechmi*, 15.
8. In a striking contamination of two elements of the same story (best known in its telling by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.339–510, which exploits the same parallel), P. describes Echo using terms (*regerere*, used of visual reflection, and *refundere*) more obviously suited to Narcissus and his pool. Reference to the myth perpetuates the letter's motif of self-knowledge.
9. The Aesopian fable is given by Phaedrus, *Fabulae*, 1.3. But P. takes his language from the allusion to the story in Horace, *Epistulae* 1.3.19–20.
10. A play on the literal meaning of *picus*, "woodpecker."
11. Plato, *Ion*, 533D-E, where the magnet is a metaphor for the transitivity of inspiration from one person to another.
12. The Greek term continues the echo of Plato's *Ion*. Given the general theme of dependence on the divine, it seems likely that the relatively rare Latin word *depluit* is borrowed from Columella, *De re rustica*, 10.206 (where modern editors prefer to read *defluit*), describing Jupiter's "violent rain into the lap of his mother" (Earth), impregnating her with spring.
13. Language borrowed from Seneca, *Epistulae*, 56.5, the only appearance of *pausarius* in classical literature. It is difficult to capture the double meaning of P.'s *modos dat*, not only "he marks time" but also "he provides the ways" (of praising you).
14. In mythology, a utopian early period of human history, often described in literature; especially influential were Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109–20, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.89–112.
15. I.e., like Icarus, son of Daedalus, whose wings of feathers and wax melted when he flew too close to the sun. The story was often told, but P. here closely follows Horace, *Odes* 4.2, which begins "Whoever, Iulus, is eager to emulate Pindar hangs on wings which Daedalean care joined with wax, soon to give his name to a translucent sea." P. borrows directly from line 25, *multa Dircaeum levat aura cycnum* (which in Horace refers to Pindar, not to his imitators or to Icarus). The echo of Horace's paeon to Pindar is anticipated by P.'s use of the Greek word for the work of the rhapsode (properly a professional reciter of poetry).

16. Pointed borrowings from Plato, *Phaedrus*, 238D, where Socrates likewise describes himself as *νυμφόληπτος* (literally, “captured by nymphs”) and observes that he is falling into a dithyramb (a kind of song or poem originally in honor of Dionysus). Socrates first attributes his ecstasy to the dialogue’s suggestive and sacred surroundings but then immediately transfers the blame to the attractiveness of his interlocutor and returns to his subject-matter: the nature of (pederastic) love.
17. With *furor* P. introduces a third ancient term (after *inspirare* and *ἐνθουσιασμός*, above) used to describe poetic inspiration. But given the context—an admission of the promiscuity of his admiration—P. almost certainly is directing Donà to Horace, *Satires* 2.3.325, “fierce passions (*furors*)—a thousand for girls, a thousand for boys.”
18. P.’s translation of the Greek expression *λευκὴ στάθμη*.
19. The “Florentine Plato” is Marsilio Ficino.

LETTER XI

1. Hesiod, *Works and Days* 350.
2. A reference to the ancient debate between “Attic” and “Asian” rhetorical styles.
3. Pseudo-Phalaris, *Epistulae* 23.1.5–6.
4. Giuliano de’ Medici, killed April 26, 1478, in the cathedral of Florence as part of the so-called “Pazzi Conspiracy,” subject of P.’s *Coniurationis commentariolum*, though Donà’s *carmen* would seem to suggest not this (prose) work but, rather, some lost work in verse.
5. Theocritus, *Idylls* 9.33–5, modified.

LETTER XII

1. Third-century AD commentator on Aristotle. Donà’s Latin translation of his *On the Soul*, complete by January 1491, would be printed in Brescia, September 13, 1495.
2. Donà was in Milan April 1489 to June 1490 (officially he was Venetian ambassador until March 1, 1490).
3. The beginning of the second book of Alexander’s *On the Soul*.

LETTER XIII

1. “Fescennine verses” were bawdy songs performed at Roman weddings. *Bacchanalia* (properly, the Latin name for Greek mysteries of Dionysus, famously suppressed as licentious by Roman authorities in 186 BC) may be hyper-classicism on P.’s part for “Carnival.”
2. This last phrase is borrowed from Horace, *Satires* 1.9.21 (*demitto auriculas*), where it is used of a donkey resentful of the load on its back. See also Erasmus, *Adagia* 4.6.100.
3. Referring to the practice of placing a ring in the animal’s nose, by which to lead it. See Erasmus, *Adagia* 2.1.19.
4. P. was an ordained priest and (from 1486) canon.
5. P.’s variation on Scipio’s *dictum* about leisure, preserved (through Cato) by Cicero, *De officiis* 3.1.
6. P. borrows *quam oculatissimo loco*, “in the most conspicuous place possible,” from Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 34.24, where it describes the Roman Senate’s instructions for the placement (the site chosen is the speaker’s platform in the Forum) of a statue in honor of Gnaeus Octavius, murdered while on an embassy.
7. I.e., P. will tear at Ermolao’s clothes to impede his departure.
8. Niccolò Seratico, Milanese humanist.
9. P. completed his translation of the *Problemata* by August 1478, as we learn from a letter appended to the text in the Aldine edition of P.’s *Opera omnia*.
10. Domenico Grimani, major Venetian political figure, likewise well-known for his formidable collection of books and artwork.
11. Echoing ancient technologies of erasure (i.e., not necessarily his own) familiar as *topoi* of classical literature, P. means that he is thinking of erasing the whole thing (with a sponge) if Donà confirms the duplication, thus avoiding the work of revision (with a file).
12. Jacopo Antiquari, literary and political figure from Perugia and close friend of Poliziano and of other humanists, and Jacopo Gherardi of Volterra, humanist, churchman, and diplomat.

LETTER XIV

1. This is Donà's meaning, though his wording is awkward, as is the connection to the previous idea. The final image is from Cicero, *De officiis* 3.77, who gives a rustic proverb according to which an honest person is one "worthy of a game of finger-flashing in the dark" (*dignum . . . quicum in tenebris mices*), where *micare* refers to a game (*mor[r]a* in Italian) by which one guesses the sum of the fingers held up by oneself and one's opponent. Donà's *dimicare* might reflect ignorance of this technical meaning, but it is more likely that he is simply trying to vary or render more generally applicable the language of his source.
2. Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 1.85-7.
3. Literally, "to whom it will seem rather soiled," or better, "in whose eyes it will become rather soiled."

LETTER XV

1. I.e., Letter 2.14.
2. I.e., Poliziano.
3. Giorgio Merula, humanist, originally from Alessandria, active in Venice and, from 1485, in Milan. Francesco (sometimes given as Gianfrancesco) Dal Pozzo or Puteolano, humanist and major figure in the early printing of classical literature.

BOOK III

LETTER I

1. Callimachus Experiens, adopted name of Filippo Buonaccorsi, humanist, member of Leto's Roman Academy, who fled Italy for Poland over the alleged plot against Paul II in 1468, of which he was accused of being the mastermind.
2. Achilles, replying to a speech by Odysseus seeking to persuade him to set aside his anger and return to the war (Homer, *Iliad* 9.312-13).
3. See Plautus, *Pseudolus* 945. Erasmus (*Adagia* 3.6.27) identifies *obtrudere palpum* as proverbial for deception, though his attribution of the expres-

sion to the calming of restless horses by the hand-clapping of their trainers is certainly incorrect.

4. P's meaning turns on a line from a lost play by the early Roman poet Naevius, several times quoted by Cicero (*Tusculan Disputations* 4.67; *Letters to His Friends* 5.12.7, 15.6.1; see also Seneca, *Letters* 102.16), in which Hector says, "I am pleased to be celebrated by you, father, that is, by a celebrated man" (*Laetus sum laudari me abs te, pater, a laudato viro*).

5. From "marketable" on, P. uses the language of slavery; here he alludes to the impossibility under ancient law for slaves to own property in their own right.

LETTER II

1. Direct reference to Horace, *Ars Poetica* 343, the most famous contribution to the long debate about the relative merits of the *dulce* and the *utile* in poetry.
2. See Letter 2.9.4, note 3.
3. Quotation of Horace, *Ars Poetica* 143: *ex fumo dare lucem*.
4. Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.487-8.

LETTER III

1. Humanist from Padua who moved to Urbino to become tutor of the son of Duke Federico da Montefeltro.
2. Isocrates, *To Demonicus*, 1.
3. Presumably Odasio's translation of an essay from Plutarch's *Moralia*, "On Envy and Hate."

LETTER IV

1. The mss. add, "Tutor to the Duke of Urbino."
2. See Letter 1.12.1, note 2.
3. *Oculus totus* is borrowed from Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.23, which likewise mentions Lynceus, an Argonaut of legendary eyesight. Momos criticized Hephaestus' design of the human body for not providing windows in its chest through which its true thoughts might be visible