



Michelangelo Buonarroti, Letter to Vittoria Colonna with a poem. Florence, Archivio Buonarroti, XIII, 114. Courtesy of Archivio Buonarroti

By Diverse Hands

Sir, more then kisses, letters mingle Soules;
For, thus friends absent speake...
John Donne, 'To Sir Henry Wotton', 1587-1588

The texts included in this Appendix have been selected following the categories discussed in the essays which appear in this volume. For the most part, these categories refer to the art or craft of the various letter writers (e.g. Artists, Writers, Players, Scientists, Craftsmen); one category refers to a particular genre or type of letters (that of Dedicatory Letters). Less clear-cut, because it obviously overlaps almost all the other categories, is that of Women. In it, however, I have endeavoured to include missives written by women in their position as private persons, rather than as artists, writers, or public figures, roles in which they appear within the other categories. Needless to say, to anthologize letters written in a lapse of time of almost three centuries is a hopeless task and can only aim at presenting as wide as possible a variety of specimens which may appear interesting precisely because of their quasi-randomness.

1. Artists

Rough draft of a letter from Leonardo da Vinci to Duke Ludovico Sforza, 'il Moro', in which the artist, seeking employment with the Duke, presents his own credentials and describes some of his mechanical inventions as tools most useful in war as well as his artistic merits as a sculptor and painter (1482?).

Most illustrious Lord, Having now sufficiently considered the specimens of all those who proclaim themselves skilled contrivers of instruments of war, and that the invention and operation of the said instruments are nothing different to those in common use, I shall endeavour, without prejudice to any one else, to explain myself to your Excellency showing your Lordship my secrets, and then offering them to your best pleasure to work with effect at opportune moments, as well as all those things which, in part, shall be briefly noted below (and in many more, according to the diverse occasions).

1) I can build up a sort of extremely light and strong bridges, apt to be most easily carried, and with them you may pursue, and at any time flee from, the enemy; and others, secure and indestructible by fire and battle, easy and convenient to lift and place. Also methods of burning and destroying those of the enemy.
2) I know how, in a siege, to take the water out of the trenches, and make endless variety of bridges, and covered ways and ladders, and other machines pertaining to such expeditions.

3) Item, if, by reason of the height of the banks, or the strength of the place and its position, it is impossible, when besieging a place, to avail oneself of the plan of bombardment, I have methods for destroying every rock or other fortress, even if it were founded on a rock.

4) Again I have kinds of mortars most convenient and easy to carry; and with these can fling small stones almost resembling a storm; and with the smoke of these causing great terror to the enemy, to his great detriment and confusion.

5) Item, I have means by secret and tortuous mines and ways, made without noise, to reach a designated place, even if it were needed to pass under a trench or a river.

6) Item, I will make covered chariots, safe and unattackable, which will penetrate the enemy and their artillery, and there is no body of armed men so great that they would not break through it. And behind these, a numerous infantry will be able to follow, quite unhurt and without any hindrance.

7) Item, in case of need I will make big guns, mortars and light ordnance of very beautiful and useful forms, out of the common type.

8) Where the operation of bombardment should fail, I would contrive catapults, mangonels, trebuchets and other machines of marvellous efficacy and not in common use; and in short, according to the variety of cases, I will contrive various and endless means of offence and defence.

9) And when the fight should be at sea I have kinds of many machines most efficient for offence and defence; and vessels which will resist the attack of the largest guns and powder and fumes.

10) In time of peace I believe I can give perfect satisfaction and to the equal of any other in architecture and the composition of buildings public and private; and in guiding water from one place to another.

Item, I can carry out sculpture in marble, bronze or clay, and also in painting whatever may be done and as well as any other, be he whom he may.

Item, the bronze horse may be taken in hand, which is to be to the immortal glory and eternal honour of the prince your father of happy memory, and of the illustrious house of Sforza.

And if any one of the above-named things seem to any one to be impossible or not feasible, I am most ready to make the experiment in your park, or in whatever place may please your Excellency—to whom I commend myself with the utmost humility &c.

A letter from Giorgio Vasari in Florence to his friend the poet Pietro Aretino in Venice. The letter was written on March 1, 1536, when Vasari was employed by Alessandro I de' Medici. Two years before, Vasari had been commissioned by Alessandro to decorate the corner chamber on the ground floor of Palazzo Medici, where he painted four frescoes with episodes from the life of Julius Caesar. The letter accompanies one of the four cartoons which served as preparation for these paintings, which Vasari is sending as a gift to Aretino.

Your just desire to protect me which makes you hold me as your son, as you wish to get and see some of my paintings, induces me to send you by my runner Lorenzo another parcel with one of the four cartoons which I painted in that room at the corner of the Medicis' palace where, not many years ago, stood the public loggia. And if it was not that the parcel would be too big I would have decided to send you not only this but all four in the same bundle. But I will tell you in detail what kind of invention is in the ones which remain with me and, from the one I am sending, you will know what the ways and qualities of the others are, as well as the postures of the figures, their robes and their motions and feelings. Our most illustrious Duke is so fond of Julius Caesar's deeds that, if he lives and I continue to serve him during my life, in a few years the palace will be full of the stories of all his feats.

And therefore he required these stories, which are large and full of figures, to be life size, and in the first – which is the one you will receive – he wanted me to paint the scene when Caesar, fighting by sea in Egypt against Ptolemy, seeing the danger of being discomfited, threw himself into the sea; and, vigorously swimming, bore in his mouth the attire of the imperial army, in one hand the booklet of his commentaries and, swimming with the other, arrived safely ashore where there were boats with archers who, following him, aimed at him but never hit him. As you will see, I painted a brawl of naked men in order to show in the first place the art of fighting and in the second to tell the story: that, armed with a crew, the galleys fight sturdily to win the battle against the enemy. If you like it, I will be happy, since this is your wish, that, in your time, a painter from your own city be of those who, with their hands, can paint speaking figures; and, if you think that God has satisfied your will, ask me to forsake my covetous youth, for pleasures cause the intellect to go astray and become barren, and cannot bear those fruits which nourish men's names after their death.

...

And, coming back to the second cartoon in which I figured a night which, in the light of the moon, shows a dazzled light in the figures. There is Caesar who, having left the crew on the ships and, on the shore, a large army lighting fires and building fortifications, alone in a boat, escapes the tempest; and to the mariner who complained about ill venture: 'Do not be afraid! You are bearing Caesar'. There are also mariners tossed by the sea and the boat tossed by the waves, and there is a great deal of technical mastery.

In the third is the circumstance when he was given the letters which his friends had written to Pompey against him, which he burned in a great fire among the citizens. I know that you will much like this one owing to the admiration you have for that people, and the many servants who, bending, fan the flames and others, bearing wood, letters and pamphlets, execute Caesar's order, in the presence of all the armies' heads.

The fourth and last one is his honoured triumph where, all around his chariot, are the many things made prisoners and the jesters who jeer at them,

the cart bearing the statues, the cities taken by force, the enormous amount of spoils, the prize and honour of soldiers. This one, since I had to discontinue work to make other things for His Excellency, is not yet being painted, although I already finished colouring the first three.

Now be healthy and remember me, that I wish to see you one day; and give my best greetings to Sansovino and Titian. And when you get the cartoon which I am going to send you, deign to send me word about their opinion as well as your judgment. And with this I leave you.

A Supplication by Orazio Gentileschi to Pope Paul V. The letter was written by the end of February, 1612, following the rape perpetrated by the painter Agostino Tassi of Orazio's daughter Artemisia, for which Orazio begs for justice from the Pope.

Most Holy Father, Orazio Gentileschi, painter, most humble servant of Your Holiness, respectfully reports to You how, through Madame Tuzia his tenant, and as a result of her complicity, a daughter of the plaintiff has been deflowered by force and carnally known many, many times by Agostino Tassi, painter and close friend and associate of the plaintiff; also taking part in this obscene business was Cosimo Quorli, your orderly. By this I mean that besides the rape, the same orderly Cosimo, through his intrigues, took from the hands of the same young woman some paintings of her father's, and in particular a Judith large in size. And because, Holy Father, this is such a grievous deed, giving such serious and great injury and damage to the poor plaintiff, especially since it was done under the trust of friendship, it is like a murder, and committed by a person who is used to committing even worse crimes than this one, the perpetrator being the said Cosimo Quorli. Thus, kneeling at your Holy feet, I implore you in the name of Christ to take action against this ugly intemperance by bringing to justice him who deserves it, because, besides granting a very great favour, your action will keep the poor plaintiff from disgracing his other children. And he will always pray to God for your most just reward.

By Orazio Gentileschi, painter

In the letter which follows, written from Naples on January 30, 1649, Artemisia Gentileschi writes to her patron Don Antonio Ruffo about some paintings of hers she has sent him. In it, Artemisia shows consciousness of the difficulties a woman painter seeking recognition inevitably meets.

Most Illustrious Sir and My Master,
By God's will, Your Most Illustrious Lordship has received the painting and I think that by now you must have seen it. I fear that before you saw the painting you must have thought that I was arrogant and presumptuous. But

I hope to God that after seeing it you will agree that I was not totally wrong. In fact, were it not for Your Most Illustrious Lordship, of whom I am so affectionate a servant, I would not have given it for one hundred and sixty, because in every other place where I have been, I was paid one hundred *scudi* per figure. And this was in Florence as well as in Venice, and in Rome and even in Naples when there was more money. Whether this is due to merit or luck, Your Most Illustrious Lordship, a discriminating nobleman with all of the virtues of the world, will judge what I am.

I sympathize greatly with Your Lordship, because a woman's name causes doubt until her work is seen. Please forgive me, for God's sake, if I gave you reason to think me greedy. As for the rest I will not trouble you any longer. I will only say that on other occasions I will serve you with greater perfection, and if Your Lordship likes my work, I will send you also my portrait so that you can keep it in your gallery as all the other Princes do.

And thus I end this letter and I most humbly bow to Your Most Illustrious Lordship with the assurance that as long as I live I will be ready for any orders from you. To end, I kiss your hands.

Your Most Illustrious Lordship's most humble servant Artemisia Gentileschi

The following seven short letters were written by Rembrandt to Sir Constantijn Huygens, Secretary to Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, about the so-called 'Passion Series' which Rembrandt had been commissioned to paint for the Prince. The series was commissioned in 1628 and composed between this date and 1639. All these letters were written at various moments in 1639.

My lord,

My most gracious lord Huygens, I hope that your lordship will please tell his Excellency that I am hard at work on and expertly completing the three passion paintings which his Excellency himself has commissioned from me, an entombment and a resurrection and an Ascension of Christ. These are companion pieces to a raising and a descent of Christ on the Cross. Of the three earlier named pieces one is finished, the one with Christ's ascension to Heaven, and the other two are about half done. And so if his Excellency prefers to have this finished piece first or the three together, I beg my lord let me know that I may best serve the desires of his Prince Excellency. And I also can not resist, because of my readiness to serve, from honoring my lord with my latest work trusting that this will be taken in the best way Along with my greetings I commend all of yours to God in health.

My lord's ready and devoted servant

Rembrandt

I live beside the pensionary boereel nieuwe doelstraat

My lord,

After offering friendly greetings let me say I think it good that I follow directly to see how the piece fits in with the rest. As for the price of the piece, I have certainly earned 200 pounds with it but I will let myself be contented with whatever his excellence pays me. My lord, if my lordship will not take my cheek amiss, I will not neglect to repay the favour.

Your Lordship's ready and devoted servant
Rembrandt

In the gallery of His exc. it will show best as there is a strong light there.

My lord,

Because of the great pleasure and devotion that I have put into the execution of the two pieces which his Highness has had me make, being the one where the dead body of Christ is laid in the grave and the other one where Christ rises up from the dead to the great shock of the guards. These same two pieces are now complete as well due to studious diligence so that I am now also inclined to deliver these in order to please his Highness since in these two the greatest and the most natural movement is observed which is also the reason that I have had them so long in my hands.

I therefore would request if my lord could please tell his Highness of this and if my lord could please have the two pieces first delivered to your house as happened before. I will wait first for a short note to this effect. And, since my lord will be bothered with this business for the second time, in recognition a piece 10 feet long and 8 feet high will be included as well which will do honour to my lord in his house. I wish you all happiness and the blessing of salvation, Amen.

Your Lordship, my lord's r. and devoted servant
Rembrandt

the 12 January 1639

My lord I live on the inner Amstel
the house is called the 'sugar bakery'

My lord

It is then with the permission of your lordship that I send these two pieces which I believe will be found sufficient that his Highness will now pay me no less than a thousand guilders for each. Yet if his Highness thinks them not worth that and will pay me less according to his own pleasure I rely on his Highness' knowledge and discretion. I will thankfully let myself be contented with that and remain along with my greetings his ready and devoted servant

Rembrandt

What I have advanced for the frames
and the crate is 44 guilders

My Lord

I have read your lordship's agreeable missive of the 14th with particular pleasure. I find there your lordship's good favour and disposition so that I remain with heartfelt devotion obliged to repay your lordship with service and friendship. Because of my inclination to do so I am sending the accompanying canvas against my lord's wishes hoping that this will not be taken amiss by you as it is the first token that I have presented my lord. The tax collector mr. Wttenboogaert paid me a visit as I was busy packing these two pieces. He wanted to see one first. He said he could advance me the payments here from his office if it pleased his Highness. Thus I would request of you my lord that whatever his Highness grants me for the 2 pieces that I may receive this money here soon as it would be particularly useful to me now. Awaiting your lordship's answer I wish your lordship and your family all happiness and salvation along with my greetings.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

In haste this 27 January 1639

My lord hang this piece in a strong light and such that one can stand far away so that it will sparkle at its best.

Honoured Lord

I have complete trust that everything will go well and in particular regarding my compensation for these last 2 pieces trusting your lordship that if it had gone according to your lordship's favor and what is right there would have been no objection to the agreed price. And as far as the pieces delivered earlier no more than 600 carolus guilders were paid for each. And if his Highness can not be moved to a higher price with good will although they are admittedly worth it, I can be satisfied with 600 c. guilders each, as long as my outlay for the 2 ebony frames and the crate, which is 44 guilders, can be included in the account. So I would kindly request of my lord that I may now soon receive my payment here in Amsterdam, trusting that due to the good favour shown me I will soon enjoy my monies, while I remain grateful for all such friendship. And with my heartfelt greetings to my lord and to all your lordship's nearest friends, all are commended to God in long-lasting health.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

My Lord,

My noble Lord it is with scruples that I inflict my letter upon your lordship in order to say that I complained to the collector Wttenbogaert concerning the delay of my payment, although the treasurer Volbergen denies this as the dues were claimed yearly. The collector Wttenbogaert responded to this last Wednesday that Volbergen has claimed the same dues every half year up till now, so that more than 4000 carolus guilders have once again appeared at the

same office. And as these are the true circumstances I beseech you my well-disposed Lord that my warrant might be taken care of at once so that I might now at last receive my well-earned 1244 guilders. And I will always seek to repay this to your lordship with reverence, service and evidence of friendship. With this goes my heart-felt greetings and wishes God keep your lordship in good health and bless you.

Your Lordship's r. and affectionate servant

Rembrandt

I live on the inner Amstel in the sugar-bakery.

2. Writers

In a letter to Giovanni Boccaccio, written in 1366, Francesco Petrarca discusses the merits of the Latin tongue and the potentialities of the vernacular, in which he has been trying his hand, also complaining about the ignorance and excessive pride of those who call themselves 'learned'.

To be sure, the Latin, in both prose and poetry, is undoubtedly the nobler language, but for that very reason it has been so thoroughly developed by earlier writers that neither we nor anyone else may expect to add very much to it. The vernacular, on the other hand, has but recently been discovered, and, though it has been ravaged by many, it still remains uncultivated, in spite of a few earnest labourers, and still shows itself capable of much improvement and enrichment. Stimulated by this thought, and by the enterprise of youth, I began an extensive work in that language. I laid the foundations of the structure, and got together my lime and stones and wood. And then I began to consider a little more carefully the times in which we live, the fact that our age is the mother of pride and indolence, and that the ability of the vainglorious fellows who would be my judges, and their peculiar grace of delivery is such that they can hardly be said to recite the writings of others, but rather to mangle them. Hearing their performances again and again, and turning the matter over in my mind, I concluded at length that I was building upon unstable earth and shifting sand, and should simply waste my labours and see the work of my hands levelled by the common herd. Like one who finds a great serpent across his track, I stopped and changed my route for a higher and more direct one, I hope. Although the short things I once wrote in the vulgar tongue are, as I have said, so scattered that they now belong to the public rather than to me, I shall take precautions against having my more important works torn to pieces in the same way.

And yet why should I find fault with the unenlightenment of the common people, when those who call themselves learned afford so much more just and serious a ground for complaint? Besides many other ridiculous peculiarities, these people add to their gross ignorance an exaggerated and most disgusting

pride. It is this that leads them to carp at the reputation of those whose most trivial sayings they were once proud to comprehend, in even the most fragmentary fashion.

O inglorious age! that scorns antiquity, its mother, to whom it owes every noble art, that dares to declare itself not only equal but superior to the glorious past. I say nothing of the vulgar, the dregs of mankind, whose sayings and opinions may raise a laugh but hardly merit serious censure. I will say nothing of the military class and the leaders in war, who do not blush to assert that their time has beheld the culmination and perfection of military art, when there is no doubt that this art has degenerated and is utterly going to ruin in their hands. They have neither skill nor intelligence, but rely entirely upon indolence and chance. They go to war decked out as if for a wedding, bent on meat and drink and the gratification of their lust. They think much more of flight than they do of victory. Their skill lies not in striking the adversary, but in holding out the hand of submission; not in terrifying the enemy, but in pleasing the eyes of their mistresses. But even these false notions may be excused in view of the utter ignorance and want of instruction on the part of those who hold them.

Such are the times, my friend, upon which we have fallen; such is the period in which we live and are growing old. Such are the critics of today, as I so often have occasion to lament and complain – men who are innocent of knowledge or virtue, and yet harbour the most exalted opinion of themselves. Not content with losing the words of the ancients, they must attack their genius and their ashes. They rejoice in their ignorance, as if what they did not know were not worth knowing.

Desiderius Erasmus to Richard Whitford, an English – or Welsh – catholic priest, author of several devotional works. The letter was written in 1506 and shows Erasmus' great admiration for his friend Thomas More.

For several years, dearest Richard, I have been entirely occupied with Greek literature; but lately, in order to resume my intimacy with Latin, I have begun to declaim in that language. In so doing I have yielded to the influence of Thomas More, whose eloquence, as you know, is such, that he could persuade even an enemy to do whatever he pleased, while my own affection for the man is so great, that if he bade me dance a hornpipe, I should do at once just as he bade me. He is writing on the same subject, and in such a way as to thresh out and sift every part of it. For I do not think, unless the vehemence of my love leads me astray, that Nature ever formed a mind more present, ready, sharp-sighted and subtle, or in a word more absolutely furnished with every kind of faculty than his. Add to this a power of expression equal to his intellect, a singular cheerfulness of character and an abundance of wit, but only of the

candid sort; and you miss nothing that should be found in a perfect advocate. I have therefore not undertaken this task with any idea of either surpassing or matching such an artist, but only to break a lance as it were in this tourney of wits with the sweetest of all my friends, with whom I am always pleased to join in any employment grave or gay. I have done this all the more willingly, because I very much wish this sort of exercise to be introduced into our schools, where it would be of the greatest utility. For in the want of this practice I find the reason why at this time, while there are many eloquent writers, there are so few scholars, who do not appear almost mute, whenever an orator is required, whereas if, in pursuance both of the authority of Cicero and Fabius and of the examples of the ancients, we were diligently practised from boyhood in such exercises, there would not, surely, be such poverty of speech, such pitiable hesitation, such shameful stammering, as we witness even in those who publicly profess the art of Oratory. You will read my declamation with the thought that it has been the amusement of a very few days, not a serious composition. I advise you also to compare it with More's, and so determine whether there is any difference of style between those, whom you used to declare to be so much alike in genius, character, tastes and studies, that no twin brothers could be found more closely resembling one another. I am sure you love them both alike, and are in turn equally dear to both. Farewell, most charming Richard.
In the country, the 1st of May, 1506.

Thomas More to Martin Dorpius. The letter was written in 1515. In it, apart from showing great appreciation for his friend Erasmus, More discusses and compares the merits of various Italian, English, Flemish and French universities and academies.

... I do not think there can be any doubt, what is Erasmus' feeling about the Universities, in which he has studied and taught, not Grammar only, but many other things more important to all Christians. Who does not know how long he resided at Paris, and how much he was esteemed there, as also at Padua and Bologna, not to speak of Rome, which I regard as the chief of all Academies? Oxford and Cambridge have that love for him, which is due to one who has passed some time in both with great profit to students and great credit to himself. Both invite him to return, both are desirous of transplanting him into the number of their own theologians, as he has already obtained that degree elsewhere. I do not know what may be your estimate of our Universities, when you attribute so much importance to Paris and Louvain, that you seem to leave nothing at all for the rest of mankind, especially with regard to Logic; for you say that, but for the theologians of both those Universities, the Dialectic science would for many ages have been banished from the world. Seven years ago I saw something of both those Academies. My visits were not long, but while there, I took some pains to know what subjects were taught in each, and what was

the manner of teaching. And, although I respect them both, I have not found, by what I heard when I was there or by enquiry from others, any reason to prefer, that my own children, for whose education I wish to do my best, should be taught in either of them rather than at Oxford or at Cambridge. I will not however deny, that our students owe much to James Lefèvre of Paris, who has been welcomed everywhere by the happier intellects and saner judgments among us, as the restorer of true Dialectic and true Philosophy, especially that founded upon Aristotle. By his teaching Paris may seem in some sort to repay an old obligation to our own country, by reviving among us lessons originally received from us – an admitted obligation, which even Gaguin – no detractor from the glory of France or trumpeter of that of England – has commemorated in his Annals. It is much to be wished that the students of Louvain and also of Paris would all accept the commentaries of Lefèvre upon Aristotle's Dialectic. Their teaching, if I am not mistaken, would be less controversial and more accurate.
Bruges, 21 October, 1515

Thomas More in London to Desiderius Erasmus in Basel. In this letter, written in June, 1516, More replies modestly to Erasmus' appreciative remarks on More's style and expresses the wish that Erasmus may soon come back to London. The Cardinal mentioned here as addressee of a letter and of some books from Erasmus is Woolsey.

You bid me, my dear Erasmus, to write fully to you about every thing, which I am all the more disposed to do, as I understand you were pleased with my former letter, as a proof of my love. But when you say that you were also pleased with it because it showed my proficiency in power of expression, you invite me at once to be silent. For how can I be disposed to write to you, if my letters are to be curiously weighed and examined? And when you compliment me on my scholarship, I blush to think, how much I am losing every day of the less than little I ever had; which cannot but be the case with one constantly engaged in legal disputations so remote from every kind of learning. If therefore you weigh my words, that is to say, if you count my errors and barbarisms, you bid me hold my tongue; but if you are content to hear about your business and mine in whatever speech comes to my pen, I will tell you first about your money, as of most importance.

...

The lord Cardinal received your letter and the books you sent him, with much appearance of pleasure, and promises most liberally what I hope he will perform.

I am truly glad on your account, that Basel is so agreeable to you in every way, as I would have you find everywhere what you like best, but not so as to shut us off entirely from you. If we cannot furnish the conveniences they supply, we certainly do not yield to them in love. I have read through

the bundle of letters, written by learned men who approach you with the veneration you deserve, but I find nothing strange in that.

Pace is not come back, nor is he as yet expected. I have no doubt you know he is made King's Secretary. I hear you have met Tunstall, and have been his guest, since he has become Master of the Rolls. As to our small verses I say nothing; please settle the matter for me. I want to know what you think of my epistle to Dorpius. Farewell, dearest Erasmus. My Clement sends his best greetings to you.

Thomas More in London to Desiderius Erasmus in Brussels. The letter was written in October, 1516, just before the first edition of Utopia appeared in Louvain. More had sent Erasmus a copy of his work and in this letter he is seeking acknowledgement from him.

I have received your letter written at Calais, by which I gather that you had a favourable crossing; and the Provost of Cassel has reported to me that you had arrived safe at Brussels before he left home; for he is now here on a diplomatic mission.

...

I sent you the *Nowhere* some time ago;¹ and I am glad to think it will soon come out in a handsome form, with a magnificent recommendation; and that, if possible by many, not only men of letters, but also of political celebrity, principally on account of one person (whose name I suppress, but I think it will occur to you) who, from some feeling or other which I leave you to guess, is sorry to see it published without the prescribed nine years' delay. These matters you will arrange as you think most to my advantage; but I long to know whether you have shown it to Tunstall, or have at any rate described it to him, as I think you have done. This I prefer, as his pleasure will be doubled; the thing will appear more elegant in your narration than in my description, and you will save him the trouble of reading it!

Farewell.

Juan Luis Vives writes to Erasmus. The letter was sent from Bruges on 18 March, 1517. Its most important topic is the information Vives gives Erasmus about the Spanish translation which is being made of Erasmus' Enchiridion.

While I was waiting every day for a letter from you, almost an age has gone by, and while hoping for something from you to which I could reply, I have missed many an opportunity to write. In fact, I have already written two or three times and am now beginning to feel uneasy about your silence; either my letters have not been delivered or you are overwhelmed with work. This or something else must be the reason you did not write. But none of that matters

if you are in good health and have not forgotten me entirely. If you remember me and keep a place for me in your heart, that is enough for me. That you should demonstrate your feelings by sending me a letter as a sort of affidavit, that does not matter to me at all.

I do not know what news you have from Paris about your affairs. The dean says he got a letter from you, in which you bewail what is happening here. But all the university people who come here from Paris testify to the great esteem in which you are held by everyone, even by those who used to hate you most bitterly. In Spain your *Enchiridion* has begun to speak our language and with the full approval of the people whom the brothers² used to keep under their thumb. There is talk now of doing the same about the Paraphrases.

...

If you see any of the books I have published in your absence, please, dear master, write and give me your opinion of them, or rather, act like a teacher or a father and send me your criticisms and advice, for I can think of nothing more helpful than criticism from a wise friend. Indeed, even criticism from a foolish or hostile person does no harm. I wish you were closer at hand, so that I could consult you like an oracle.

If it is the Lord's will, I shall leave shortly for Britain. If there is anything you would like me to do, just say so and it will be done. If you have nothing specific to request, I have a general idea about what you want – there is no need to explain. Look after your health and do not cease to love me. Sincere and respectful greetings from your friends Laurinus and Fevijn. Farewell.

Niccolò Machiavelli to Francesco Vettori. In 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli was accused of conspiracy against the Medici, imprisoned and tortured. When, after a few weeks, he was released, he retired in his estate in Sant'Andrea in Percussina. In this letter, which dates from December 10, 1513, he informs Francesco Vettori, Florentine ambassador to the Pope and his benefactor, about his activities while in Sant'Andrea. This letter is an important historical document, for Machiavelli tells his friend that at night he has been writing a booklet called De principatibus. As is well known, Il principe was to be published posthumously, only in 1532.

Magnificent Ambassador. Divine graces were never late.³ I say this because I seemed to have lost, or mislaid, your favour since you had not written to me for a long time; and I was wondering what the reason could be. And I took little account of all those which came to my mind, except when I feared that you had discontinued writing because somebody had written to you that I was not a good keeper of your letters; and I knew that, except Filippo and Pagolo, nobody had seen them by my doing. But again I found your favour in your last letter of the 23rd of last month, from which I am happy to know how properly and quietly you carry on this public office; and I encourage

you to continue so because he who gives up his own convenience for the convenience of others loses his own and gets no gratitude from those. And since fortune wants to do everything, one should let her do, be quiet and not trouble her, and wait for the time when she will allow men to do something; and then it will be time for you to make some effort, to watch things better, and for me to leave my farm and say: here I am. I can only, therefore, since I wish to reciprocate your favour, tell you what my life is here; and if you think that you would like to exchange it with mine, I will be happy to swap.

I am staying in my farm, and since my recent unhappy fate,⁴ I have not spent twenty days altogether in Florence. Up till now, I have been snaring thrushes with my own hands. I used to get up before daylight, prepare birdlime, go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I looked like Geta when he was returning from the harbour with Amphitryon's books;⁵ I used to catch at least two thrushes and up to six. And so I did all the month of September. Then this pastime, annoying and strange as it is, ended up, to my displeasure. And of what kind my life is, I will tell you. I get up in the morning with the sun and go into a grove which I am having cut down, where I remain two hours revising the works of the past day, and spend some time with the cutters, who have always some misfortune to tell.

...

When I leave the grove, I go to a spring and thence to my aviary. I have a book with me, either Dante or Petrarch, or one of the lesser poets, such as Tibullus, Ovid and the like: I read of their amorous passions, and their loves remind me of mine: I enjoy myself a while in such thoughts. Then I move along the road to the inn; I speak with those who pass, and ask for news from their villages; I hear about various things and note various tastes and different fancies of men. In the meantime the hour of dining arrives and then with my family I eat such food as this poor farm and my small property allows. After eating, I go back to the inn: there is usually the host, a butcher, a miller, two furnace tenders. With these I sink into vulgarity for the whole day playing *cricca* and *tric-trac*, and from these games a thousand disputes and countless insults with offensive words are born; and most of the times the dispute is over a penny, and our shouts are heard as far as San Casciano. And so, wallowing among these lice, I keep my brain from growing mouldy and escape the malice of my fate being glad that it treads me in this way, to see if in the end it will be ashamed.

When evening comes, I return to my house and enter my study; and, at the door, I dismiss the day's clothing, covered with mud and dust, and put on regal and courtly garments; and, appropriately attired, I enter the ancient courts of ancient men where, welcomed by them with affection, I feed on that food which *solum* is mine, and which I was born for; where I am not ashamed to speak with them and ask them the reasons of their actions; and they, out of kindness, answer me; and for four hours I do not feel any boredom, forget all trouble, am not afraid of poverty, am not frightened by death; entirely, I give myself over to them.

And since Dante says that no knowledge is produced when we hear but do not remember,⁶ I have taken note of all that I have treasured by their conversation, and have composed a little book *De principatibus*; where I go as deeply as I can into considerations on this subject, debating what principedoms are, of what kinds, how they are gained, how kept and why they are lost. And if you ever liked any of my extravagances, this one should not displease you; and by a prince, and especially a new prince, it should be welcomed: therefore I am dedicating it to His Magnificence Giuliano.⁷

...

I have talked with Filippo⁸ of this pamphlet of mine, whether it would be good to give it or not give it; and if it is good to give it, whether it would be good to take it myself or send it. Not giving it would make me fear that Giuliano would not read it and that this Ardinghelli⁹ would get himself honour from this latest work of mine. The giving it was forced by the necessity that drives me, because I am spending all my money and cannot remain as I am a long time without becoming despised owing to my poverty. In addition, I wish that these Medici lords would start making use of me, even if they would begin making me roll a stone; because then, if I did not gain their favour, it would be my fault; and through this thing, if it were read, it would be seen that the fifteen years which I have spent studying the art of the state, I have not slept or played; and everyone should care to get the services of one who has got full experience at the expense of others. And of my honesty no one should doubt, because, having always preserved my honesty, I shall hardly learn now how to break it; and he who has been honest and good for forty-three years, which is my age, cannot change his nature; and of my honesty and goodness my poverty is witness. I should like therefore that you wrote me what you think of this matter and I send you my regards. *Sis felix.*

Die 10 Decembris 1513.

In a letter dating from June 18, 1568, Michel de Montaigne writes to his father, Pierre Eyquem, Seigneur de Montaigne, about a translation from the Spanish of a work by Raymond Sebond, a Catalan theologian and philosopher, in which he has been engaged. Apparently, the translation had been suggested to Montaigne by his father.

To Monseigneur, Monseigneur de Montaigne
Monseigneur,

in obedience to your commands last year at your home of Montaigne, I have with my own hands put that great Spanish divine and philosopher, Raymond Sebond, into a French dress, and have, as much as lay in my power, stripped him of that rough mien and unpolished aspect, which he first appeared in to you; so that, in my opinion, he is now comely and genteel enough to

appear in the best of company. It is possible that some over-curious reader may perceive that he has got a little of the Gascon turn and feature; but they may be the more ashamed of their own negligence, in suffering a person quite a novice and a learner, to get the start of them in this work. Now, Monseigneur, it is but reason it should be published to the world, and have credit of your name, because what amendment and reformation it has, is all owing to you. Yet I plainly perceive that, if you should please to settle accounts with him, you will be very much his debtor; since, in exchange for his excellent and most religious discourses, of his sublime and, as it were, divine conceptions, it will appear that you have only brought him words and language, a merchandize so mean and common, that he who has the greatest stock of it is peradventure the worse for it.

Monseigneur, I pray God to grant you a very long and happy life.

Paris, this 18th of June, 1568.

Your most humble and obedient son,

Michel de Montaigne

Veronica Franco writes to a friend who has sent her four sonnets, reciprocating with two of her own. From Lettere familiari a diversi (Familiar Letters to Various People), 1580. In this, which is the first edition of Franco's letters, neither the date of the letter nor the name of Veronica's poet friend are mentioned.

Since I cannot praise enough your Lordship's divine writing and the sonnets you have composed, conforming so closely to the strictures of rhyme, or even find the words to thank you as I should for the many honours and favours I received from you, I shall keep silently in the depth of my soul my admiration for your skill and the memory of what I owe you. And I shall let it pass that you begin ennobling comparisons of the lowliest possible object that can be chosen for praise so that the light of your famous style burns all the more brightly, though it does not need such help at all, and you continue to enjoy the pleasure that every really noble heart feels at behaving courteously, especially towards ladies. May your gentle thought be happy as you turn over in your mind the generous favour and great liberality you have granted me. If I fail to deserve them in any other way, I do because I need the help of another's kind praises when I lack any of my own, even though such praise makes me uneasy because I so admire the skill of its makers, equal (if any equal can be found) to your Lordship.

To whom as a sign of my gratitude, though warned against it by my judgment, I send two sonnets written in the same rhymes as your four. I, too, would have written four, which, though they would not be worth a single one of yours, would at least show that I am eager to learn. For I work so hard at them, longing to reveal my soul, which corresponds in such writ-

ing neither to the desire nor the need to return such graces and favours. May your Lordship make up for my lack with your skill and, wherever I may be, I will still be yours. Do me the favour, as your servant, of making me worthy of your commands, which I am sorry not to be able to fulfill by coming to you today, as I had planned to do, taking the occasion to visit my aunt the nun. But something has come up that keeps me from it. So, against my will, I must stay in this city for the time being.

In this consolatory letter to the Lady Kingsmel, written on 26 October, 1624, John Donne, following the death of the Lady's husband, dwells on the meaning of death for a Christian.

To the Honourable L. the Lady Kingsmel upon the death of her Husband
Madame,
Those things which God dissolves at once, as he shall do the Sun, and Moon, and those bodies at the last conflagration, he never intends to reunite again; but in those things, which he takes in pieces, as he doth man, and wife, in these divorces by death, and in single persons, by the divorce of body and soul, God hath another purpose to make them up again. That piece which he takes to himself, is presently cast in a mould, and in an instant made fit for his use; for heaven is not a place of a proficiency, but of present perfection. That piece which he leaves behinde in this world, by the death of a part thereof, growes fitter and fitter for him, by the good use of his corrections, and the intire conformity to his will. Nothing disproportiones us, nor makes us so incapable of being reunited to those whom we loved here, as murmuring, or not advancing the goodness of him, who hath removed them from hence. We would wonder, to see a man, who in a wood were left to his liberty, to fell what trees he would, take onely the crooked, and leave the streightest trees; but that man hath perchance a ship to build, and not a house, and so hath use of that kinde of timber: let not us, who know that in Gods house there are many Mansions, but yet have no modell, no designe of the forme of that building, wonder at his taking in of his materialls, why he takes the young, and leaves the old, or why the sickly overlive those that had better health. We are not bound to think that souls departed, have devested all affections towards them, whom they left here; but we are bound to think, that for all their loves they would not be here again: Then is the will of God done in Earth, as it is in Heaven, when we neither pretermit his actions, nor resist them; neither pass them over in an inconsideration, as though God had no hand in them, nor go about to take them out of his hands, as though we could direct him to do them better. As Gods Scriptures are his will, so his actions are his will; both are Testaments, because they testifie his minde to us. It is not lawfull to adde a scedule to either of his wills: as they

do ill, who adde to his written will, the Scriptures, a scedule of Apocryphall books, so do they also, who to his other will, his manifested actions, adde Apocryphall conditions, and a scedule of such limitations as these, If God would have stayed thus long, or, If God would have proceeded in this or this manner, I could have born it. To say that our afflictions are greater then we can bear, is so near to despairing, as that the same words express both; for when we consider *Caines* words in that originall tongue in which God spake, we cannot tell whether the words be, My punishment is greater then can be born; or, My sin is greater then can be forgiven. But, Madame, you who willingly sacrificed your self to God, in your obedience to him, in your own sickness, cannot be doubted to dispute with him about any part of you which he shall be pleased to require at your hands. The difference is great in the loss of an arme, or a head; of a child, or a husband: but to them, who are incorporated into Christ, their head, there can be no beheading; upon you, who are a member of the spouse of Christ, the Church, there can fall no widowhead, nor orphanage upon those children to whom God is father. I have not another office by your husbands death, for I was your Chaplaine before, in my daily prayers; but I shall inlarge that office with other Collects then before, that God will continue to you, that peace which you have ever had in him, and send you quiet, and peaceable dispositions in all them with whom you shall have any thing to do in your temporall estate and matters of this world. *Amen.*

Your Ladiships very humble and
thankfull servant in Christ Jesus J. Donne.
At my poor house at S.
Pauls. 26. Octob. 1624

In a letter written on 2 September, 1637, John Milton writes to Carlo Diodati, his school mate and friend from childhood, complaining about his friend's long silence. Diodati belonged to a Calvinist family originally from Lucca. In 1629 Milton composed an elegy in Latin for his friend (Elegia Prima, 'Ad Carolum Diodatum').

I now see plainly that you mean to vanquish me by being obstinately silent; if so, take your triumph, for I write first! But if we shall ever happen to argue, why neither has written to the other 'for this long while,' take care lest you have to own, that I am much the more excusable: 'I being naturally slow and lazy about writing,' as you well know, whereas, you, on the contrary, whether through nature or habit, have not in general to be dragged to literary 'addresses' of this kind. Besides, this is in my favour, that I know your method of study to be so arranged, that you frequently stop to breathe; that you visit your friends; write much; occasionally take a journey:

whereas my disposition is such, that no impediment, no rest or care for rest, no reflection, prevents me from continuing in my course, until I bring my study to a full period. From this cause, and from no other, (by your leave!) it happens, that although I tardily approach duties which I would rather postpone, yet, my friend, I am no loiterer in answering; and it has never happened through my neglect of writing, that a letter should not be due from you. What! you, as I hear, can write frequently to your bookseller, and to your brother, either of whom are near enough to hand me your letters, if there were any. But I chiefly complain, that you did not fulfil your promise, of stopping to see me, when you left the city; and this breach of faith (if you once thought of your engagement,) gave you an almost unavoidable topic for a letter. I think I may justly tax you with these matters. You will say what you may judge proper in reply. But in the mean time I prythee how are you? are you well? what smatterers have you to associate and converse with, as we used to do when do you return? how long do you intend to remain among the 'hyperboreans'? I wish you to reply to each of these interrogatories. And lest you should not be apprised that I have your welfare still at heart, know that, in the beginning of Autumn, I went out of my road to inquire of your brother what you were about; and lately, when somebody, I forget who, told me in London that you were in the city, I forthwith, and 'at the first sound,' sped to your lodgings; but it was the 'dream of a shadow', for you were not to be seen. Wherefore, if it be no inconvenience, make haste to return, and settle yourself in some situation, that may afford a prospect, that by some possibility, we may occasionally see each other; for I would not care that we should be neighbours on any other condition; I a rustic, and you a cit: 'but this as God pleases'. I have many things to tell you of myself, and my studies, but would rather communicate it to you in person. I am going to the country tomorrow, and should be preparing; so that I can scarcely throw these sentences coherently together. Farewell.

Jean Racine wrote the following letter to the Abbot Le Vasseur, one of his college friends, in 1660. The two friends had been discussing a sonnet by Racine and apparently Le Vasseur was not entirely content with it. Following their discussion, Racine decided to reshape his sonnet and sent the new version to his friend.

Thursday morning,

I send to you my sonnet, that is, a new sonnet; for I so deeply changed it last night that you will not recognize it. But I believe that you will not approve of it either. Indeed, what makes it unrecognizable is what should make it more agreeable to you, because I have disfigured it in such a way only to make it more beautiful and more consistent with the rules which you dictated to me yesterday, which are the very rules of the sonnet. You found strange

that the end was so different from the beginning. This surprised me no less than it surprised you; for in this poets resemble hypocrites, that they always vindicate what they do, although their conscience never allows them to rest: I was in the same position. I had fully acknowledged this flaw although I made all possible efforts to show that it was not a flaw; but the strength of your arguments, added to those of my conscience, in the end convinced me. I sided with reason and I also sided my sonnet with reason. I changed its *pointe* [climax], which is the most important part in such compositions. I almost wrote a new sonnet; and although so dissimilar from the first, I will find it difficult to disown it. My conscience does not blame me any more, and I consider this a good omen. I hope it satisfies you as well; and I send it to you in this hope. I would be happy if you found it worthy to be read by M.lle Lucrèce, and I would believe it not to be unworthy of his eminence. Go back to the countryside as late as you can. You see how important your presence is.

3. *Players*

The following letters, exchanged between Edward Alleyn and the Henslowe family, were written in 1593, during the plague epidemic which, since the previous year, had been devastating the city of London. In that period, since the London theatres were closed to avoid contagion, Alleyn was engaged in a provincial tour together with Lord Strange's Men and some players belonging to the Admiral's Men. Although Alleyn's letters are addressed mainly to his wife Joan, Henslowe's daughter, the replies always come from Philip Henslowe. This shows that Joan could not write, but also demonstrates Henslowe's power of impersonation in his capacity as go-between, especially when he uses the affectionate nicknames exchanged by husband and wife either to address Alleyn or to refer to his daughter, or even provides the signature 'Your lovinge wiffe to comande tell death'. Apart from constituting important historical documents about the London theatrical groups when travelling in the provinces and about those who remained at home under the threat of sickness, these letters would deserve critical attention precisely as letters, because they present a 'triangular' relationship and also because of the ways in which addresser and addressee construct the personality of Joan, the 'silent' sender-receiver.

Edward Alleyn to his wife. The following letter was written from Bristol on 1 August, 1593.

My good sweett mouse J comend me hartely to you And to my father my mother & my sister bess hopinge in god thought the siknes be round about you yett by his mercy itt may escape your house which by the grace of god it shall therfor vse this corse kepe your house fayr and clean wich J knowe you will and every evening throwe water before your dore and in your bakesid and haue in

your windowes good store of rwe and herbe of grace and with all the grace of god wich must be obtaynd by prayers and so doinge no dout but the lord will mercyfully defend you: now good mouse J haue no newse to send you but this thatt we haue all our helth for which the lord be prayesed J reseed your letter att bristo by richard couley for the wich J thank you J haue sent you by this berer Thomas popes kinsman my whit wascote because it is a trobell to me to cary it reseave it with this letter And lay it vp for me till J com if you send any mor letters send to me by the cariers of shrowsbery or to west chester or to york to be keptt till my Lord stranges players com and thus sweett hartt with my harty comendations to all our frends J sess from bristo this wensday after saint Jams his day being redy to begin the playe of hary of cornwall mouse do my harty comendations to mr grigshis wif and all his houshold and to my sister phillyps
Your Loving housband E Alleyn

mouse you send me no newes of any things you should send of your domestycall matters such things as hapens att home as how your distilled watter proves or this or that or any thing what you will and Jug J pray you Lett my orayng tawny stokins of wolen be dyed a very good blak against J com hom to wear in the winter you sente me nott word of my garden but next tym you will but remember this in any case that all that bed which was parsley in the month of september you sowe itt with spinage for then is the tym; J would do it my self but we shall nott com hom till allholand tyd and so swett mouse farwell and broke our Long Journey with patienc

This be delyvered to mr hinslo on of the gromes of hir majesty's chamber dwelling on the bank sid right over against the clink

Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyne. The letter dates from August, 1593.

Welbeloved Sonne edward allen After ovr hartie Comendationes bothe J & your mother & syster bease all in generall dothe hartieley comende vs vnto you & as for you mowse her comendationes comes by yt seallfe which as she sayes comes from her harte & her sowle prainge to god daye & nyght for your good heallth which trewley to be playne we doe soe alle hoopinge in the lorde Jesus that we shall haue agayne a mery meting for J thanke god we haue be flytted with feare of the sycknes but thankes be vnto god we are all this time in good healte in ovr howsse but Rownd a bowte vs yt hathe bene all moste in every howsse about vs & wholle howsholdes deyed & yt my frend the baylle doth scape but he smelles monstrusly for feare & dares stayer no where for ther hathe deyed this laste weacke in generall 1603 of the which number ther hathe died of them of the plage 113-0-5 which haue bene the greatest that came yet & as for other newes of this & that J cane tealle youe none

but that Robert brownes wife in shordech & all her chelldren & howshowld be dead & heare dores sheat vpe & as for your Joyner he hath browght you a corte coberd & hath seat vp your portowle in the chamber & sayes you shall have a good bead stead & as for your garden yt is weall & your spenege bead not forgotten your orange colerd stockens died but no market in smythfylld nether to bye your cloth nor yet to sealle your horsse for no mane wold ofer me a bove fower pownd for hime therfor J wold not sealle hime but haue seante hime in to the contrey tylle youe Retorne backe agayene this licke poore peapell Reioysinge that the lorde hath in compased vs Rownd & kepeth vs all in health we end prayinge to god to seand you all good health that yet maye please god to send that we maye all merelye meat & J praye you do ower comendationes vnto them all & J wold gladley heare the licke frome them & thankes be to god your poore mowse hath not ben seack seance you went.

Your lovinge wiffe tylle
death Jone allen

Your poore & a sured frend
tell death Phillipe Hensley

To my wealle loved Sonne Edward allen one of my lorde Stranges Players this be delyuered with spead

Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyn. The letter dates from August 14, 1593

Jesus

welbeloued Sonne edwarde allen J and your mother & your sister Beasse haue all in generale our hartie commendations vnto you & verey glad to heare of your good healthe which we praye god to conetenew longe to his will & pleassur for we hard that you weare very sycke at bathe & that one of your felowes weare fayne to playe your parte for you which wasse no lytell greafe vnto vs to heare but thanckes be to god for amendmente for we feared yt mvche because we had no leatter frome you when the other wifes had leatters sente which mad your mowse not to weape a lyttell but tocke yt very greauesly thinckinge yt you hade conseed some vnkindnes of her because you weare ever wont to write with the firste & J praye ye do so styll for we wold all be sorey but to heare as often frome you as others do frome ther frendes for we wold write oftener to you then we doo but we knowe not whether to sende to you therfor J praye you forgeat not your mowse & vs for you seant in one leatter that we Rettorned not answeare wheather we Receued them or no for we Receued one which you made at seant James tide wher in mackes mensyon of your whitte wascote & your Ivte bockes & other thinges which we haue Receued & now lastly a leater which peter browghte with your horsse which J wilbe as carfull as J cane Jn yt now sonne althowge longe yt at the laste J Remember a hundered comendations from your mowse which Js very glade

to heare of your health & prayeth daye & nyght to the lord to conteneue the same & lickewisse prayeth vnto the lord to seace his hand frome punyshenge vs with his crosse that she mowght haue you at home with her hopinge hopinge then that you shold be eased of this heavey labowre & toylle & you sayd in your leater that she seant you not worde howe your garden & all your things dothe prosper very well thanckes be to god for your beanes are growen to hey headge & well coded & all other thinges doth very well but your tenantes weax very power for they cane paye no Reant nor will paye no Rent whill myhellmas next & then we shall haue yt yf we cane geat yt & lyckewisse your Joyner comendes hime vnto you and sayes he will mack you such good stufe and suche good peneworthes as he hoopeth shall weall licke you & contente you which J hope he will do because he sayes he will prove hime seallfe ane onest man & for your good counsell which you gawe vs in your leater we all thank you which wasse for kepinge of our howsse cleane & warringe of our dores & strainge our windowes with wormwode & Rewe which J hope all this we do & more for we stowe yt withe hartie prayers vnto the lorde which vnto vs Js more avaylable then all thinges eallsse in the world for J prayse the lord god for yt we are all in very good health & J praye ye sonne comend me harteley to all the Reast of your fealowes in generall for J growe poore for lacke of them therfor haue no geaftes to sende but as good & faythfull a harte as they shall desyer to haue comen a mongeste theme nowe sonne we thank you all for your tokenes you seant vs and as for newes of the sycknes J cane not seand you no Juste note of yt be cause there is commandment to the contrary but as J thincke doth die with in the sitteye and with out of all syckneses to the number of sevenen or eyghten hundreth in one weacke & this praynge to god for your health J ende frome london the 14 of aguste 1593

Your lovinge wiffe to
comande tell death
Johne Allen

Your lovinge ffather & mother
to owr powers P H A

Too my wealbeloued husbände mr Edwarde Allen on of my lorde stranges players this to be delyuered with speade.

Philip Henslowe to Edward Alleyn. The letter dates from 28 September, 1593

Righte wealbeloued Sonne edward allen J & your mother & your sisster beasse haue all in generall our hartie Comendations vnto you & as for your wiffe & mowsse she desieres to send heare Comendationes alone wich she sayes Comes ffrome heare very harte but as ffor your wellfare & heallth we do all Joyne to geather in Joye and ReJoyse ther att & do all to geather with one

consent praye to god longe to conteneu the same now sonne leate vs growe to alyttell vnkindnes with you becausse we cane not heare frome you as we wold do that is when others do & if we cold as sartenlye send to you as you maye to vs we wold not leat to vesete you often ffor we beinge with in the crosse of the lorde you littell knowe howe we do but by sendinge for yt hath pleased the lorde to vesette me Rownd a bout & almoste alle my nebores dead of the plage & not my howsse ffree for my two weanches haue had the plage & yet thankes be to god leueth & are welle & J my wiffe & my two dawghters J thanke god ar very well & in good heallth now to caste a waye vnkindnes & to come to owr newes that is that we had a very bade market at smyth fylld for no mane wold ofer a bove fower pownd for your horsse & therfor haue not sowld hime but to saue carges J haue sent him downe Jn to the contrey ther to be keapte tell you Retorne & as for your clocke cloth ther wasse none sowld by Retaylle for all wasse bowght vp by wholle saylle in to dayes so the fayer lasted but iij dayes & as for yowr stockings they are deyed & yor Joyner hath seate vp your portolle in the chamber & hath brothe you a corte cobert & sayes he will bringe the Reaste very shortley & we beare with hime because his howsse is visited & as for your garden that is very weall your spenege bead & all sowed...

...

& this J eand praysinge god that it doth pleass him of his mersey to slacke his hand frome visietinge vs & the sittie of london for ther hath abated this last two weacke of the sycknes iij hundredth thurtie and five & hath died Jn all betwext a leuen and twealle hundred this laste weack which J hoop Jn the lord yt will conteneu in seasynge euery weacke that we maye Rejoyssse agayne at owr meatinge & this with my hartie comendations to thy own seall & lickwise to all the Reaste of my felowes J genereall J praye you hartily comende me from london the 28 of septmb 1593

Your asured owne seallfe

Tell deathe Joanne allen

Commending to her mvnshen

Your lovinge father & frend to my power

tell death Phillipe Henslow

your wiffe prayeth you to send her word in your next leater what goodman hudson payes you yerley for his Reante for he hause the sealer and all stille in his hand & as for your tenenantes we cane geat no Rent & as for greges & his wife hath ther comendations vnto you & your sister phillipes & her husband hath leced two or thre owt of ther howsse yt they in good health & doth hartily comend them vnto you

This be delyuerd vnto my welbeloued husband mr edward alien one of my lord stranges players geue wth spede

The following letters by Comici dell'Arte, apart from dealing with the financial and logistic difficulties in which the companies often found themselves, illustrate one particular aspect of the relationships within each company and between different companies of comici: their feelings of rivalry and the ways in which they communicated their mutual grudge to their patron or his close collaborators. The main company is that of the 'Accesi', led by Pier Maria Cecchini, often in sharp contrast with that of the 'Fedeli', led by Giovan Battista Andreini, both in the service of the Gonzaga dukes in Mantua. It is to be noted that in almost all their letters, the comici refer to themselves and to their companions not with their actual names but with the names of the characters they impersonated. Thus, Fritellino or Frittellino is to be identified with Pier Maria Cecchini, Flaminia with his wife Orsola, while Lelio is Giovan Battista Andreini and Florinda his wife Virginia Ramponi. Arlecchino, in turn, is the celebrated 'zanni' Tristano Martinelli. Virginia Rotari, Andreini's second wife, was surnamed 'Baldina', but her role name was Lidia. Ricciolina is the role name of a maid-servant, but the identity of this particular performer is uncertain. Inevitably, the translation normalizes texts (especially those by Cecchini) which appear to have been written under the spur of necessity and in haste and have therefore special characteristics of style, rhetoric, lexicon and construction.

The three letters which open this selection were written in September, 1606, by Pier Maria Cecchini and Giovan Battista Andreini to their patron Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua and to his gentleman usher Silvio Andreasi. Cecchini, the elder of the two, and Andreini both manifest the rivalries and the resentment which was to characterize their personal and professional relationships for years.¹⁰

Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 11 September, 1606.

My most serene Lordship,

The subterfuge and persecutions which come from Florinda and her husband and their abuse are so great that they have led me to ruin and made me fall into a ravine.

They send me advice to remain in Milan the whole winter, and since I do not think it would be right and I say I will not stay, Florinda's husband has led me to fight, which would have happened if God had not helped.

All the same, they want to stay, and they talk about fetching certain *comici* who are in this area and ask them to remain with them till Christmas, and then let them go and come with us to serve Your Highness in time of Carnival; which, if it happens, I, too, will be obliged to gather a company and keep it until that time in order to perform where I promised to go. But since I never want to act if not advised by your consent, I am sending the present message so that Your Highness may advise me about what to do; and, in case they have written talking foul about me (or saying anything contrary to what I am writing), I pray Your Highness to charge a Cavaliere here to hear both him and me, and the one who

will be found wrong will be excluded from your service because undeserving of it. However, Your Highness may appreciate that we cannot stay together because things are so serious, and their behaviour is such as I cannot say, because there are things which only can be said in your presence...I did not want to say so much, but I am assured that I am speaking to a master who will not neglect my message and who will easily understand everything. I have been asking my companions to sign a letter or certify what happened and I will send it to Your Highness, to whom I humbly bow.

From Milan, 11 September 1606

Your Highness' most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

Giovan Battista Andreini to Silvio Andreasi. The letter dates from 20 September, 1606

My most illustrious Lordship,

For my good deeds the company stoned me to death. I wish you to know that I turn to you, most kind sir, together with my wife, entreating you to bow to the duke my most serene highness and deliver the attached letter, together with the present unsealed message, in which your lordship will read what I am writing. I was persuaded to do this because that cheat Frittellino has cheated so well with the most serene Highness of Mantua that his Highness was led to dismiss me: therefore I ask your lordship to deliver my reasons to his Highness and let him know by word of mouth that I will set out with the company and will come to Mantua because it is too strange that a liar be believed better than a poor young man. I professed to be Your most serene Highness' servant, an honourable servant, as the city of Milan will witness; but now I shut my mouth hoping that your lordship will make all efforts now that we are so much in need, for the love which your lordship grants us. My wife bows to you and I do the same, entreating your help, so that when I arrive in Mantua I may be seen with good will.

From Milan, 20 September, 1606

Your most illustrious Lordship's

Most humble servant

Giovan Battista Andreini

Giovan Battista Andreini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The following letter accompanies the previous one and dates from 20 September, 1606

Most Serene Highness,

pardon me if my pen dares so much as to venture, by bowing to you, to write and recall that I never wrote about the company but in good terms, as is witnessed by two letters I wrote to signor Silvio Andreasi, since I never wrote to anyone else.

Now it has been told me by Frittellino that Your Highness dictates that, if I do not want to follow the company, I am free to leave it; hearing this, I imagined I have been very badly represented to your Highness, and therefore I decided to let you know my position in a short letter which (if you do not spurn to read) will be shown to you by the same Signor Silvio Andreasi. And with this, I wish you the summit of the highest graces from God Our Lord.

From Milan, 20 September, 1606

Your Most Serene Highness'

Most humble servant

Giovan Battista Andreini

The following three letters were written by Pier Maria Cecchini in 1607 and are addressed to Vincenzo I Gonzaga and his secretary Annibale Chioppo. By that time, the 'Accesi' were performing in Turin at the court of the Duke of Savoy, who wanted to keep them, while they were waiting to leave for Paris where their service had been requested by Queen Maria de' Medici and granted by their patron, Vincenzo Gonzaga. Apart from the usual expressions of rivalry and resentment between the actors, Cecchini's letters express the company's difficulties created by the contrasting wills of the Duke of Savoy who wanted to continue enjoying their services, and of Maria de' Medici who had agreed with Vincenzo that they should go to perform in Paris.

Pier Maria Cecchini to Annibale Chioppo. The letter dates from 22 November, 1607.

My most illustrious Lordship and most honourable patron,
 Here I am, importunate as usual and too confident in your kindness, but since I know how much you prize the service to His Most Serene Highness, I wish hereby to inform Your most illustrious Lordship about what is happening as regards the part of that service which falls on me. Since when I was in Mantua I imagined – and told His Highness about it – that we would be detained by these Most Serene Highnesses [the Dukes of Savoy]; I entreated him to give me letters in order to prevent that our departure should be barred, but I had none. Now I am in Turin, and am bound to perform some comedies; Cola [Aniello Di Mauro, who should have played in place of Martinelli] has not yet arrived, I left Mantua three weeks ago and the stuff which we sent for to Florence has not arrived yet, and we are informed that delivery will tarry a few more days. Once Cola arrives, they want us to go on performing and I, in order to serve as is meet, asked Cavalier Sandri, manager of... to show his Most Serene Highness the Duke both the letter addressed to the Queen [of France] and the passport issued by His Highness Our Lord. But I see that this is to no avail and therefore we most eagerly need letters asking that we may be allowed to leave, and if my repeated requests allow our departure, they will be proof that I was telling the truth. If in the end they allow us to leave,

His Highness should consider the time and the damage, because to wait for the money we deserve as recompense for our toils would mean to wait until the end of the year, and if I ever deserved a salary from His Highness, I deserve it this year better than in the past, for the time wasted, the money spent in addition to His, the dangers run and for a thousand more reasons which I omit. I entreat you to give your answer to Cavalier Sandri who, if he comes back after I am gone, will forward it to me in France; and with this I bow before your most illustrious Lordship and also acquaint you that this company (although without Arlecchino and Cola) has given so great and universal pleasure here as I hope it is going to give to their Majesties. From Turin November 22, 1607.

Your most devoted and obliged servant

Pier Maria Cecchini alias Frittellino

Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 30 November, 1607.

My most Serene Lordship,

By a letter to Mr Chieppio I informed Your Highness of what had passed, and again I inform you that today part of the stuff which had been sent to Florence was delivered except for a chest in which is the stuff of Cintio [Jacopo Antonio Fidenzi]. The amount of money I have spent up till now is so great that in order to leave Turin I must leave behind a very considerable pawn, and this was so great a disaster that I will not be able to recoup expenses, but to serve Your Highness I would not even care to lose my life. I am resolved to leave without waiting to be rewarded for the comedies performed to these Highnesses because this would mean to wait too long, but I sincerely swear to Your Highness that these most serene princes have been so pleased with this company, and in particular the Duke, that they are making us a thousand offers in order to have us here until the end of Carnival; but since this would be contrary to the service to His Majesty and to Your Highness' order, I took leave, and on December 4 I will leave for Paris with the company. And thus I humbly bow to Your Highness and will pray Our Lord together with all my own for the health of Your Highness and of Your most serene Household.

From Turin, November 30, 1607

Your most serene Highness' very humble and faithful servant

Pier Maria Cecchini

Pier Maria Cecchini to Vincenzo I Gonzaga. The letter dates from 10 December, 1610.

My most Serene Lordship,

Today, December 10, we are still in Turin, having contracted a debt of 350 *scudi* (and they are gold *scudi*) with mule drivers and carriers who have carried

our stuff (and with my mother, one of our women) up to Lyon. I also inform Your Highness that, having decided to leave without waiting for the reward for the time we have served, and being already in our boots, we have been enjoined not to leave, and we cannot say 'We are going to leave such and such a day'; and so we are without our stuff, without money and with many debts, having lost so much time that we cannot retrieve any longer. But now then, I will be patient and I temper all considering how much this company is enjoyed; and so I end by bowing in all humility to Your Highness

From Turin, December 10, 1607

Your Highness' most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

The last group of letters belongs to a later date. They were written between August and September, 1620, to Ferdinando Gonzaga, who succeeded his father Vincenzo, by Pier Maria Cecchini, Giovan Battista Andreini and Tristano Martinelli. What appears from these missives is a rivalry which, by that time, had become sheer disorder owing to the intrigue, denounced by Cecchini but denied by Andreini, between Lelio and Baldina. The quarrel and the general confusion were further fuelled by the celebrated 'zanni' Tristano Martinelli, who obtained from his fellows that they signed a sort of accusation in form of a letter against his eternal rival Cecchini.

Pier Maria Cecchini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 15 July, 1620.

My most Serene Lord and my only special master,
I refrained as long as I could from troubling Your most serene Highness, but since I can no longer hold, I am obliged to disclose to you my tribulations, which keep growing every day.

I will not mention among these the fact that, in Lelio's plots, Baldina [Virginia Rotari], is no longer playing the maidservant, but the second woman, thereby depriving or lessening the roles which belong to my wife.

I will not talk about the fact that the same Lelio craftily entrusts the lovers' parts to the Captain, to prevent my wife from talking to the other lover.

I will not pay attention to the fact that in many of his plots he entrusts the parts of the first *zanni* to Arlecchino.

I will not complain about the fact that he has engaged and keeps in the Company a Pantalone who is universally disliked and gives him a whole part.

I have never complained about the fact that every day he entrusts a role to Berneta [Urbania Liberati], who stays at home nearly all the time... But I cannot keep silent about the fact that, in spite of the mutual affection which binds Flaminia and Florinda, who seem to have forgotten that they are women, in addition to this, Lelio is universally spreading the rumour that, if our courier

comes back from France with a negative answer, in that case he does not want my company any longer; which thing I envisaged from the beginning, when he made me remain without my companions, so that he might stay with his company.

And, since there is nothing he can complain about, as he gets from us all the satisfactions he wishes to have, he says that he does not want his wife to be involved in this competition; but things are different and I know how they are, and I am about to write it to Your Highness, but I do not know why I am doing it, there being persons who should do it better than me, and with better opportunities. But come, now, I cannot refrain myself. Lelio is in love with Baldina, and acts so immoderately that he makes his wife's life hell; and that little devil Baldina gets pleasure and laughs about it, which shows she is a most despicable ignorant person, and there will never be peace while she is in the company... What most disturbs me is that Lelio, by saying that he wants to work on his own, means he knows what he can do, as if Your Most Serene Highness had agreed with his intention. If things are thus, please be not displeased if I provide myself, because I will gather a company which will always serve Your Highness whenever you please, and do not let me remain frustrated without a company; or else (if it pleases Your Highness), do dismiss Baldina from the company, who would give her life to play the first part in a company which is in Venice, which company may in the future serve Your Highness, and so you will rid Florinda of this displeasure and also Lelio of this opportunity, and will restore peace in the company, not only when we go to France, but also when we stay in Italy. I disclosed my feeling, leaving Your Highness' prudence to act, to which I recommend my peace of mind and reputation, entreating you to give me an answer, and let me not remain surrounded by so many doubts; and, together with my wife I most reverently bow to you.

From Milan, 15 July, 1620
Your most serene Highness'

Most humble and obedient servant
Pier Maria Cecchini

Giovan Battista Andreini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 5 August, 1620.

Most Serene Highness,

I could never believe (most Serene Highness) that my letters would become so daring as to be directly addressed to your most serene hand; but may this grace be allowed them today.

Your Highness certainly knows that, owing to a letter written to me by signor Ercole Marliani, I was so nauseated that I wanted to give it all up and come to your most serene feet to find there the mercy you bestow on your enemies, not on your most devoted servants who never, as I believe, displeased you.

The letter said that I, in love with Baldina, was causing revoultion and that therefore I would be punished.

Most serene patron, a great punishment it would be if I had fallen in love with this person – if it were true – because if I knew, if every city knew, that beautiful Iole has fallen in love with Nesso the Centaur, would never persuade me to such falling in love.

Indeed, although falling in love happens sometime by the imperious force of the stars, nevertheless little or nothing good can issue unless this is accompanied by the evaluation of the object of love.

I not only zealously prize my honour, but also the honour of my companions, and this the Captain and Baldo know quite well, since twice I run to their rescue, once in Genova, the other in Paris.

This is indeed the tongue of the Captain who, jealous lest he lose the object of his love, spread this rumour, which was confirmed with her magic pen by the astrologer Bernetta [Urania Liberati]; and so, for two or three days (as little women are wont to do) the floods of tears and abuse were open.

Therefore, with this heavy cross which I carry with my wife, patiently sagging under that weight, I fell silent.

....

And I end here, wishing you the highest good I humbly bow to you.

From Milan, the 5th of August, 1620

Your most serene Highness'

Most humble and obedient servant

Giovan Battisti Andreini

Pier Maria Cecchini to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 26 August, 1620.

Most Serene Highness,

In the midst of so much confusion, I would not know what else to say to your Most Serene Highness but ask you to order the gentleman your confidant to question our doorman and then inform Your Highness about what is happening between Lelio and his wife on account of the reasons which by now everyone is acquainted with. My Lord, I profess I ever want to serve Your Highness until you are content with my service, but I entreat you not to force me to remain in the midst of such a mess. Here are only heard cryings, insults, charms, swearings not to do, not to say, so that, living in this way it is impossible to live well either in France or in Italy, indeed, neither in this world nor in the other. I wish to live very soberly in Mantua under the shade of Your Highness rather than get rich touring the world in these people's company; when I say these people I mean Lelio, because they all agree with his wife. For God's sake, consider me at least worthy of an answer, so that I may be given a place where to find solace. And with this I pray for your everlasting health and bow very deeply to you. From Milan, 26 August, 1620.

Your Most Serene Highness'

Most humble and devoted servant

Piermaria Cecchini

Tristano Martinelli to Ferdinando Gonzaga. The letter dates from 28 September, 1620

Most Serene godfather,

Today signor Lelio told us that we are ordered to get ready to go to France, where we are all agreed to go, starting from signor Frittellino who says that if Lidia is coming he does not want to come, and the company likes Lidia more than him; but they did not want to wrong him. Furthermore, Frittellino says that, if he came, he wanted the company to pay for his journey to Paris... a thing that none of the *comici* has ever done; and because I said 'Although this is not permitted, to please the said Frittellino, let us pay for his journey', and only because I said this word, he started ranting, cursing to God, swearing that he does not want to come, threatening me and saying that if he came unwillingly to France, if Your Highness made him come, he will only sow discord in the company, and many other impertinent ugly words, but pronounced in great anger, and, to make it short, that he does not want to come. At this, the company decided to go without him, and fetch a good Pantalone, and myself and Fichetto [Lorenzo Nettuni] as Zanni, who in Milan was a zanni better liked than Frittellino, which is acknowledged by all. Therefore, most serene Highness, the whole company entreats you to let us go with our company, which is going to be a thousand times more satisfactory than it would be with this bad man; and it is not only I who says so, but all those who associate with him, and in particular the whole company, which asked me to inform Your most serene Highness, because they know that you will graciously trust my letter. And that it is true that this man is greatly confused Your most serene Highness will see from two letters received in Milan, which signor Lelio is going to show you, and that he does nothing but plot all the time. And, as witness that I am telling the truth, signor Lelio is going to sign this; while we pray Our Lord to give Your Highness all happiness. From Due Castelli the 28th of September, 1620.

Your Most Serene Highness'
most humble servant
Tristano Martinelli

I, Lelio *comico*, confirm what said above, because I see that a most serious danger is impending.

I, Giovanni Rivani
I, Girolamo Garavini

4. *Craftsmen*

The letters in this section were written by craftsmen and are of a different nature. The first one, written in 1539, is a petition addressed to the Lord Privy Seal Thomas Cromwell from Suffolk and Essex wool weavers who complain about the rising cost of wool production and the consequent decay of the trade. The following two are private letters written in 1567 by immigrant craftsmen in London to their families at Ypres.

The Suffolk and Essex wool weavers to the Lord Privy Seal Thomas Cromwell. The letter was written in 1531

... my Lorde Prevy Seale.

... Complayning Shewith vnto your honorable Lordshipp your poore Suppliauntes... the weyvers of woollen Clothes inhabiting in and by all the hede to... mooste vsed to be made within the Shyres of Suffolk and Essex, as Ipsewiche, Hadleighe, Lavenham, Barholt, Colchester, and Dedham with other townes therabowte, that where as it has pleased the Kynges highness tendering the publyke welth of this his Realme of Englande, to make certayne Actes and statutttes, wheroff one is concerning the pure and true making off woollen clothes, in the which it is enactyd that the same clothes shall always holde beare and kepe the full Rate and Syce bothe of the Length and bredth, wherby your said supplyauntes in every clothe always susteynith the more coste, Labour, and busynes Dyvers wayes as your good Lordshipp full well can consider, Albe it your said Sypplyauntes the weyvers cannot attayne nor nothing be allowide for the same at their masters the Clothiers handes, By meane wheroff the ocupacion of weyving, which is the hede and mooste pure point of Clothing, is alredy gretly decayed, in so moche that no man in those parties will put their children to that ocupacion, so that within fewe yeres these shires of Suffolk and Essex of weyvers ys lyke to be frustrate and voyde. Moreover, moste gracyous Lorde, by Reason that the Richmen the clothiers have their Loomes and weyvers and also their fullers dailie workyng within their owne howses. All these your saide supplyauntes, beyng howseholders nowe luyng, having their wyffes and children, Are many tymes destitute of worke. And the lenger they lyue, the more they are lyke to growe into extreme povertie; for the Richmen the Clothiers be concludede and Agreede Amonge themselues to holde and pay one pryce for weyving of the saide Clothes, which pryce is so litle, that your sayde supplyauntes the weyvers cannot with their Labour gett wherwith to susteyne and maynteyne their poore howsholdes, although they sholde worke incessantly nyght and day, holy day and worke day, yet your saide subiectes for avoiding off Idlenes Are of necessityte compellyd to take their worke at the Clothiers own pryce. By meanes wheroff many of your saide Supplyauntes, that hathe kepte good howeholdes, hathe exspendyd and wasted their substaunce, And are glade to become other mens servauntes, And many mo of them ys lyke so to doo oneles a Reformation the soner be had in this behalff, off all which premysses your saide Supplyauntes hathe made and presentyd a bill in to the parliament howse, But as yet they have little comferte theroff. Pleasith it therefore your honorable lordship, of your haboundaunte goodnes and charitye to be so good lorde vnto your said Supplyauntes as to extend your good worde and gracyous helpe towards the fortherance of the forsaide bill presentyd into the parliament howse, so that yt may take effecte. And your saide supplyauntes shall Duryng their lyves pray to god for the preservacion of your honorable estate long to contynewe.

Clais van Wervekin (hatmaker) to his wife at Ypres. The letter was written on 21 August, 1567.

... You would never believe how friendly the people are together, and the English are the same and quite loving to our nation. If you come here with half our property, you would never think of going to live in Flanders. Send my money and the three children. Come at once and do not be anxious. When you come, bring a dough trough for there are none here. Know that I await you and doubt me not; send me Catelynken, Saerle and Tonyne. Bring also our long hooks to hang your linnencords on. Buy two little wooden dishes to make up half pound of butter; for all Netherlanders and Flemings make their own butter, for here it is all pigs fat... Your married friend.

Clement Baet to his wife at Ypres The letter was written on 5 September, 1567.

... There is good trade in bays and I will look after a house as quickly as I can to get into business, for it will be easy to make money. I will get ready the gear for making bays against your coming. Bring all your and your daughter's clothing, for people go well clad here. Let your sister know that Lein's trade is no use, for they only work at bay work here. Greet heartily Philip Kuen, Pieter de Pers, Pieter Priem, Cornelis Hendrickz, Christianen van der Stene, Jakijns de Muelene, Hooris Boontam, and Jan Spene. I let you know that we are merry and happy with each other. May God give you the same loving peace and riches as we have here at Norwich. It is very dear to hear the word of God peacefully.

5. *Scientists*

On 30 December, 1610, Galileo Galilei writes from Florence to the Italian mathematician Benedetto Castelli in Brescia. In 1609, Galileo had constructed his first telescope and is now informing his friend about what his instrument shows of the changing shapes and size of Venus and the peculiar structure of Mars.

To the very Reverend Father and most honourable Father
Benedetto Castelli, Casinensis Frier

To Your Lordship's most welcome letter of December 5 I will give a brief answer, for I am still aggrieved by a sickness which for many days has confined me to bed. I heard with great pleasure about your plan to come and stay in Florence, which rekindles my hope to enjoy your company and have a chance to serve you for some time: do keep this purpose and be assured that I will ever be ready to answer all your needs, although mine or anyone else's help cannot answer the needs of the sharpness of your intelligence. As regards your queries, I can in part satisfy you; which I most willingly do.

Know therefore that about three months ago I started observing Venus with my instrument and saw it round in shape and very small; it grew day by day in size and, keeping the same roundness until at last, arriving at a great distance from the sun, it started to grow smaller from the eastern part and, in a few days, was reduced to a half circle. It remained in this shape for several days, but ever growing in size: now it is starting to become sickle-shaped and, until it is seen at sunset, it will wear thinner in its thin horns until it vanishes: but, when it is again seen at morning, its horns are going to be very thin and opposite to the sun, and it will grow until it reaches a half circle up to its utmost size. Then it will remain in this shape for a few days, although decreasing in size; then, from the half circle in a few days it will grow to a whole circle, and for many months it will be seen both at sunrise and at sunset, all round, but smallish in size. Your Reverence is well aware of the evident consequences which can be drawn from this.

As regards Mars, I would not dare to affirm anything certain; but, having observed it for four months, it seems to me that it appears about a third in size of what it was last September, that from the east it appears rather decreased, if I am not deceived by my wish, which I do not believe is the case. It will be seen better at the beginning of next February... and yet, since it appears so small, its shape is not easily perceived, if it is perfectly round or is somehow flawed. But Venus I see as clear and distinguished as I see the moon, for the telescope shows it is the same diameter as the moon perceived with the naked eye.

Oh how many and what crucial consequences have I derived, my dear Don Benedetto, from these and other observations of mine! 'Sed quid inde?' Your Reverence almost made me laugh when you said that by these evident observations the stubborn can be convinced. You do not know, then, that in order to convince those who are endowed with rationality and desirous to know the truth the other demonstrations, advanced in the past, were sufficient; but to convince the obstinate, who only look for vain applause from the stupid and stolid populace, not even the witness of the very stars who, descended to the earth spoke of them, would be sufficient? Let us try to acquire some knowledge for ourselves and be content with this sole gratification; but let us renounce the wish and hope for an advancement of public opinion or the assent of philosophers 'in libris'.

What is Your Reverence going to say about Saturn, which is not only one star, but three stars linked together and fixed to one another, set in parallel to the equinoctial line, thus: o O o? The one in the middle is larger than those at the sides by three or four times; I observed it in this shape since last July, but now they have much decreased in bulk.

Now then, come to Florence, we will enjoy ourselves and will have a thousand new and admirable things to talk about. In the meantime, I remain your servant, kiss your hands and pray God for your happiness. Please present my double regards to Father Serafino and to Messers Lana and Albano.

From Florence, September 30, 1610
 From Your very affectionate Servant
 Galileo Galilei

Between July 25 and August 10, 1660, Pierre de Fermat and Blaise Pascal, the two scientists who are acknowledged as the founders of modern mathematics, write to each other. The exchange has a personal tone, except for what concerns a surprising statement about geometry made by Pascal.

Pierre de Fermat to Blaise Pascal. The letter was written on 25 July, 1660

Sunday, July 25, 1660

Monsieur,

as soon as I discovered that we were nearer to one another than we had ever been before, I could not resist making plans for renewing our friendship and I asked Monsieur de Carcavito to be mediator: in a word I would like to embrace you and to talk to you for a few days; but as my health is not any better than yours, I very much hope that you will do me the favour of coming half way to meet me and that you will oblige me by suggesting a place between Clermont and Toulouse, where I would go without fail towards the end of September or the beginning of October.

If you do not agree to this arrangement, you will run the risk of seeing me at your house and of thus having two ill people there at once. I await your news with impatience and am, with all my heart,

Yours ever,
 Fermat

Blaise Pascal to Pierre de Fermat. The letter was written on 10 August, 1660.

Tuesday, August 10, 1660

Monsieur,

You are the most gallant man in the world and assuredly I am the one who can best recognize your qualities and very much admire them, especially when they are combined with your own singular abilities. Because of this I feel I must show my appreciation of the offer you have made me, whatever difficulty I still have in reading and writing, but the honour you do me is so dear to me that I cannot hasten too much in answering your letter.

I will tell you then, Monsieur, that if I were in good health, I would have flown to Toulouse and I would not allow a man such as you to take one step for a man such as myself. I will tell you also that, even if you were the best Geometrician in the whole of Europe, it would not be that quality

which would attract me to you, but it is your great liveliness and integrity in conversation that would bring me to see you.

For, to talk frankly with you about Geometry, it is to me the very best intellectual exercise: but at the same time I recognize it to be useless and that I can find little difference between a man who is nothing else but a geometrician and a clever craftsman. Although I call it the best craft in the world, it is after all only a craft, and I have often said it is fine to try one's hand at it but not to devote all one's powers to it.

In other words, I would not take two steps for Geometry and I feel certain you are very much of the same mind. But as well as all these my studies have taken me so far from this way of thinking, that I can scarcely remember that there is such a thing as geometry. I began it, a year or two ago, for a particular reason; having satisfied this, it is quite possible that I shall never think about it again.

Besides, my health is not yet very good, for I am so weak that I cannot walk without a stick nor ride a horse, I can only manage three or four leagues in a carriage. It was in this way that I took twenty-two days in coming here from Paris. The doctors recommended me to take the waters at Bourbon during the month of September, and two months ago I promised, if I can manage it, to go from there through Poitou by river to Saumur to stay until Christmas with M. le duc de Roannes, governour of Poitou, who has feelings for me that I do not deserve. But, since I go through Orléans on my way to Saumur by river and if my health prevents me from going further, I shall go from there to Paris.

There, Monsieur, is the present state of my life, which I felt obliged to describe to you so as to convince you of the impossibility of my being able to acknowledge it to you or to your children, for those who bear the name of the foremost man in the world.

I am, etc.

Pascal

De Bienassis, 10th August, 1660

On September 8, 1679, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz writes to Christiaan Huygens about a new, nonquantitative approach to geometry and describes the properties of phosphorus.

One of my friends, Mr Hansen, who has had the honour of speaking with you, assures me that you continue to have a good opinion of me, which I am much indebted to you. And I want to use this opportunity to witness how much I honour your extraordinary worth, which everyone recognizes as I do, and which places you in the highest rank.

I have learned from Mr Mariotte that you will soon give us the dioptrics which we have so long desired. I am very eager to see it some day, and I should like to know in advance if you are satisfied with the reasons for refraction which Descartes proposes. I must admit that I am not entirely, any more than Mr. Fermat's explanation in the third volume of Descartes' letters.

I have left my manuscript on arithmetical quadratures at Paris so that it may some day be printed there. But I have advanced far beyond studies of this kind and believe that we can get to the bottom of most problems which now seem to lie beyond our calculation; for example, quadratures, the inverse method of tangents, the irrational roots of equations, and the arithmetic of Diphantus. I have some general methods which solve most of these things in a way as determinate as that used in ordinary algebra to solve equation. And I am not afraid to say that there is a way to advance algebra as far beyond what Vieta and Descartes have left us as Vieta and Descartes carried it beyond the ancients... But, in spite of the progress which I have made in these matters, I am still not satisfied with algebra, because it does not give the shortest methods or the most beautiful constructions in geometry. This is why I believe that, so far as geometry is concerned, we need still another analysis which is distinctly geometrical or linear and which will express *situation* directly as algebra expresses *magnitude* directly. And I believe that I have found the way and that we can represent figures and even machines and movements by characters, as algebra represents numbers or magnitudes. I am sending you an essay which seems to me to be important. There is no one who can judge it better than you, Sir, and I should take your opinion in preference to those of many other men.

I am also sending you a little of the corporeal fire, which can well be called a perpetual light for, when properly protected, it lasts many years without being consumed. It is a small piece but beautiful, for similar pieces are not always produced; usually the matter comes in small grains. I have put it in a bladder, and this is sealed in wax, so that nothing can escape, and the piece will not take fire by motion or friction, as easily happens. Such a piece will be enough for many experiments, for the smallest particle is capable of making things radiant, and, when one takes it into his hands, they remain luminous for some hours, yet there is nothing visible in daylight. One can write with it in luminous letters and, some hours later, when these seem dead, they become visible afresh if rubbed once more. I hold that there is a true fire inclosed with the matter, but not concentrated enough to make itself felt. When one blows against it, the light disappears but returns immediately afterword, which is a remarkable thing. However, I have seen its vapour alone light a piece of paper which I was using to wipe my fingers when I emptied the container after I had produced the fire.

...

I beg you, Sir, to tell me something about scientific happenings there... You have heard mention the attempt of Mr. Becher, in Holland, to extract gold from sand. There are persons here who think well of him... I should like to know if you have heard talk of it in Paris. As for me, I am sceptical of his success, for I believe I know a little about the nature of the experiment. He does find a vestige of gold, but I do not think he has gained any of it, for he claims that the proportion of gold is greater in large than in small amounts, which is paradoxical.

On February 8, 1758, Carl Linnaeus writes from Uppsala to John Ellis in London seeking information about the supposed presence of a strange being in London and asking Ellis to examine it and describe it in detail.

Uppsala, Feb. 8, 1758

Sir,

I learn by letters from London that a Troglodyte, or *Homo nocturnus*, figured in Bontius, p. 84, and certainly very different from the *Satyrus* of Tulpius, is arrived in your capital. In order to learn the truth of this, as no subject is more interesting to me, I have not been able to think of any way so promising as to request your assistance. I therefore most respectfully beg of you to examine this animal with attention and to compare it with the account of the above-mentioned author. The points on which I chiefly want information are the following: 1. Is the body white, walking erect, and about half the human size? 2. Is the hair of the head white, though curled and rigid, like a moor? 3. Are the eyes orbicular, with a golden iris and pupil? 4. Do the eyelids lie over each other (*incumbentes*) with a *membrana nictans*? 5. Is the sight lateral, and is it only nocturnal? 6. Is there any whistling voice? 7. Is there any space between the canine teeth and the others, either before or behind? 8. What is peculiar in the organs of generation, whether male or female? I wish the excellent Mr. Edwards would make a drawing of this individual, as there is no more remarkable animal, except man, in the world. I earnestly entreat you to observe its manners with all possible attention.

...

This letter is enclosed to my excellent friend Collinson, as I am ignorant of your proper address. Be so good as to inform me of your precise place of abode.

...

On 25 April, 1758, John Ellis replies to Carl Linnaeus saying that he knows nothing about the presence in London of a 'Troglodyte' or 'Nightman' similar to the one which Linnaeus is describing.

Sir,

Our friend Mr. Collinson delivered me your obliging letter very lately, wherein you desire me to enquire whether there is such a creature here as a Troglodyte or Nightman, such as is figured by Bontius, which you think very different from the Satyr of Tulpius. I have enquired very narrowly after this animal, and cannot find that there is any such here. We had one of this kind of animals here about 20 years ago, which was called a Chimpanzee; this at that time I saw alive, but as it was habited like a young girl, for it was a female, I did not examine it so particularly as to answer your questions. All I can remember is that, from its

whole behaviour and actions, it appeared to resemble the human species more than any that I had ever seen exhibited here. I think it had but very little hair on it, and appeared nearer to Tulpius' than Brontius' figure, which last I think is but ill designed, and that of Tulpius placed in an awkward posture. For I examined in our friend Edward's possession Dr. Tyson's anatomy of the Ouran-Outang, and find the Doctor had drawn both Tulpius' and Bontius' animal in the same plate with his own animal. This Ouran-Outang is very hairy, the hair thinly set, and of a reddish brown colour. The same kind of animal is still preserved in the College of Physicians, which Mr. Edwards has drawn, and is among his last plates.

I have got a plate of the Chimpanzee, which was published in the year 1738, and which I shall send you by the first ship that goes to Stockholm. The colour of this animal was a pallid dusky kind, like the Mulattoes.

...

6. Women

Isabella Gonzaga d'Este, a patron of the arts and wife to Francesco II Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, writes to a certain Luciana N. stigmatizing the behaviour of Luciana's mother. The letter, which is not dated, is in Ortensio Landi, Lettere di molte valorose donne (Letters of Many Worthy Women), 1549. Isabella lived between 1474 and 1539.

I heard that you are very cross with me and that you wish me dead because I said that your mother was behaving like a mad woman, since a few days ago she lustily danced both publicly and privately for a whole day; indeed I truly said so, and I confirm it, and again blame her, oh what a fine honesty is this in a decorous Matron who is held to be wise; does she not know how dangerous it is to draw straw near a burning fire; who does not know that many women who arrived chaste and bashful at balls went back shameless and full of lust. And what advantage can you expect from that touching of hands, from that lascivious waggle and from the very uncovering of any parts of the body which were hidden? No one (as the man who wrote against Verres said) ever went to dance and remained sober. Indeed, I do not understand what the reason for so strong a fury against me on your part may be, since I was prompted only by that care for womanly honour which I always harboured; and should we strive to lose it? what are we worthy then?

...

Now, I will only say what I already said; I know you have wisdom (if you want to use it) and that by yourself, when the great fury which now blinds you is appeased, you will say that I am utterly right and that you were greatly wrong to get furious with me.

From Luzzara, the 7th of February

Pantasilea Lonardi Giordani warns M. Faustina Benzona about the lascivious behaviour of Faustina's son. The letter, which is not dated, is in Ortensio Landi, Lettere di molte valorose donne (Letters of Many Worthy Women), 1549.

According to my advice, it would be well done if your son remained at home, leaving alone the wives of other men (who are indeed his friends), otherwise I fear for him that he may enter into competition with Phaon, Speusippus, the prefect Tigellinus, Rodoald the Lombard king and Pope John XII who, discovered to be adulterers, met violent deaths; exhort him to follow my advice, restrain him by virtue of maternal obedience lest one day he make you sorrowful and tearful. Be healthy and cheerful.

From Pesaro, the 7th of August.

The poet Vittoria Colonna writes to Marchese Ferrante Francesco D'Avalos, her husband. The letter, which is not dated, was written after the defeat of Ravenna (1512), where the Marchese had been made prisoner.

Eccelso mio Signor,

I write this to thee to tell thee amidst what dubious wishes and bitter anxieties I live. I little expected such grief and torment from thee, who oughtest to have gained the victory if the favour of Heaven had been propitious. I did not think that the Marchese and Fabrizio¹¹ would ever have caused me such great sorrow – the one my husband, the other my father! Piety towards my father and love towards thee are for ever gnawing at my heart like two hungry rabid snakes. I believed that the Fates would have been more benignant. I believed that so my prayers and tears, and love without measure, would not have been displeasing to God; whilst thy deeds are known in heaven and the fame and glory of my father also.

But now this dangerous assault and this horrid and cruel fight has turned my mind and heart to stone. Your great valour has shone as in a Hector or an Achilles; but what comfort is that to me, weeping, abandoned?

My mind was always doubtful, which caused me to give a mixed judgement, divided between assent and dissent; but I, O miserable! Always thought that evil fortune could not come nigh thy valour and thy brave soul!

Others may desire war! I always desire peace! Saying it is enough for me if my Marchese remains quietly in his place. It does not disturb you to attempt difficult undertakings, but to us, grieving and afflicted, what seeds of fear and doubt it brings!

You, full of ardour, not dreaming of anything but honour, disdainful of danger, rush to battle with furious cries; whilst we, timid of heart, sad of aspect, desire – the sister, the brother; the wife, the husband; the mother, the son; and I, alas, desire both husband, father, brothers and son! In this case I am daughter by nature, wife by the legal ties of marriage, and sister and mother by affection!

Never before came messenger from whom I did not seek to know every little particular, to make my mind joyful and at ease; but on that fatal day I (in the *body*, my *mind* is always with *thee*), was lying at a point of our island, when the whole atmosphere appeared like a sick cloud – like a cavern of black fog; the sea looked like ink and, weeping around, the marine gods seemed to say to Ischia – ‘To-day, Vittoria, thou shalt hear of disgrace from the confines. Though now in health and honour, thou shalt be turned to grief; but thy father and husband are saved, though taken prisoners.’

Then with a dark and sad countenance I, weeping, narrated the fearful and sad augury to the magnanimous Costanza.¹² She comforted me, as is her wont, saying, ‘Do not think of it. It would be a strange thing for such a force to be conquered!’ ‘He cannot be much removed from such evils’, I replied, ‘who, animated to great deeds, does not fear to what his hand leads. Those who go into action must show a prompt and rapid boldness, and can have no breathing time, nor bargain with fortune.’

And behold! As I spoke the fatal messenger arrived to tell us the sad tale of thy ill fortune; the remembrance of which still seems to me like a trick played upon my feelings. If victory thou desired I was near thee; but thou, in leaving me, lost *her*, and in seeking another she has fled from thee!

It distressed Pompey, as thou oughtest to know, to leave Cornelia; and it distressed Cato to leave Marcia in bitter tears. A wife ought to follow her husband at home and abroad; if he suffers trouble, she suffers; if he is happy, she is; if he dies, she dies. What happens to one happens to both; equals in life, they are equals in death. His fate is her fate.

Thou livest cheerful, having no care; and in thinking of thy newly-acquired fame, thou grieveest not to be separated from thy beloved! Whilst I, with angry and sad countenance, rest on thy abandoned and solitary couch, with hope and sorrow filled; thy joy tempering my grief.

Anne Boleyn writes to Cardinal Wolsey. Anne is anxiously waiting for news from the Pope and his Legate Campeggio. Anne's letter is completed by Henry's postscript to the same effect. The probable date is September, 1528.

My Lord, in my most humblest wise that my Heart can think, I desire you to pardon me that I am so bold to trouble you with my simple and rude Writing, esteeming it to proceed from her, that is much desirous to know that your Grace does well, as I perceive by this Bearer that you do. The which I pray God long to continue, as I am most bound to pray; for I do know the great Pains and Troubles that you have taken for me both Day and Night, is never like to be recompenced on my Part, but alonely in loving you next unto the King's Grace, above all Creatures living. And I do not doubt but the daily Proofs of my Deeds shall manifestly declare and affirm my Writing to be true, and I

do trust you do think the same. My Lord, I do assure you I do long to hear from you News of the Legate; for I do hope an they come from you they shall be very good, and I am sure you desire it as much as I, and more, an it were possible, as I know it is not: And thus remaining in a stedfast Hope, I make an End of my Letter written with the Hand of her that is most bound to be,

Your Humble Servant,

Anne Boleyn.

Postscript by Henry VIII

The Writer of this Letter would not cease till she had caused me likewise to set to my Hand; desiring you, though it be short, to take it in good Part. I ensure you there is neither of us, but that greatly desireth to see you, and much more joyous to hear that you have scaped this Plague so well, trusting the Fury thereof to be passed, specially with them that keepeth good Diet, as I trust you do. The not hearing of the Legate's Arrival in *France*, causeth us somewhat to muse; notwithstanding we trust by your Diligence and Vigilancy (with the Assistance of Almighty God) shortly to be eased out of that Trouble. No more to you at this Time; but that I pray God send you as good Health and Prosperity as the Writer would.

By Your Loving Sovereigne and Friend
Henry K.

Teresa de Avila writes to the Reverend Father Pedro Ibañez. The letter accompanies the text of Teresa's Life which the saint had been requested to write by Father Pedro, her spiritual director. The date is about 1562.

JESUS. The Holy Ghost be always with your Reverence. Amen.
It would not be amiss, in writing to your Reverence, to dwell on this service of mine, in order to oblige you the more to take particular care in recommending me to God. And this I could well do, seeing it has cost me so dear to behold myself in writing, and thus to have brought to my remembrance so many of my miseries, though I can with truth say, that I have experienced more reluctance in mentioning the favours which our Lord has shown me, than I should have felt in mentioning the offences I have committed against His Majesty.

I have done what your Reverence commanded me, to enter into more particulars; but upon this condition, that your Reverence also will perform what you

promised me, viz., to tear out whatever you do not approve. When your Reverence sent for the manuscript, I had not finished the perusal of it after having written it. Hence you may find some things not very clearly explained, and others mentioned twice over; for the time I had was so short, that I could not review what I had written. I beseech your Reverence to correct it; and order it to be transcribed, if it must be sent to Father Avila, otherwise some one may know my hand.

I am very desirous such orders may be given, as he thinks proper, since it is with this intention I began to write. If he shall judge I am going on in a safe way, this will give me great consolation, for there will be no more to do on my part. Your Reverence must do whatever you think best; consider how bound you are to one who thus confides her soul to you. *Your* soul I will recommend to our Lord all the days of my life; make haste, then, to serve His Majesty, in order to be able to do me this favour, for your Reverence will see, by what is now sent you, how well you are employed in giving yourself wholly to Him (as your Reverence has already begun so to do) who gives Himself to us without reserve. May He be blessed for ever: I hope in His mercy, that both your Reverence and myself may one day meet together in that kingdom, where we shall more clearly understand the great favours He has been pleased to show us both, and praise Him for ever and ever. Amen.

Your Reverence's unworthy Servant,
Teresa de Jesús.

Mary Stewart Queen of Scots writes to her banished servants while under house arrest in England.

From Sheffield, the 18th September, 1571.

My faithful and good servants, seeing that it has pleased God to visit me with so much affliction, and now with this strict imprisonment, and the banishment of you, my servants, from me; I return thanks to the same God, who has given me strength and patience to endure it, and pray that this good God may give you like grace, and that you may console yourselves, since your banishment is on account of the good service which you have rendered to me, your queen and mistress; for that at least will be of very great honour to you to have given so good a proof of your fidelity in such an exigence, and if it shall be the pleasure of the good God to restore me to liberty, I shall never forget you all, but shall reward you according to my power. At present I have written to my ambassador for your maintenance, not having it in my power to do better towards you, as I should wish; and now at your departure I charge each one of you, in the name of God, and for my blessing, that you be good servants to God, and do not murmur against him for any affliction which may befall you, for thus it is his custom to visit his chosen. I commend to you the faith in which you have been baptized and instructed along with me, remembering that out of the ark of Noah there is no salvation: and like

as you make profession of no other sovereign than myself alone, so I pray you to profess with me one God, one faith, one Catholic Church, as the greater portion of you have already done. And especially you who are recently reclaimed from your errors, strive to instruct yourselves very rigidly, and found yourselves in the faith: and pray to God to give you constancy, for to such God will never deny his grace; and to you, Master John Gordon and William Douglas, I pray God that he may inspire your hearts. I can no more.

Secondly, I command you to live in friendship and holy charity with each other, and to bear with each other's failings: and now being separated from me, assist yourselves mutually with the means and graces which God has given to you: and above all pray to God for me, and give my very affectionate remembrances to the French ambassador in London, and tell him the state in which I am. And in France present my humble duties to all my uncles and friends, and particularly to my grandmother, whom let some one of you hasten to visit for me. Beseech my uncles to urge strongly the King, the Queen, and Monsieur, to assist my poor subjects in Scotland; and if I die here, to grant the same protection to my son and my friends as to myself, according to the ancient league of France with Scotland. Remember me to Lord Fleming, the Archbishop of Glasgow, and George Douglas, and all my good subjects; and bid them be of good cheer, and not to be concerned for my adversity, but each of them do the best that he can, and tell them to demand from all the sovereigns assistance for our party, and not to mind me, for I am content to endure every kind of affliction and suffering, even death itself, for the liberty of my country. If I die, I only regret that I shall not have the means of rewarding the services and the trouble which they have endured in my quarrel; but I hope that if it shall be so, that God will not leave them unrequited, and will cause my son and the other Catholic princes my friends and allies to take them under their protection. If Lord Seton can hear from me, send him the copy of this letter.

Lastly, if I have not been so good a mistress to you as your necessities required, God is my witness that my good will has never been wanting, but the means; and if I have sharply reprehended you, God is my witness that I have intended it for your good, and never to cast you off or from want of affection. I beseech you, comfort yourselves in God; and you, William Douglas, rest assured that the life which you have risked for mine, shall never be destitute so long as I have a friend alive. Do not part company till you reach the French court, and there all of you together wait upon my ambassador, and tell him all that you have seen or heard of me or mine. Therefore I pray to God with an anguished and afflicted heart, that according to his infinite mercy he may be the protector of my country and my faithful subjects; and that he may forgive those who have done me so much injury and are so hostile to me, and turn their hearts to a speedy repentance, and that he may give you all grace, and me also, to conform us to his will.

Written in prison in Sheffield Castle, the 18th of September, 1571. If you can keep this letter, take it to the Archbishop of Glasgow, as evidence that your

service has been approved by me.
Your good and gracious mistress,
Marie E.

Sister Maria Celeste (Virginia), daughter of Galileo Galilei, writes to her father, after he was found gravely suspect of heresy and, on 22 June, 1633, was sentenced by the Holy Office to remain indefinitely under house arrest. The letter was written on 2 July, 1633.

Most Illustrious and Beloved Lord Father,
Just as suddenly and unexpectedly as word of your new torment reached me, Sire, so intensely did it pierce my soul with pain to hear the judgment that has finally been passed, denouncing your person as harshly as your book. I learned all this by importuning Signor Geri, because, not having any letters from you this week, I could not calm myself, as though I already knew all that had happened.

My dearest lord father, now is the time to avail yourself more than ever of that prudence which the Lord God has granted you, bearing these blows with that strength of spirit which your religion, your profession, and your age require. And since you, by virtue of your vast experience, can lay claim to full cognizance of the fallacy and instability of everything in this miserable world, you must not make too much of these storms, but rather take hope that they will soon subside and transform themselves from troubles into as many satisfactions.

In saying all that I am speaking what my own desires dictate, and also what seems a promise of leniency demonstrated toward you, Sire, by His Holiness, who has destined for your prison a place so delightful, whereby it appears we may anticipate another commutation of your sentence conforming even more closely with all your and our wishes; may it please God to see things turn out that way, if it be for the best. Meanwhile I pray you not to leave me without the consolation of your letters, giving me reports of your condition, physically and especially spiritually: though I conclude my writing here, I never cease to accompany you with my thoughts and prayers, calling on His Divine Majesty to grant you true peace and consolation.

From San Matteo, the 2nd day of July 1633.

Most affectionate daughter,
S. M. Celeste

7. *Dedicatory Letters*

Niccolò Machiavelli, Dedicatory Letter of *Il principe (The Prince)*, 1532

To the Magnificent Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici

Those who desire to win the favour of princes generally endeavour to do so by of-

fering them those things which they themselves prize most, or such as they observe the prince to delight in most. Thence it is that princes have very often presented to them horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness. Wishing now myself to offer to your Magnificence some proof of my devotion, I have found nothing amongst all I possess that I hold more dear or esteem more highly than the knowledge of the actions of great men, which I have acquired by long experience of modern affairs and a continued study of ancient history.

These I have meditated upon for a long time, and examined with great care and diligence; and having now written them out in a small volume, I send this to your Magnificence. And although I judge this work unworthy of you, yet I trust that your kindness of heart may induce you to accept it, considering that I cannot offer you anything better than the means of understanding in the briefest time all that which I have learnt by so many years of study, and with so much trouble and danger to myself.

I have not set off this little work with pompous phrases, nor filled it with high-sounding and magnificent words, nor with any other allurements or extrinsic embellishments with which many are wont to write and adorn their works; for I wished that mine should derive credit only from the truth of the matter, and that the importance of the subject should make it acceptable.

And I hope it may not be accounted presumption if a man of lowly and humble station ventures to discuss and direct the conduct of princes; for as those who wish to delineate countries place themselves low in the plain to observe the form and character of mountains and high places, and for the purpose of studying the nature of the low country place themselves high upon an eminence, so one must be a prince to know well the character of the people, and to understand well the nature of a prince one must be of the people.

May your Magnificence then accept this little gift in the same spirit in which I send it; and if you will read and consider it well, you will recognise in it my desire that you may attain that greatness which fortune and your great qualities promise. And if your Magnificence will turn your eyes from the summit of your greatness towards those low places, you will know how undeservedly I have to bear the great and continued malice of fortune.

François Rabelais, Dedicatory Letter of *La vie de Gargantua et Pantagruel* (*The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel*), Book 1 (c. 1532), trans. Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty and Peter Antony Motteux, 1894.

The Author's prologue to the First Book

Most noble and illustrious drinkers, and you thrice precious pockified blades (for to you, and none else, do I dedicate my writings), Alcibiades, in that dialogue

of Plato's, which is entitled *The Banquet*, whilst he was setting forth the praises of his schoolmaster Socrates (without all question the prince of philosophers), amongst other discourses to that purpose, said that he resembled the Silenes. Silenes of old were little boxes, like those we now may see in the shops of apothecaries, painted on the outside with wanton toyish figures, as harpies, satyrs, bridled geese, horned hares, saddled ducks, flying goats, thiller harts, and other such-like counterfeited pictures at discretion, to excite people unto laughter, as Silenus himself, who was the foster-father of good Bacchus, was wont to do; but within those capricious caskets were carefully preserved and kept many rich jewels and fine drugs, such as balm, ambergris, amomon, musk, civet, with several kinds of precious stones, and other things of great price. Just such another thing was Socrates. For to have eyed his outside, and esteemed of him by his exterior appearance, you would not have given the peel of an onion for him, so deformed he was in body, and ridiculous in his gesture. He had a sharp pointed nose, with the look of a bull, and countenance of a fool: he was in his carriage simple, boorish in his apparel, in fortune poor, unhappy in his wives, unfit for all offices in the commonwealth, always laughing, tippling, and merrily carousing to everyone, with continual gibes and jeers, the better by those means to conceal his divine knowledge. Now, opening this box you would have found within it a heavenly and inestimable drug, a more than human understanding, an admirable virtue, matchless learning, invincible courage, unimitable sobriety, certain contentment of mind, perfect assurance, and an incredible misregard of all that for which men commonly do so much watch, run, sail, fight, travel, toil and turmoil themselves.

Whereunto (in your opinion) doth this little flourish of a preamble tend? For so much as you, my good disciples, and some other jolly fools of ease and leisure, reading the pleasant titles of some books of our invention, as *Gargantua*, *Pantagruel*, *Whippot* (*Fessepinte.*), the *Dignity of Codpieces*, of *Pease and Bacon with a Commentary*, &c., are too ready to judge that there is nothing in them but jests, mockeries, lascivious discourse, and recreative lies; because the outside (which is the title) is usually, without any farther inquiry, entertained with scoffing and derision. But truly it is very unbecoming to make so slight account of the works of men, seeing yourselves avouch that it is not the habit makes the monk, many being monasterially accoutred, who inwardly are nothing less than monachal, and that there are of those that wear Spanish capes, who have but little of the valour of Spaniards in them. Therefore is it, that you must open the book, and seriously consider of the matter treated in it. Then shall you find that it containeth things of far higher value than the box did promise; that is to say, that the subject thereof is not so foolish as by the title at the first sight it would appear to be.

And put the case, that in the literal sense you meet with purposes merry and solacious enough, and consequently very correspondent to their inscriptions, yet must not you stop there as at the melody of the charming syrens, but

endeavour to interpret that in a sublimer sense which possibly you intended to have spoken in the jollity of your heart. Did you ever pick the lock of a cupboard to steal a bottle of wine out of it? Tell me truly, and, if you did, call to mind the countenance which then you had. Or, did you ever see a dog with a marrowbone in his mouth,—the beast of all other, says Plato, lib. 2, de Republica, the most philosophical? If you have seen him, you might have remarked with what devotion and circumspectness he wards and watcheth it: with what care he keeps it: how fervently he holds it: how prudently he gobbets it: with what affection he breaks it: and with what diligence he sucks it. To what end all this? What moveth him to take all these pains? What are the hopes of his labour? What doth he expect to reap thereby? Nothing but a little marrow. True it is, that this little is more savoury and delicious than the great quantities of other sorts of meat, because the marrow (as Galen testifieth, 5. facult. nat. & 11. de usu partium) is a nourishment most perfectly elaboured by nature.

In imitation of this dog, it becomes you to be wise, to smell, feel and have in estimation these fair goodly books, stuffed with high conceptions, which, though seemingly easy in the pursuit, are in the cope and encounter somewhat difficult. And then, like him, you must, by a sedulous lecture, and frequent meditation, break the bone, and suck out the marrow,— that is, my allegorical sense, or the things I to myself propose to be signified by these Pythagorical symbols, with assured hope, that in so doing you will at last attain to be both well-advised and valiant by the reading of them: for in the perusal of this treatise you shall find another kind of taste, and a doctrine of a more profound and abstruse consideration, which will disclose unto you the most glorious sacraments and dreadful mysteries, as well in what concerneth your religion, as matters of the public state, and life economical.

Do you believe, upon your conscience, that Homer, whilst he was a-couching his Iliads and Odysseys, had any thought upon those allegories, which Plutarch, Heraclides Ponticus, Eustathius, Cornutus squeezed out of him, and which Politian filched again from them? If you trust it, with neither hand nor foot do you come near to my opinion, which judgeth them to have been as little dreamed of by Homer, as the Gospel sacraments were by Ovid in his Metamorphoses, though a certain gulligut friar (Frere Lubin croquelardon.) and true bacon-picker would have undertaken to prove it, if perhaps he had met with as very fools as himself, (and as the proverb says) a lid worthy of such a kettle.

If you give no credit thereto, why do not you the same in these jovial new chronicles of mine? Albeit when I did dictate them, I thought upon no more than you, who possibly were drinking the whilst as I was. For in the composing of this lordly book, I never lost nor bestowed any more, nor any other time than what was appointed to serve me for taking of my bodily refection, that is, whilst I was eating and drinking. And indeed that is the fittest and most proper hour wherein to write these high matters and deep sciences: as Homer knew very well, the paragon of all philologues, and Ennius, the father of the Latin poets,

as Horace calls him, although a certain sneaking jobernol alleged that his verses smelled more of the wine than oil.

So saith a turlupin or a new start-up grub of my books, but a turd for him. The fragrant odour of the wine, O how much more dainty, pleasant, laughing (Riant, priant, friant.), celestial and delicious it is, than that smell of oil! And I will glory as much when it is said of me, that I have spent more on wine than oil, as did Demosthenes, when it was told him, that his expense on oil was greater than on wine. I truly hold it for an honour and praise to be called and reputed a Frolic Gualter and a Robin Goodfellow; for under this name am I welcome in all choice companies of Pantagruelists. It was upbraided to Demosthenes by an envious surly knave, that his Orations did smell like the sarpler or wrapper of a foul and filthy oil-vessel. For this cause interpret you all my deeds and sayings in the perfectest sense; reverence the cheese-like brain that feeds you with these fair billevezees and trifling jollities, and do what lies in you to keep me always merry. Be frolic now, my lads, cheer up your hearts, and joyfully read the rest, with all the ease of your body and profit of your reins. But hearken, joltheads, you viedazes, or dickens take ye, remember to drink a health to me for the like favour again, and I will pledge you instantly, Tout ares-metyts.

Rabelais to the Reader

Good friends, my Readers, who peruse this Book,
 Be not offended, whilst on it you look:
 Denude yourselves of all depraved affection,
 For it contains no badness, nor infection:
 'Tis true that it brings forth to you no birth
 Of any value, but in point of mirth;
 Thinking therefore how sorrow might your mind
 Consume, I could no apter subject find;
 One inch of joy surmounts of grief a span;
 Because to laugh is proper to the man.

Gaspara Stampa, *Rime (Poems)*, 1554

Dedicatory Letter 'Allo Illustre mio Signore' ('To my Illustrious Lord'), believed to be Count Collaltino di Collalto

Since my love pangs which, for the love I bear Your Lordship, I keep written in diverse of my letters and poems could neither instil in you pity towards me, nor made you so kind as to persuade you to write me a word, I decided to gather them all in this book, to see whether, taken together, they will be able to move you. Here, then, Your Lordship will not find the high sea

of passions, of tears and of my torments, because that is a bottomless sea; but only a little stream of these; and Your Lordship should not think that I did this either to make you conscious of your cruelty, because it cannot be called cruelty since there is no obligation, nor to sadden you; but rather to make you conscious of your greatness and therefore make you happy. Because, seeing that these fruits have been engendered by your harshness, you will imagine how those which will be engendered by your pity will be, if it ever happens that the heaven may turn it into compassion: Oh, noble object, Oh, illustrious object, Oh divine object, since, still tormenting, you help and breed fruit. Therefore, do read, Your Lordship, when you are free from your greater and more treasured cares, the notes of the amorous heavy cares of your most faithful and unhappy Anassilla;¹⁵ and from this shade figure out how she must have experienced and felt them in her soul; and indeed, if my poor and sad home will ever be deemed worthy to welcome its great guest, that is, Your Lordship, I am sure that beds, chambers, halls will narrate the laments, the sobs, the sighs, the gasps, the tears which day and night I diffused, calling Your Lordship's name, although, even amidst my greatest agonies, ever blessing heavens and my good fortune for their cause: and therefore it is much better for you, my Count, to die than to rejoice for anything. But, what am I doing? Why do I unnecessarily bother Your Lordship at length, thus reviling also my poems, as if they were not able to say their reasons and needed somebody else's help? And therefore, committing myself to them, I will cease, praying Your Lordship that, as a last reward of my most faithful servitude, when receiving this poor booklet, you grant me only a sigh which might refresh from afar the memory of your forgotten and forsaken Anassilla. And you, my booklet, custodian of my tears, present yourself before our lord in the humblest possible shape, together with my immaculate devotion. And if, when you are received, you will see those my fatal and immortal eyes a little brightened, then blessed be all our toils and most happy all our hopes; and remain with him for ever in peace.

Thomas Garrard, Dedicatory Letter of *The Arte of Warre*, 1591

To the right Honourable Robert Deurax, Earle of Essex, &c. Knight of the noble order of the Garter, & Maister of her Maiesties horse. Health, honour, and happines, both in this world, and the world to come, hartily wished for. Hauing been requested (right Honourable) by a dying Souldiour, to publish in his behalfe, the xiiij. yeeres fruites of his mercinarie trauaile, in the wars of the Low Countries: I haue thought fit for that the trauaile of well deseruing paines, shal not die together with the dead man, to publish his industrie, so worthy both of knowledge and practise, to the worlds view, for the present

and future benefit of our Nation (as his chiefest care was) that they might with ease, reach into the knowledge of that, the knowing whereof, had cost him time, toyle, blood, and studie. The worke is commended by Captaine *Robert Hichcock* and others, such as experience hath made able to iudge in this honorable profession: so that for me to bestow more praises, vpon a thing so praised, were but to lessen what I wish increased, and to seeme to commend that which doth best commende it selfe. Onely thys ayde I couet, to adde for his greatest grace, that it would please your Lordship, vnder the protection of your honourable acceptance, to deigne the patronage of his painfull endeouours, and then the worke may be assured of defence: as when a well deseruing seruant, is supported by an able defending Maister. Therefore onely by your Lordshyppe I wish this worke may be perfected, whose humors and honours of minde, so well suteth with the honourable matter it treateth on, that as there cannot be (of worldly things) a more worthy subiect then this to write on, so can there not be found a more woorthie Patron, for a discourse of such worth, whose rase assured him a Souldiour whilst the flower was in the bud: and whose timely yeres since, haue witnessed that of his valoure, which neyther time nor yeeres can deface. I pray GOD rayse vp many such mindes, to make our Country of all Nations the most happy: and also that thys worke may stirre vppe the harts of all Noble men, Gentlemen, and all other her Maiesties subiects that minde to professe Armes, that by the exercise of the same they may be the better instructed with greater skill, and so with theyr manly and valiant mindes, to the defence of our most gracious soueraigne Lady, Queene *Elizabeth*, and theyr natiue Countrey. And thus in all humilitie I cease, wishing your Lordshippe such fortunes and happines, as doe euer attend so honourable and vertuous deserts.

Your Lordships deuoted poore freende: Thomas Garrard.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part I (*The Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote of la Mancha*), 1605

Dedication

To the Duke of Bejar, Marquis of Gibraleon, Count of Benalcazar and Banares, Vicecount of the Puebla de Alcocer, Master of the towns of Capilla, Curiel and Burguillos

In belief of the good reception and honours that Your Excellency bestows on all sort of books, as prince so inclined to favour good arts, chiefly those who by their nobleness do not submit to the service and bribery of the vulgar, I have determined bringing to light *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of la Mancha*, in shelter of Your Excellency's glamorous name, to whom, with

the obeisance I owe to such grandeur, I pray to receive it agreeably under his protection, so that in this shadow, though deprived of that precious ornament of elegance and erudition that clothe the works composed in the houses of those who know, it dares appear with assurance in the judgment of some who, trespassing the bounds of their own ignorance, use to condemn with more rigour and less justice the writings of others. It is my earnest hope that Your Excellency's good counsel in regard to my honourable purpose, will not disdain the littleness of so humble a service.

Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, Part II (*The Ingenious Gentleman don Quixote of la Mancha*), 1615

Dedication

To the Count of Lemos

These days past, when sending your Excellency my plays, that had appeared in print before being shown on the stage, I said, if I remember well, that Don Quixote was putting on his spurs to go and render homage to Your Excellency. Now I say that 'with his spurs, he is on his way'. Should he reach destination methinks I shall have rendered some service to Your Excellency, as from many parts I am urged to send him off, so as to dispel the loathing and disgust caused by another Don Quixote who, under the name of Second Part, has run masquerading through the whole world. And he who has shown the greatest longing for him has been the great Emperor of China, who wrote me a letter in Chinese a month ago and sent it by a special courier. He asked me, or to be truthful, he begged me to send him Don Quixote, for he intended to found a college where the Spanish tongue would be taught, and it was his wish that the book to be read should be the History of Don Quixote. He also added that I should go and be the rector of this college. I asked the bearer if His Majesty had afforded a sum in aid of my travel expenses. He answered, 'No, not even in thought'. 'Then, brother', I replied, 'you can return to your China, post haste or at whatever haste you are bound to go, as I am not fit for so long a travel and, besides being ill, I am very much without money, while Emperor for Emperor and Monarch for Monarch, I have at Naples the great Count of Lemos, who, without so many petty titles of colleges and rectorships, sustains me, protects me and does me more favour than I can wish for'.

Thus I gave him his leave and I beg mine from you, offering Your Excellency the 'Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda', a book I shall finish within four months, Deo volente, and which will be either the worst or the best that has been composed in our language, I mean of those intended for entertainment; at which I repent of having called it the worst, for, in the opinion of friends, it is bound to attain the summit of possible quality. May Your Excellency

return in such health that is wished you; Persiles will be ready to kiss your hand and I your feet, being as I am, Your Excellency's most humble servant.

From Madrid, this last day of October of the year one thousand six hundred and fifteen.

At the service of Your Excellency:
Miguel de Cervantes de Saavedra

¹ Before it was published, *Utopia* was meant by More to be entitled *Nusquama*.

² The monastic orders who formulated the charges against Erasmus' orthodoxy.

³ A quotation from Petrarch's *Trionfi* ('Tarde non furon mai grazie divine'), here meant as ironic.

⁴ Machiavelli had recently been excluded from public office, imprisoned and tortured.

⁵ The reference is to Plautus' *Amphitruo*.

⁶ 'che non fa scienza / Senza lo ritener aver inteso' ('Paradiso' V, 41-42).

⁷ Actually, *Il principe* was dedicated to Lorenzo, Giuliano's nephew.

⁸ Filippo Casavecchia, Machiavelli's friend.

⁹ Piero Ardinghelli, secretary to Pope Leo X and hostile to Machiavelli.

¹⁰ The letters by *Comici dell'Arte* have been translated from the collection and edition prepared by C. Burattelli, D. Landolfi and A. Zinanni, *Comici dell'Arte. Corrispondenze*, Firenze, Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1993, 2 vols; general editor Siro Ferrone.

¹¹ Vittoria's father.

¹² Costanza D'Avalos, aunt to Ferrante.

¹³ Anaxilla was the name Stampa was given when she became a member of the Accademia dei Dabbiosi.