Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

The Prospects and Perils of Humanist Discourse

Terence J. Martin

Volume 47, Number 1, Winter 2024

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111820ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v47i1.41861

See table of contents

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)
2293-7374 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Martin, T. (2024). The Prospects and Perils of Humanist Discourse. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, *47*(1), 7–38. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v47i1.41861

Article abstract

The correspondence of Erasmus and Guillaume Budé represents an exemplary performance of the kind of intellectual exchange prized in humanistic circles of their day, though its sudden collapse has continued to puzzle interpreters. The design of this essay is to examine the prospects and perils of this epistolary venture set against the cultural, political, and religious circumstances of the time, and thus to show that this humanist project floundered not so much because of differences in personal character as due to fissures concealed in the rhetorical landscape over which these correspondents wished to travel. This rich and intricate theatre of humanist letters thereby illustrates both the noble aspirations and the inherent fragility of humanist discourse.

The Prospects and Perils of Humanist Discourse

TERENCE J. MARTIN
Saint Mary's College

The correspondence of Erasmus and Guillaume Budé represents an exemplary performance of the kind of intellectual exchange prized in humanistic circles of their day, though its sudden collapse has continued to puzzle interpreters. The design of this essay is to examine the prospects and perils of this epistolary venture set against the cultural, political, and religious circumstances of the time, and thus to show that this humanist project floundered not so much because of differences in personal character as due to fissures concealed in the rhetorical landscape over which these correspondents wished to travel. This rich and intricate theatre of humanist letters thereby illustrates both the noble aspirations and the inherent fragility of humanist discourse.

La correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé représente une performance exemplaire du type d'échange intellectuel prisé dans les cercles humanistes de leur époque, même si son effondrement soudain continue de laisser les interprètes perplexes. Cet article se donne pour fin d'examiner les perspectives et les périls de cette aventure épistolaire dans le contexte culturel, politique et religieux de l'époque, afin de montrer que ce projet humaniste a échoué non pas tant en raison de différences de caractère qu'à cause de failles dissimulées dans le paysage rhétorique que ces correspondants souhaitaient parcourir. Ce théâtre riche et complexe de lettres humanistes illustre ainsi à la fois les nobles aspirations et la fragilité inhérente au discours humaniste.

In the fifty-some letters exchanged by Desiderius Erasmus and Guillaume Budé—initiated with Erasmus's overture to the French philologist in a letter now lost to us, and ending with the latter's enigmatic silence some twelve years later—these two eminent scholars of their day engage each other in an animated, yet tension-filled correspondence that works to embody the essential features of humanist communication. Each writes with the style and purpose expected of a sixteenth-century scholar: at once learned, and hence capacious in range and critical in judgment; eloquent, giving rise to speech that is intelligent, often illuminating, and appropriate by design; and clever, showing agility of mind, subtlety in expression, and an ample capacity for surprise. While each tailors these qualities to his particular agenda, together they move to fashion the social embodiment of their ideal cause—most immediately and in miniature, a friendship that binds them together in a working alliance for the good of what Budé calls the *studia humanitatis*; but additionally and more broadly, as their letters were shared with friends, and since most were quickly printed

Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme 47.1, Winter / hiver 2024
https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v47i1.41861

for wider distribution, their protracted correspondence also undergirds an interdisciplinary and transnational "republic of letters" that invites participation and support from far and wide to promote the cause of *bonae literae*.[1]

This remarkable enterprise—a veritable theatre of humanist values with an expanding network of participants—could not happen by accident, of course. As Léon-E. Halkin observes, Erasmus closely managed the editing of his letters to broadcast the image of himself as "un champion des belles-lettres et d'un restaurateur de la théologie," and something similar could be said of Budé's efforts to promote his own reputation while serving the cause to which he was devoted.[2] Along the same lines, Lisa Jardine argues that Erasmus "masterfully" manipulates and "cunningly" orchestrates the production and distribution of his letters in order to control the reception of his "reputation as *the* figure of trans-European learning—the quintessential European man of letters"—working centre stage on behalf of the "humanist 'world of learning.'"[3] Though these are helpful perceptions—certainly useful in warning us, as Jardine puts it, not to mistake the "figural Erasmus" for the "historical"[4]—what makes correspondence unique as a genre, and certainly what dominates the letters of Budé and Erasmus, is the fact that communication of this kind simply *cannot* be controlled by either participant. Ultimately, in fact, their epistolary venture proved so difficult and so fragile, peppered with confusion and laced

1. On the republic of letters as "an alliance of intellects, not regions" (*foedus ingeniorum, non regionum)*, see "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2379, in Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus* [hereafter *CWE*], 17:69; *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* [hereafter *Allen*], 9:40. See also Erasmus, "On the Writing of Letters," *CWE* 25:246; *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* [hereafter *ASD*], 1.2:576. Budé similarly speaks of "la nation des lettres" to depict the harmony of scholarship across disciplines (Budé, *L'étude des lettres*, 5). With respect to the correspondence and related works, here and throughout, I have first given the citation for the English translation (from *CWE*) followed by a reference to the original document reproduced in either *Allen* or *ASD*. All references are to volume number (or, in the case of *ASD*, ordo and volume number) and page number.

2. Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*, 206. With regard to Erasmus, as Halkin puts it, "nous entrevoyons l'homme à travers l'auteur, l'homme tel qu'il voudrait être, sinon l'homme tel qu'il est." Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*, 87. On Budé's literary redaction and intentional organization in publishing collections of his letters, see Gueudet, *L'Art*, 107–214. On the life and works of Budé, see La Garanderie, "Qui était Guillaume Budé?" For parallel biographies of Erasmus and Budé, see La Garanderie, *La correspondance*, 32–37.

3. Jardine, *Erasmus*, 147–48.

4. Jardine, *Erasmus*, 7.

with suspicion, that it could not even be sustained, much less orchestrated with aplomb. The question with which any reader of these letters must grapple is, why did this happen? Why did this momentous venture, the ends to which Budé and Erasmus energetically aspired, collapse so suddenly and so inexplicably?

Readings of these letters have tended to answer this question in a manner that does not do justice to the staged subtlety and rhetorical dexterity that mark this epistolary exchange. There is, in particular, a recurring temptation in the literature to take individual statements at face value, usually rendering them in terms of psychological temperament and too often accenting their negative qualities. Thus, for instance, when Budé suggests that Erasmus is preoccupied with "trivialities," some insist that Erasmus is perturbed and even angry in his reaction,[5] though in fact he responds playfully to Budé's observation with a familiar Horatian riff on the value of serious trifles.[6] Then again, after an exchange of letters focused on whether or not Erasmus should have responded to the attacks of the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, Budé dramatically feigns an end to all communication with Erasmus, and some take this threat seriously, though the conciliatory tone in the rest of the letter makes it clear that this is but a grand jest.[7] Some years later, with the uproar against Erasmus in Paris following the publication in 1528 of *The Ciceronian*, a satirical dialogue wherein Erasmus has the foolish Nosoponus dare to compare the incomparable Budé with the Parisian printer Josse Bade, deeming the latter to be a superior imitator of pure Ciceronian style, Budé abruptly ends the correspondence with Erasmus. About this sudden turn of events, some scholars claim to know with great confidence exactly what Budé was thinking, though there is scant evidence to support any specific judgment.[8] Readings of this correspondence, in sum, too often ignore the fact that letters such as these are artful rhetorical performances rather than simple and direct reflections of

5. Mesnard, "Le commerce épistolaire," 28; McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 62.

6. See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:306–8; *Allen* 2:254; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:104–6; *Allen* 2:363–67.

7. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 896, *CWE* 6:176-78; *Allen* 3:434–36. See, for instance, Bietenholz, *Basle and France*, 190; and McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 65.

8. Louis Delaruelle, for instance, claims that Budé was "fort froissé" by the comparison, asserting that we can guess "sans doute" his attitude towards the hostilities against Erasmus (Delaruelle, "Une amitié d'humanistes," 350). For the supposedly offending passage, see Erasmus, *Ciceronian*, *CWE* 28:420–21, 587n676; *ASD* 1.2:671–72.

individual states of mind.[9] Things are not always as they seem or sound, after all, especially from humanist writers who excel in the art of eloquence. To understand why the correspondence of Erasmus and Budé ultimately collapses, I suggest, requires more than guesses about their interior sentiments. It rather requires close attention to their highest rhetorical aspirations, as well as to the defining contours of their epistolary venture, since the perils they encounter are inextricably bound up with the prospects for which they strive.

In saying this, I am not advancing a claim akin to what Stephen Greenblatt says generally of Renaissance literature—that "any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss."[10] Intriguing as this suggestion is, I will argue not that the correspondence of Erasmus and Budé *must* have collapsed but simply that it *did* so for reasons that are inherent in the shared pursuit of their rhetorical aspirations. For starters, Budé and Erasmus undertake a highly personal intellectual exchange, but, as already noted, they deliberately do so in full public view. While this confluence of the private and the public yields welcome publicity for literary studies, it also generates a debilitating self-consciousness in both writers, as they wonder and worry about how their words will be heard by others and received by posterity. Along with that, this correspondence seeks to build a community of scholars—rich in friendship, open in mutual criticism, and transcending national borders—that will augment the stature of the *studia humanitatis*, though the bond of friendship ultimately is undermined from within by shifting personal concerns and threatened from without by the frenzy of partisan friends.

While each is keen on promoting his own reputation, moreover, their mutual praise and avowals of modesty prove difficult to interpret, as praise may be flattery in disguise and modesty can be artfully affected, and when this kind of uncertainty triggers confusion among partisan supporters who mistake a compliment for an insult, reputation itself turns precarious. Finally, our authors are at their best when engaging in their playful "skirmishes," though their subtlety of expression, rhetorical agility, and ironic exercises sow uncertainty and confusion in one another, and eventually—with the loss of personal suppleness and the infusion of public furor—their correspondence proves to be untenable. My design in what follows is to examine the prospects and perils of this epistolary venture set against the cultural, political, and religious circumstances of

9. On Renaissance letters as works of art, see Henderson, "On Reading the Rhetoric."

10. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 9.

the time, and thereby to show that this humanist project collapses not so much because of differences in personal character as due to fissures concealed in the rhetorical landscape over which the correspondents wished to travel.

"In another way for the public"

From the start, the correspondence of Erasmus and Budé is an intensely personal intellectual exchange carried out with dazzling rhetorical finesse. It is personal in as much as each addresses the other with the familiarity and intimacy of a good friend, even though they initially know each other only by reputation.[11] Unlike impersonal addresses and unlike correspondence designed for other rhetorical purposes, the "familiar" letter between scholars, Erasmus tells us, is designed in large part to carry on "a reciprocal scholarly exchange" (*quo studiorum suorum inter se agunt commercia),* but also to allow for the natural exchange of familiar sentiments—encouragement, consolation, advice, complaint, reproof, lamentation, conciliation, and the like.[12] What makes these personal exchanges so interesting, however, is the creative reciprocity within which each speaks to and of the other, since—in writing such letters at all—they involve themselves in a process of mutual self-fashioning, a back-and-forth movement that yields results that are often delightful, frequently competitive, and occasionally combative.

What ensues is a rich and complex rhetorical exchange with what Jardine calls an "intimately theatrical" quality,[13] but it is one that simply cannot be choreographed by the interlocutors, and thus it is one that often issues in confusion and misunderstanding. Consider, for example, the exchange of letters where Erasmus objects that Budé has "twisted" his "well-meant and simple

11. Letters dating from 1514 reveal Erasmus's familiarity with Budé's work on Roman civil law and coinage. See "To Udalricus Zasius," letter 307, *CWE* 3:36; *Allen* 2:27; and "From Josse Bade," letter 346, *CWE* 3:154; *Allen* 2:125. The first letter of Budé to Erasmus (letter 403, *CWE* 3:275–80; *Allen* 2:227–33), in which Budé narrates how François Deloynes showed him the eulogy of Budé inserted by Erasmus in his annotation of Luke 1:4, similarly indicates the scholarly familiarity and mutual respect shared by Erasmus and Budé. See note 66 below.

12. Erasmus, "On the Writing of Letters," *CWE* 25:254; *ASD* 1.2:78; and *CWE* 25:70–247; *ASD* 1.2:308–569. On Erasmus's reflections on the art of letter writing, see Henderson, "Erasmus." See also Najemy, *Between Friends*, 52–56; and Fantazzi, "Evolution."

13. Jardine, *Erasmus*, 151.

remark" that Budé has all his "maxims and epigrams" at his "fingertips" into "something critical and offensive," and then again where Budé complains in kind that Erasmus has misinterpreted every point that he did not like, even turning innocent remarks into "something scandalous."[14] But their correspondence is made even more tenuous by the fact that the entire process is deliberately carried out in public view, as both Budé and Erasmus shared their letters with a circle of friends,[15] and most of their letters were quickly printed and sold for a wider network of readers.[16] Thus, while both correspondents address each other personally, they are at the same time—and with full knowledge and deliberate intent—speaking to a much larger network of learned readers. There is, as Claudio Guillén gladly observes, an "indiscreet charm" in such correspondence, as what is ostensibly personal is distributed to feed the "latent voyeurism" of a wider audience.[17]

While the deliberate blurring of the lines between what is private and what is public yields the chance to broadly display cherished features of humanist communication, it also conceals a lurking fissure between personal interests and public pressures that threatens the entire endeavour. Of course straddling the personal and the public can prove useful, as when Budé requests, as if he were writing in private about minor details, that Erasmus tend to some errors in the printing of their letters, though since this request is broadcast publicly it also conveys the optimal image of Budé as a meticulous scholar.[18] At

14. See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1004, *CWE* 7:39; *Allen* 4:37; "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1011, *CWE* 7:68; *Allen* 4:63; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1015, *CWE* 7:79; *Allen* 4:72.

15. "A 'circle' in the world of Erasmus," as Jardine notes, is "a collection of named individuals, linked and cross-linked by exchanges of letters and allusions within letters." Jardine, *Erasmus*, 17. With good-natured honesty, for instance, Budé concedes that he shows the letters from Erasmus to others in order to bolster his reputation. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 435, *CWE* 3:329; *Allen* 2:273. For his part, Erasmus encourages François Deloynes to read the letter Erasmus sent to Budé, as "the rule that friends have all things in common is now in force" (*lex illa placet, ut amicorum omnia sint communia*) between Erasmus and Budé. "To François Deloynes," letter 535, *CWE* 4:252; *Allen* 2:481.

16. On the various collections of letters edited and organized for printing by Erasmus, see Halkin, *Erasmus ex Erasmo*. For a catalogue including the letters printed by Budé, see Delaruelle, *Répertoire*; and "Bibliographie de la correspondance de G. Budé," the first appendix to Gueudet, *L'Art*, 577–607.

17. Guillén, "Notes," 101. On the "disingenuous" distinction between a book and a letter to a particular person, see Henderson, "Humanist Letter Writing," 33.

18. For examples of Budé's self-consciousness regarding printing errors, see "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:240–41; *Allen* 2:473; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 819, *CWE* 5:391; *Allen* 3:288.

other times, it can be effective in eliciting a desired response, as when Erasmus expresses his concern with Budé's silence, though by doing so in publication he shows himself to have been forcing a response that would help to mollify his anxieties that Budé and his circle were offended by Erasmus's published response to Lefèvre.[19] What is important to stress in these and similar examples is that everything that is said—even if ostensibly in confidence—is said as something meant to be read by others, so the interpretation of these letters must at all times proceed with agility, tending to both levels at once, allowing for nuance where appropriate but granting tension where evident.

On occasion such tension is relatively mild, as when Budé requests discretion in the handling of his letters so that he will not be exposed to criticism, even though he has just expressed the hope that their letters will make their friendship "famous and a matter of public knowledge."[20] At this point, therefore, his personal worries that he will become the object of criticism appear to be moving at cross-purposes with his literary ambitions in the public sphere. More jarring is the request from Erasmus that Budé publicly give him, if not a personal "compliment," then at least "some indication of your good will"—in part to bolster the idea that those engaged in "the advancement of scholarship" are "united in mutual good will" (*mutua benevolentia foederentur*), but surely also to allay the suspicions of some who think Budé lacks "friendly feelings" for Erasmus, thereby publicly expressing—oddly enough—the very personal vanity of Erasmus.[21] There are times, however, when the tensions over publicity are simply startling, as when Erasmus tells Budé that he will take critical "rebuke" from someone like him as a "friendly act," though he requests

19. Lefèvre had challenged Erasmus's reading of Hebrews 2:7 on the abasement of the Son in the Incarnation, calling it "heretical and most unworthy of Christ and God." For Erasmus's reply, see *Apology against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, *CWE* 83:81–107; *ASD* 9.3:164–94. Though Erasmus felt justified and victorious, he also regretted the entire affair, and he worried that Budé's silence reflected serious misgivings over his handling of Lefèvre. See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 689, *CWE* 5:158–59; *Allen* 3:112, where Erasmus raises the question of Budé's "sudden silence" (*subitum silentium*); and, more explicitly, "To Guillaume Budé," letter 723, *CWE* 5:723; *Allen* 3: 151–52. Both letters appeared publically in the *Farrago*, albeit not until 1519, after Budé had responded in December 1517 with letter 744. On the controversy between Lefèvre and Erasmus, see Mann, *Érasme*, 16–46.

20. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:138; *Allen* 2:391.

21. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1794, *CWE* 12:493; *Allen* 6:478. See also, among many examples, "To Guillaume Budé," letter 930, *CWE* 6:277; *Allen* 3:513, where Erasmus underscores the importance that he and Budé be "of one mind" (*nos inter nos esse concordes*).

that Budé not let the "public" know this, even while this very letter was printed by Erasmus in the same year it was written, including the caution on publicity.[22]

But the confluence of the personal and the public in the letters of Erasmus and Budé eventually generates a debilitating self-consciousness in the face of public judgment—so much so, in fact, that Budé is driven to terminate his part in the correspondence, and Erasmus is left wondering whether it was advisable to have spoken so personally in public. The seeds of these questions are evident in the letters addressing Erasmus's controversy with Lefèvre in 1517–18, where Budé requests that Erasmus "suppress" their letters on the question, "or even throw them on the fire," as he is worries for the "reputation" of Erasmus. For his part, Erasmus responds to Budé's more thorough explanation as to why he should not have disputed with Lefèvre in a letter revealing concern over how Budé's words will be seen by the public eye of "posterity."[23] Both are anxious, in short, about how they will be seen by wider circles of readers, though—curiously enough—both also express this intensely personal anxiety in letters destined for publication. Much the same thing appears when Erasmus cautions that, while he is not personally insulted by Budé's clever attacks and jesting abuse, which he knows in any case are meant kindly, he is very much concerned how others—perhaps "some tactless person"—will come to think of them.[24] Though both understand the value of privacy and discretion, their epistolary project deliberately flaunts such limits, even as it struggles with the consequent pressures of public judgment.[25]

These pressures come to a breaking point in 1528, when—with the outburst in Paris over the perceived slight to Budé in *The Ciceronian*—Erasmus writes a letter to Louis de Berquin, his spirited but impetuous ally in Paris, frankly defending his intentions in *The Ciceronian* and likely requesting help in

22. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:306; *Allen* 2:254.

23. See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 869, *CWE* 6:130–31; *Allen* 3:404–5, where Erasmus answers Budé's criticism of Erasmus's response to Lefèvre in both "From Guillaume Budé," letter 744, *CWE* 5:247-48; *Allen* 3:174–75; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 810, *CWE* 5:368–78; *Allen* 3:268–77.

24. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1004, *CWE* 7:42; *Allen* 4:89. See also "To Guillaume Budé," letter 906, *CWE* 6:211–14; *Allen* 460–62.

25. See "From Guillaume Budé," letter 896, *CWE* 6:180; *Allen* 3:437, where Budé concedes to the printing of questionable letters, including one that included "private remarks made as between you and me," which Budé had "hoped would remain secret." See also "From Guillaume Budé," *CWE* 6:411–12; *Allen* 3:625–26. Much later, however, Budé berates Erasmus for being "afraid to confide things that were close to your heart at the time." "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:76–77; *Allen* 7:38.

suppressing the furor against him, only to have what he thought was a private letter made public by Germain de Brie, much to Erasmus's dismay.[26] He now wishes—sensibly but belatedly—that his letter had not gone public, but what a remarkable conclusion this is, considering his long-practised policy of releasing personal correspondence to public view. As he puts it in his last published letter to Budé, something of a resigned denouement to their joint venture, apparently "one must write in one way for one's friends, in another way for the public" (*aliter scribendum est amicis, aliter populo*).[27] What they had hoped to accomplish together—to cross familiarity with publicity for the enhancement of humanist scholarly life—proved eventually to be unsustainable, as acute self-consciousness coupled with overt public pressure tore open the fissure that they wished to straddle.

"Seek human friendship more carefully"

There is nothing "better or sweeter" in "the whole world" than friendship, Erasmus insists, which is why it is so unbearable when the pleasure and profit of friendship are diminished due to separation or distance.[28] Fortunately, Erasmus tells Budé, a ready solution is at hand in lively correspondence. Indeed, he writes, "What more delightful thing could come one's way than to converse by exchange of letters with such a special friend?"[29] It is the function of a familiar letter, after all, to emulate "a mutual conversation between absent

26. The letter in question to Berquin (with a copy sent to Germain de Brie) was written "in confidence to a friend," Erasmus complains, and he would have preferred that "it had not fallen into other hands." "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2046, *CWE* 14:339; *Allen* 7:491. See also "To Guillaume Budé," letter 2047, *CWE* 14:343–44; *Allen* 7:493–94; "Erasmus to Louis de Berquin," letter 2048, *CWE* 14:345; Allen 7:495; and "Erasmus to Louis de Berquin," letter 2077, *CWE* 14:409; *Allen* 7:539–40. Since these letters were published by Erasmus, they make for an especially well-publicized statement of regret for publicity.

27. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 2047, *CWE* 14:344; *Allen* 7:494.

28. Erasmus, "War is a treat for those who have not tried it," *CWE* 35:412–13; *ASD* 2.7:22: "Principio, quid in rerum natura dulcius aut melius amicitia?" See also the commentary of Erasmus in "A friend is more necessary than fire and water," adage 2.2.75, *CWE* 33:114–15; *ASD* 2.3:190.

29. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 906, *CWE* 6:197; *Allen* 3:449: "Quid possit accidere iucundius quam cum amico tam eximio vicissitudine literarum confabulari?" On the centrality of friendship to forging a community of shared labour, see Eden, *Friends*, 25–31, 142–73.

friends,"[30] allowing both to convey something of their "character, fortune and sentiments."[31] What is especially noteworthy in these letters, however, is that the friends in question are Guillaume Budé and Erasmus of Rotterdam: Budé standing "au centre et au sommet de l'intelligentzia française du temps de François 1[er]",[32] and Erasmus, "citoyen le plus en vue de la République de lettres, esprit cosmopolite par excellence."[33]

More significant yet, these eminent interlocutors seek not only to publicize their friendship but also to include others in a broader network of friends, one where—as Thomas More aptly puts it—"each gains a share in the friendship of all."[34] It is precisely this that Budé has in mind when he proposes a "partnership" in friends with Erasmus, where we "shall share our friends," one with the other, building thereby a vast network of humanist scholars that aspires cooperatively to further the cause of *bonae literae*.[35] What grand prospects open up before them, therefore, as they seek to fashion a community of scholars whose labour and communication will transcend national borders, making "fellow-countrymen" of anyone who has taken "vows to the Muses,"[36] and building alliances that will endure despite the wars between the respective monarchs of Erasmus and Budé.[37]

30. Erasmus, "On the Writing of Letters," *CWE* 25:20; *ASD* 1.2:224.

31. Erasmus to Beatus Rhenanus," letter 1206, *CWE* 8:220; *Allen* 4: 501. See Jardine, *Erasmus*, 150–51; and Henderson, "Erasmus," 334. On letters as an "exercise in friendship," see Guillén, "Notes," 78; and Charlier, *Érasme*, 62.

32. La Garanderie, *Christianisme*, 26.

33. Vaillancourt, *La lettre familière*, 124.

34. More, "Letter to Martin Dorp," *Complete Works*, 3. More marvels at how Erasmus constantly tries "to make all of them share with each other the same special attachment which binds them to him."

35. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:151; *Allen* 2:403–4. For the positive reply from Erasmus, see "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:239; *Allen* 2:472. As Budé writes, however, not all of his friends, nor those belonging to Erasmus, have yet to "give in their names to the pool." "Guillaume Budé to Cuthbert Tunstall," letter 583, *CWE* 4:352; *Allen* 2:561.

36. "Erasmus to Louis Ruzé," letter 928, *CWE* 6:274; *Allen* 3:511: "communibus Musarum sacris initiatus est." See also "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:110; *Allen* 2:369, where Erasmus speaks of the world as the "common homeland" (*communem omnium patriam*) of humanist scholars. On Budé's commitment to an "international brotherhood of humanists," see McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 52; and Guillén, "Notes," 91.

37. See "Erasmus to Nicolas Bérault," letter 1284, *CWE* 9:92; *Allen* 5:64–65; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1233, *CWE* 8:295; *Allen* 4:576: "non dirimunt Musarum foedera."

One of the most remarkable features of the friendship of Budé and Erasmus is their willingness to engage each other in an open conversation on their styles of writing, a topic at the very heart of the humanist ideal of eloquent communication.[38] When Erasmus reads the early letters of Budé, for instance, he encounters a surprising challenge: to wit, that Erasmus has squandered his "eloquence" and "intellectual gifts" on "trivialities," thereby wasting his "divine fire on things unworthy of it." "Writers of your class," Budé says, "should choose the subject on which you mean to shine from among special and exalted themes."[39] Whether Budé was truly serious with this point is not entirely clear, as he wryly suggests that the word "slipped from [his] pen I know not how," but Erasmus seizes the opportunity to playfully embrace the idea that his works are indeed "trifling," though twisting the word to great ironic effect. Perhaps everything he writes is trifling, Erasmus muses, like those "light pieces" on classical works—though in a quick turn of meaning, he insists, the *Adages* are far above "Scotus and all his quillets"—or possibly his celebrated work on the New Testament, those "trifling trivialities" (*minutae minutiae*) as he amazingly calls them, that yet are somehow—in yet another reversal—"welcomed by the most authoritative theologians."[40]

A bit later, Erasmus changes course, now claiming—with another echo of Horace—that he is by nature suited to dealing with "humbler tasks" than Budé demands, and besides, he counters with an important note of contrast, it is better to be "useful" (*utilibus*) than "grand" (*splendidis*), even if it is for

38. See Gray, "Renaissance Humanism." See also Carrington, "Writer." Consider, as an example, the comparison of the styles of Budé and Erasmus in "Christophe de Longueil to Jacques Lucas," letter 914, *CWE* 6:226–30; *Allen* 3:472–76.

39. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 403, *CWE* 3:279–80; *Allen* 2:232. Budé repeats his judgment that Erasmus, "a man of such a lofty swift-winged capacious versatile mind, polished on every workbench of the Muses, ought now to undertake enterprises of the grandest scale." "Guillaume Budé to Cuthbert Tunstall," letter 583, *CWE* 4:360; *Allen* 2:568–69: "qui hoc contendam, hominem tam alto, tam volucri, tam capaci, tam versatili ingenio praeditum, in nulla non officina Musarum expolitum, grandissima quaeque opera nunc suscipere debere." See Wallace, "Merits."

40. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:306–7; *Allen* 2:254–55. On the *Adages* and Erasmus's work on Scripture as trivial, see "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:104; *Allen* 2:363–64. On his drafting a "trifling piece (*nugamenti*) about the freedom of the will," see "Erasmus to Ludwig Baer," letter 1419, *CWE* 10:180; *Allen* 5:400. Concerning an early version of "On the Writing of Letters" as a trifle, see Erasmus to Nicolas Bérault," letter 1284, *CWE* 9:91; *Allen* 5:63–64.

"children and dullards."[41] With that Erasmus turns the tables on Budé when he suggests—quite bluntly, though strangely seasoned with praise—that Budé's writing is poorly organized, "never relaxed," impossible to enjoy, "bespangled" with metaphors, and filled with long digressions. Indeed, he adds with a dig, the reader of Budé "has to work almost harder than [Budé] did in writing" (*plus propre laboret legendo quam tu scribendo*).[42] The response of Budé, like that of Erasmus, appeals to his natural bent as a writer, so that, he demurs, he proudly works on "dignified subjects of no ordinary kind"; he is not trying to "make it all clear" for ordinary readers; and he prizes his "elegant extravagance" in the use of "decorations of discourse." More importantly, however, Budé shows his readiness to accept criticism from a friend, praising Erasmus as a "critic of exceptional skill" and appreciating him as well as one who is "normally courteous and never hostile."[43]

"I know you as well as you know me," Budé tells Erasmus, and he is right, as both are astute in what they spot and tell the other of their style, and their correspondence is the medium that allows for this mutually informed process of self-understanding.[44] The difference between them, Budé suggests, is that Erasmus puts things "with charm and elegance, in the manner of a good conversation," while he expresses himself—"hold[s] forth, if you like"—in "rhetorical style." How differently they wield their art, he continues:

41. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:104–5; *Allen* 2:364. For Horace's advice that writers "choose a theme" that is "equal to [their] strength," see Horace, *Ars Poetica* ll. 38–42 (Horace, *Art of Poetry*, trans. Fairclough, 453). On Erasmus's defence of writing for a wider audience, including "the young and ignorant," see Phillips, "Erasmus," 339; and on the importance of "utility" in the style of Erasmus, see Beaulieu, "Utilité." On Budé's embrace of complexity and obscurity, see Wallace, "Merits."

42. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:109–11; *Allen* 2:368–69. On the difficulty of Budé's writing, see McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 26–27.

43. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:141–47; *Allen* 2:394–99. "What a sharp eye you have," Budé continues, "and how you hit the target," yet nonetheless seem "to exhort rather than discourage me." Erasmus likewise thanks Budé for offering corrections "in the friendly way you do" (*ut facis, amice*). "To Guillaume Budé," letter 441, *CWE* 3:339; *Allen* 2:282; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:304; *Allen* 2:252. Both express preference for friendship that allows for honest criticism. Erasmus, for instance, thanks Budé for giving him a "good shake-up" and making fun of him in such an "elegant fashion" and in a style that is "most friendly too." "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:229; *Allen* 2:464. Budé similarly asserts his dislike of a "too respectful approach with a touch of the toady in it." "From Guillaume Budé," letter 987, *CWE* 6:402; *Allen* 3:616.

44. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:144; *Allen* 2:396: "Nec minus ego te noui quam to me."

> I am violent and carry my reader away, while you charm him and win him over; I burst in, you worm your way; I sport the full armour of the young and dashing, while you wear a half-suit; your effort is less but well-directed, mine is great but, swing my arms as I may, I do not get the same results as you.

Indeed, Budé says with great percipience, Erasmus is "marvellously clever," writing in a manner that is "so clear" and "at the same time so eloquent," "not making things at first glance so obvious," and yet managing to weave together far-fetched opposites seamlessly.[45] For his part, Erasmus generously credits Budé with finding workable middle ground between the ideal of clarity and the obsession taken by some with ornament and show. The style of Budé, as he now puts it more positively, is "highly finished and elaborate without sacrificing clarity and ease, eloquent and copious without losing sight of [its] theme, […] rich in image and ornament in such a way that it is always the scholarship and not the flowers of speech that men admire." The key difference between them, Erasmus concludes, is that Budé prefers "to be understood by scholars," while Erasmus seeks when possible to instruct or persuade "the great majority," at least those who read Latin.[46] And therein lies a principal prospect of this epistolary friendship: a mutual self-fashioning crafted through a critical but constructive exchange on their respective styles of writing.

Despite this achievement, the epistolary friendship of Budé and Erasmus proves to be terminally precarious. Some suggest that they become overly sensitive to criticism, but this underestimates their readiness to accept challenges from a friend. It is true that Erasmus becomes more defensive when questioned about his response to Lefèvre, though the vehemence of Erasmus may not be what it appears to be, as we will see shortly. A more likely source of pressure on their friendship is to be found in the fact that with the passage of time their stations in life began to diverge significantly. In brief, Erasmus remained willing to "enter the arena and do battle with a host of fiends," while Budé was "chained to the treadmill of public business," and thus no longer free to battle for the

45. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:143–45; *Allen* 2:396–97.

46. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:238; *Allen* 2:471: "Tu maluisti ab eruditis dumtaxat intelligi, ego, si possim, a plurimis."

humanities.[47] With diverging positions in the world, and thus facing different external demands, their correspondence drifts—lacking a suitable subject, as both recognize—and this gives way to a great deal of quibbling followed by tedious assurances of friendship.[48]

Against that backdrop, underlying differences between Budé and Erasmus become more pronounced—most notably, Budé's increasingly pronounced patriotic fervour, and thus his irritation with what he takes to be Erasmus's animus against the "French character."[49] This spat signals not only that Budé's heightened nationalistic sentiments are at odds with the playful ambiguity of Erasmus with respect to nationality, but it also introduces a rift in their commonly held commitment to a transnational republic of humanist scholars.[50] Certainly, too, it is these differences that explain Budé's aggravation with Erasmus's hedging

47. Erasmus labours on numerous fronts, as his letters of the period illustrate. See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1601, *CWE* 11:246–48; *Allen* 6:152–53; and, written the same day, "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 1597, *CWE* 11:239–41; *Allen* 6:148–49. For Budé's report of being "overwhelmed and oppressed by a host of responsibilities," see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1370, *CWE* 10:35–39; *Allen* 5:296–99. On his various posts in the government of Francis I, including a "seat on the supreme court," see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1328, *CWE* 9:215–18; *Allen* 5:152–55. A reliable advocate of royal absolutism, Budé's place in the court of Francis I is manifest already in his reports to Erasmus in 1519 that the court is occupied with the business of the imperial election, a title won by Charles V. See "From Guillaume Budé," letter 924, *CWE* 6:267; *Allen* 3:503. In the same year, Budé confessed that he was no longer involved in the battles against the "lovers of barbarism," but now—as an older man—was observing events as if "watching a play" (*quasi in theatro sedentem*). "From Guillaume Budé," letter 987, *CWE* 6:402; *Allen* 3:616.

48. On the need for "some more attractive subject" (*aliud argumentum plausibilius*), see "To Guillaume Budé," letter 906, *CWE* 6:214; *Allen* 3:463; and similarly, for Budé's invitation to "start up some different topic" (*thema aliud auspicare*), see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 915, *CWE* 6:235; *Allen* 3:479.

49. For Budé's charge against what he calls Erasmus's "thinly veiled hatred towards the French" in his comments on the ancient Galatians, see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:74–75; *Allen* 7:35–36. Though likely sincere, Budé's national fervour is pitched for public consumption in a France suffering from an "atmosphere of insecurity" following the defeat of French forces at Pavia and the captivity of Francis I in Spain in 1525–26. See Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform*, 181. Erasmus understandably is "astonished" that Budé "could really be angry in such a trivial matter," as if what was said "against the Gauls of yore" pertains to "the Gauls of the present century." See "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1840, *CWE* 13:187–88; *Allen* 7:94. For the passage in question, see "Paraphrase on Galatians," *CWE* 42:94; *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*, 7:943–44.

50. On Erasmus's indifference to his nationality, see "Erasmus to Louis Ruzé," letter 928, *CWE* 6:274; *Allen* 3:510–11. See also Thompson, "Erasmus as Internationalist"; and Halkin, "Érasme et l'Europe."

responses to the invitation from Francis I to move to France as part of the proposed institution devoted to humane learning, a project that apparently became more important to Budé as time passed.[51] "You behaved shamelessly in this matter," Budé proclaims to Erasmus, with "all that dissembling of yours," so much so as to suggest that Erasmus intended the "severing of our friendship."[52]

So there was "discord" (*discordia*) lurking between these friends for some time, as the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives observed, largely stemming from evolving cultural pressures affecting Budé, though to that point never serious enough to rupture their alliance.[53] All of that changed, however, with the outcry

51. In 1517, Budé announces to Erasmus that Francis I wishes to found "a famous institution" for the purpose of promoting "literature of a higher and more polished kind," with Erasmus in residence. See "From Guillaume Budé," letter 522, *CWE* 4:204–9; *Allen* 2:444–48. As David McNeil notes, Budé's letter is a "masterpiece of neutrality, diplomacy, and veiled allusion," offering only the "dubious incentive of reputation," just after Budé had "placed himself 'above' the searches for riches and glory." McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 47. After one inquiry in 1518, Budé raises the question again only in 1524, where he twice presses Erasmus more seriously to "stop sitting on the fence," and promising him "unbroken security and peace." "From Guillaume Budé," letters 1439 and 1446, *CWE* 10:238–41, 256–58; *Allen* 5:440–42, 453–55. Erasmus writes to Budé in 1525 that he had "rejected the idea of going to France," for "something unpleasant was brewing there" (*aliquid praesagiebat magni mali futurum*), though earlier responses—including letter 533 to Francis I—show that he enjoyed using the invitation to burnish his reputation. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1601, *CWE* 11:248; *Allen* 6:153. Erasmus here refers obliquely to the efforts of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, with the authorization of the Parlement of Paris, to investigate the works and activities of humanists and reformers in France, including the work of Lefèvre and others on the Bible, the reform measures in the diocese of Meaux, and the writings of Erasmus. See Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform*, 162–85.

52. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:76; *Allen* 7:37. Erasmus responds that he made "no attempt to disguise [his] feelings," but "changing countries was not in [his] best interest." "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1840, *CWE*, 13:190; *Allen* 7:94: "Nec obscure tamen indicaui animum meum. […] Et vertere solum non erat in rem meam."

53. "Juan Luis Vives to Erasmus," letter 2061, *CWE* 14:373; *Allen* 6:513. As one who was "firmly committed to the establishment of a new, critical Latin text of the Bible," and too who supported the substitution of "language studies" for "traditional dialectical studies," Budé was in an awkward position with respect to the opposition of the Faculty and the Parlement to new translations of the Bible. See Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform*, 180. In a letter to Pierre Lamy in 1524, Budé blames certain theologians of the mendicant orders for their hateful opposition to the "renaissance of Greek letters," including the recent theological studies of the "Rotterdamien," as well as the work of Budé himself. "Budé à Pierre Lamy, de l'ordre franciscain," *Guillaume Budé: Correspondance*, 130–33. See Parlement's "Prononcement en jugement" of 1526 "Prohibiting Printing, Selling, Reading or Owning Vernacular Translation of the Bible," document 174 in Farge, *Religion, Reformation, and Repression*, 249–51.

against Erasmus following the publication of *The Ciceronian* by what he calls "Budé's friends"—"such stupid friends" (*amicis tam ineptis*) Erasmus says for emphasis—who lashed out with "stinging epigrams" and hostile pamphlets in defence of Budé, over a passage from which Erasmus was confident Budé could not have taken offence.[54] Budé did not respond, and most interpreters have taken his silence as a sign of grave irritation with Erasmus, and perhaps too a tacit willingness to let his supporters rage against his old friend, though frankly there is no evidence to support this view.[55]

54. "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2046, *CWE* 14:336; *Allen* 7:489. In the same letter, Erasmus insists that calling Budé a lesser Ciceronian than a local printer was a compliment to Budé, as obsessive imitation of the "outer covering and veneer of Ciceronian style" is simply foolish (*CWE* 14:331–34; *Allen* 7:485–87). Erasmus is confident that Budé understood his meaning, and Budé in fact agrees with Erasmus in his critique of the "chorus of Ciceronians" (*Ciceroianorum choro*). See "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:77–78; *Allen* 7:37–38. On Budé's agreement with Erasmus, see La Garanderie, *Christianisme*, 92–99, though McNeil thinks Erasmus was "mistaken" in this regard (McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 75). Budé offers a critique of the rigidity and sterility of the Ciceronians in the "digression Cicéronienne" of *Les Commentaires de la langue grecque*. See Sanchi, *Les Commentaires*, 97–111. Though distinctive in their strategies, as Luigi-Alberto Sanchi notes, with Erasmus speaking through a satirical dialogue and Budé burying his observations in a scholarly work on Greek, Budé's comments concur with, even as they augment, the sentiments of Erasmus; certainly, there is nothing there to suggest that Budé was personally offended by *The Ciceronian*, and there is plenty to indicate that Budé and Erasmus were of kindred mind on these questions.

55. On the reaction of Budé, see McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 61, 69. In his notes on these letters, James M. Estes suggests that Budé conveyed his displeasure with *The Ciceronian* to Erasmus in a letter now lost to us, referring to Erasmus's words in a letter to Brie that Budé had indicated his "displeasure (which he seems to have quickly forgotten) with his usual frankness in a letter to me." In the same context, Erasmus also says that he has "appeased Budé on this matter by letter," which Estes takes to be letter 2047 to Budé. See Estes's introductory note to "To Guillaume Budé," letter 2047 *CWE*, 14:342; and "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2046, *CWE* 14:335, 335n28. It is true that much of letter 2046 to Brie is taken up with the Ciceronian affair, though the immediate context in which Erasmus claims to have appeased Budé by letter (lines 193–214 in *CWE*, 187–211; *Allen* 7:488) refers not to the comparison of Budé and Bade in *The Ciceronian*, but to Budé's earlier displeasure with Erasmus's "veiled hatred towards the French" in "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:74–75; *Allen* 7:36–37, and the letter in which Erasmus "appeased Budé" is "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1840, *CWE* 13:187–88; *Allen* 7:93–94. What Erasmus defends in this context (of letter 2046) is the innocence of a quip about the French "under the guise of [a] fictional character" (*sub quacunque persona*), which in this passage refers to Cocles from "In Pursuit of Benefices" (letter 2046, *CWE* 14:335, lines 194–97; *Allen* 7:488, lines 188–89) and not to Nosoponus in *The Ciceronian*. When Erasmus returns to the dispute over *The Ciceronian* (starting with line 217 in *CWE* and 212 in *Allen*), he dismisses the suggestion that he should write "some sort of apology" to Budé, as he is "so convinced of Budé's wisdom and integrity" that he could not be "induced

A more generous reading, and one that accords with the intelligence and wit regularly shown by Budé, would be to credit him with understanding the passage exactly as Erasmus intended it—in good humour and as a compliment—after which, of course, one must look for a new explanation for his silence. Given that he had been upset with Erasmus on previous occasions—many times, it appears—without terminating their friendship, something else clearly was afoot at this point. Erasmus received reports that Budé was preparing something hostile towards him, while Brie offered reassuring words that Budé was still friendly with Erasmus, though, in fact, both were simply rumours, certainly nothing Erasmus could rely on with confidence.[56] Occasionally Erasmus tries to downplay the severity of their break, musing that every friendship must deal with "little clouds" from time to time.[57] But the key point, in fact, is that—despite their designs—not all friends were held in common, as the divisive force of cultural loyalties and the disruptive power of partisan passions proved lethal for their attempt to build a transnational network of scholar-friends. Sadly enough, Erasmus concludes, it is best to "seek human friendships more carefully, cultivate them less diligently, and lose them with less chagrin."[58]

"Soured by no small share of ill will"

The driving force of the correspondence of Budé and Erasmus is their shared commitment to "the cause of humane studies," though at the same time, without

---

to believe that Budé was offended." The latter remark makes clear that Erasmus had not received a letter (much less an indignant one) from Budé regarding *The Ciceronian*.

56. For the concerns of Erasmus that Budé was preparing a work (*Les Commentaires*) in which unflattering things would be said of him, see "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2052, *CWE* 14:355; *Allen* 7:501; "Erasmus to Louis de Berquin," letter 2077, *CWE* 14:412; *Allen* 7:541; and "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2291, *CWE* 16:244–45; *Allen* 8:392–93. Offering words of assurance, Brie says that when he "first mentioned this matter to Budé, he seemed to be completely indifferent," and later he insists that Budé remains respectful towards Erasmus by correctly citing Budé's parallel criticisms of *The Ciceronians* (without any mention of Erasmus) in *Les Commentaires as evidence*. See "Germain de Brie to Erasmus," letter 2021, *CWE* 14:252; *Allen* 7:436–37; and "Germain de Brie to Erasmus," letter 2340, *CWE* 16:366; *Allen* 8:472.

57. See, for instance, "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2046, *CWE* 14:335–36; *Allen* 7:488; and "Erasmus to Jacques Toussain," letter 2449, *CWE* 17:286; *Allen* 9:183.

58. "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 2379, *CWE* 17:67; *Allen* 9:39: "ut hominum amicitias moderatius ambiam, indiligentius colam, minore cum animi molestia amittam."

gainsaying this unifying passion, both also are keenly intent on enhancing their own personal reputations.[59] A recurring feature of their correspondence, in fact, are the elaborate exercises in mutual praise, at once elegant and effusive, though at times so inflated as to be completely unbelievable. Budé, for instance, often speaks in glowing terms of the wit and style of Erasmus, though he easily passes over into hyperbole when trying to convey his esteem for the man, whose great accomplishments are said to put all of their contemporaries "in the shade."[60] Erasmus likewise showers Budé with praise, as when he speaks of an early letter from Budé as "not only full of learning" but also abounding "all through with such elegance and charm and wit that the gloomiest of men might grow cheerful as he read it."[61] No doubt both welcomed such adulation, as praise is expected and naturally enjoyed, even while it also may be doubted, as the language of praise so easily gives way to flattery, as both Erasmus and Budé well knew.

What enormous powers of learning are evident in the works of Budé, Erasmus exclaims, after which he laments with playful modesty that "we are not all Budés."[62] Indeed, Erasmus says in another letter, "very few mortals can keep pace with [Budé's] new and recondite erudition," though—now heightening the praise by way of false modesty—Erasmus rests content to know that in losing the contest he was at least "matched against Budé, the champion of scholars."[63] So how, Budé wonders, is he supposed to take such extravagant praise? "You really are extraordinary," Budé protests, "what a witty and practised ironist you must be" to baldly declare that "we cannot all be Budés." In fact, he adds with a

59. "Erasmus to Germain de Brie," letter 620, *CWE* 5:62; *Allen* 3:42–43. Budé readily admits to being driven "by the ambition to distinguish [himself]," and while he acknowledges that the "reward in the way of reputation" for those who strive for "intellectual distinction" lies largely in the acclaim of "posterity," he nonetheless admits to enjoying "some breath of fame rounding my sails as I go along." "Guillaume Budé to Cuthbert Tunstall," letter 583, *CWE* 4:353–54; *Allen* 2:561–62. Erasmus, for his part, concedes that when younger he was "not untouched by the wish to be famous," though now he would rather "lay aside the reputation" he has garnered, since so much of it is "soured by no small share of ill will," even while he nonetheless grants that his mind continues to be "assailed by a great feeling of satisfaction" when people like Budé speak well of him. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:228–29; *Allen* 2:463–64.

60. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:152; *Allen* 2:403.

61. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:102–3; *Allen* 2:362.

62. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:106–7; *Allen* 2:366: "nec omnes Budaei sumus."

63. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:225, 228; *Allen* 2:461, 463.

bit of competition in praise, if the two were compared, Erasmus would "appear three times as large again" as himself.[64] Surely you are jesting, Erasmus tells Budé after a similar flurry of praise, though he rightly observes that it can be very hard to tell whether Budé is being serious in his praise, when so much else is said in jest.[65]

This very problem takes centre stage in the opening of the first of Budé's letters, where he responds to both the initial letter of Erasmus and the words of adulation from Erasmus in a note on Luke 1:4:

> "My dear Budé," you say, "I cannot tell you how much I wish to see you famous, and admire your learning." That second phrase—do you really mean it? "Yes, really," you say. And you expect me to believe it? "Of course."[66]

So Budé is not sure that praise from Erasmus should be taken at face value, though he quickly adds that he "would gladly do as [Erasmus says]," after which he immediately launches into his own effusive eulogy of Erasmus. A "fair-minded man" with a "reverence for the truth," he declares, "you seem to be too great a man to be called my own friend, since single as you are you can be equal to the lot of us."[67] So is Erasmus to believe this? But, of course, Budé surely would reply, and so it goes, as each tests the limits of credibility with praise delicately balanced between sincerity and jest.

Budé, for instance, carefully ponders how to repay his debt to Erasmus—for the latter has "made the name Budé immortal" with his encomium—yet

64. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:139–40; *Allen* 2:392: "Nae cauillataorem quendam facetum et callidum esse te, vir mirifice, oportet."

65. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 906, *CWE* 6:200–201; *Allen* 3:451–52.

66. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 403, *CWE* 3:275; *Allen* 2:228: "'Dici non potest,' inquis, 'mi Budaee, quantopere et tuae faueam gloriae et eruditionem admirer.' Istue quoque posterius bona fide? 'Bona certe,' inquis. Egone id credam? 'Quid ni?' inquis." See the annotation on Luke 1:4 from *In Evangelicum Lucae annotationes*, *ASD* 6.5:450–53, where Erasmus recounts how Beatus Rhénanus alerted him to a translation of this verse in Budé's *Annotationes in Pandectas*, after which Erasmus inserted a long eulogy of Budé in his own annotation. The praise of Budé is also found in "L'éloge que fait Érasme de Guillaume Budé dans son *Novum Instrumentum* de 1516," appendix 1 of La Garanderie, *La correspondance*, 269–70, along with a French translation of the central section of praise (53n12).

67. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 403, *CWE* 3:276; *Allen* 2:228: "maior enim esse mihi videre quam ut meum te appellem, cum omnibus nostris unus satis esse possis."

concludes that this is futile, as "the debt is larger than everything [he] possess[es]."[68] There is no debt to be paid, Erasmus counters wryly, now cleverly turning the excess of praise back upon Budé, for it is Erasmus who has a debt to Budé for having pirated Budé's name to add "a little lustre to [his] work from [his] famous name."[69] It is clear to Budé, of course, what Erasmus is up to with such hyperbolic praise, especially since he engages in the same kind of praise of Erasmus. So when Erasmus holds up Budé as a "paragon of knowledge," Budé finally agrees to "cheerfully accept the irony" of Erasmus's inflated praise, although he knows he is "being laughed at."[70] Again a bit later, while admiring the elegance and cleverness of Erasmus, Budé confesses that—though he would like to take his words as "not playful but seriously meant"—he thinks in fact that Erasmus is "making fun of [him] gracefully," and he probably is correct. While reputation matters a great deal to both, the rhetoric of praise proves to be remarkably unstable, and for both interlocutors, it remains very difficult to interpret.

In order to offset the extravagance of praise, Budé and Erasmus frequently resort to expressions of modesty, as both understand that excessive zeal for reputation will appear indecent, and yet, as their correspondence reveals, modesty itself proves to be ambiguous and hence equally difficult to interpret. Though it may be sincere, modesty also can be artfully affected, providing a useful but not entirely authentic pose, and, all the more remarkably, expressions of modesty can combine sincerity and artifice in one. "We both go after reputation of no ordinary kind," Budé tells Erasmus, though he adds with a quip that Erasmus actually runs after it, seeking the "highest renown for scholarship" without rest. At the same time, he says to Erasmus—"my Socratic enthusiast," he calls him—"you began some time ago ingeniously enough to degrade yourself" in order to win the approval of "theologians in your part of the world."[71] Budé, in short, clearly recognizes the artful modesty of Erasmus, as the latter explicitly claims—rather immodestly, in fact—to surpass Socrates's "false modesty" by "sincerely" knowing how little he knows.[72] But while Budé calls out what he

68. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 403, *CWE* 3:277–78; *Allen* 2:230–31.

69. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:304; *Allen* 2:252.

70. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 435, *CWE* 3:331–32; *Allen* 2:275.

71. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:145; Allen 2:397.

72. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 531, *CWE* 4:227; *Allen* 2:462–63. On the language of praise and "self-deprecation," see Carrington, "Writer," 64–66.

regards as the "false modesty" of Erasmus, he is quick to assume a similar pose of his own, as when he praises Erasmus's style as "darting and gliding, without so much as a wingbeat," while he, in the "noviciate as an author, flutter[s] about with much clapping of wings like pigeons at play."[73] So Erasmus knows next to nothing, and Budé writes like a pigeon, or so they present themselves, though neither is being deceptive so much as they are assuming a posture that is partly sincere, partly a polite compensation for the excesses of praise, and partly a springboard from which they can launch some lofty praise in turn. Like their exercises in mutual praise, therefore, understanding their assertions of modesty is no simple task.

When it comes to the rhetoric of praise and modesty, therefore, Erasmus and Budé find themselves in a hermeneutical fog, though it is one of their own making, and it is not entirely without its utility, even though—as it turns out—it proves hazardous when played out in their political environment. It is the ironic praise of Budé in *The Ciceronian*, after all, where Erasmus has Nosoponus apparently degrade Budé for lacking a trait Erasmus and Budé both consider undesirable, that stirred the outrage of Budé's friends against Erasmus. So if we credit Budé with the intelligence and wit necessary to understand what Erasmus intended with this backhanded praise, then we also must reassess his choice to terminate the correspondence with Erasmus by silence. Since there is no direct evidence of Budé's attitude towards Erasmus at the time, the best course is to read his reaction against the circumstances he faced, specifically with respect to their impact on his own reputation. Given his position in the court of Francis I, his role in the national law courts, and his prominence among French humanists, it is safe to say that Budé found himself in a tactical quandary. Were he to join his partisans and attack Erasmus, he effectively would be severing the ties that bound him with the international community of humanist scholarship, though doing that ran counter to his deeply held commitments. Opposing his friends and defending Erasmus, however, would involve him in the curious task of explaining to his supporters how they misunderstood the irony of Erasmus, and it would entail opposition to the national fervour that proved so important for his own reputation. Standing with Erasmus would also constitute a public embrace of someone whose orthodoxy was hotly contested by Noël Béda and

73. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:153, 146; *Allen* 2:398. Budé writes: "Tuum est istud, qui per sublimia volare aut raptim aut remisse ita soles ut alas non quatias; nos in scribendi tyrocinio ut columbae ludibundae alis plausitantibus expatiamur, ut sentire tu videris."

the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, thereby putting himself at risk of official suspicion.[74]

So Budé faces a quandary with no obvious solution ready to hand. From political prudence, it would seem, he opted to simply remain silent, the only way forward that would allow him to preserve his reputation, continue work for the cause of good letters, escape the scrutiny of the Faculty of Theology, and avoid the kind of violent rupture that would follow a full-fledged controversy with Erasmus, even though that meant sacrificing his epistolary friendship with him. While their correspondence held out great prospects for the enhancement of reputation, in an environment of division and suspicion it confronts him with grave risks and few good options. Given this situation, Budé opts to proceed with caution by allowing the friendship to quietly expire, a choice that—oddly enough, given the circumstances—may well have been a subtle but sincere sign of respect for Erasmus, or at least an indication of resolve not to publicly disrespect him, as silence proved to be the best avenue for Budé's continued participation in humanist scholarship without injury to personal reputation on either side.

"Whether you are jesting or being serious"

Erasmus and Budé excel in playful jesting and ironic banter, and though this lighthearted streak in their correspondence is both enjoyable and instructive, the wit and the banter eventually prove burdensome for both, especially with the advent of public controversy. How delightful it is to find Budé and Erasmus chiding each other for something as mundane as their illegible handwriting, or Erasmus observing how much support he has received from what he calls "the tribe of Williams" (*Gulielmorum gentem*), or Budé slyly questioning whether

74. On the contentious process by which the Faculty of Theology undertook the examination of the works of Erasmus, ultimately culminating in the censure of Erasmus in May 1526, a formal condemnation in December 1527, and formal publication of these judgments in 1531, see Farge, *Orthodoxy and Reform*, 176–94; and Rummel, *Erasmus*, 29–59. As McNeil observes, Budé "studiously avoided" discussing "theological matters" in his correspondence with Erasmus, except for occasional questions of the correct translation of Greek terms in scriptural texts, as the name of Erasmus in France was "tainted with heretical opinion." In fact, Budé's association with "*parlementaires*, legists, and courtiers" put him in the company of those for whom religious dissidence—including the figure of Erasmus—was a pressing national concern in the efforts to eradicate heresy and maintain social order (McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 65–67, 76, 110–17).

Erasmus has even read his works, a taunt that must have sent Erasmus scurrying to his library for a long night of reading.[75] Then again, in an extended romp of jest, after Erasmus contends that Budé's children, wife, and "household cares" are not nearly as burdensome as Erasmus's "sole wife, that accursed Penury, whom [he] still cannot shake off [his] shoulders," Budé responds—with a saucy riposte—that the wife of Erasmus "has been pretty much [his] bedfellow ever since [he] fell victim to this crazy love of learning," thereby underscoring the extent of his own poverty.[76] In reply, Erasmus insists that he is not at all jealous that his wife has been spending time with Budé, though he wishes that "she had cleared off somewhere long ago," not to live with Budé, certainly, whom he wishes "success of every kind," but perhaps to live with the Franciscans, who purportedly "have such a passion for her." Besides, Erasmus cleverly adds, Budé cannot rightly complain of poverty when he is "building two country-houses," in reply to which Budé can only concede that poverty certainly will attach itself to him—"tighter than ivy," he says—due to this "building programme."[77]

These humorous exchanges diminish over the years, though they do not disappear altogether. Thus we find Budé teasing that Erasmus—the collector and commentator on thousands of proverbs—now claims exclusive ownership of these jewels, as if from that "ocean of Antiquity" one man should "give himself leave to pull out all the finest fish and debar all men from enjoyment of the fishing"—a suggestion met, sadly enough, without much humour from

75. On the difficulty of reading each other's handwriting, see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 435, *CWE* 3:328–29; *Allen* 2:272; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:103–4; *Allen* 2: 363. On the many men named William to whom Erasmus owes his gratitude, see "To Guillaume Budé," letter 534, *CWE* 4:249; *Allen* 2:478–79. For Budé's doubting whether Erasmus had read his works, see "From Guillaume Budé," letter 435, *CWE* 3:330; *Allen* 2:273–74.

76. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 421, *CWE* 3:308; *Allen* 2:255; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 435, *CWE* 3:332; *Allen* 2:275, where Budé writes: "At ego te hoc ignorare nolo, me quidem riualem esse tibi in amore philologiae, sed quam tibi uxorem esse dicis non longe a contubernio meo abfuisse, ex quo hoc insano literarum amore captus sum." As a married man with (eventually) eleven children, Budé represented a new "cultural class" of scholar. See Gadoffre, *La révolution culturelle*, 65–91; and La Garanderie, *Christianisme*, 18–19. Indeed, Budé reports to Erasmus, "it is in books and children that I have invested a great part of my worldly goods." "From Guillaume Budé," letter 915, *CWE* 6:231; *Allen* 3:476: "in libris et liberis bonam census mei partem habere."

77. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 480, *CWE* 4:107; *Allen* 2:366; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:150; *Allen* 2:401.

Erasmus.[78] Even towards the end of their correspondence, however, when external pressures weigh heavily and their style becomes rather stiff and stern, they manage to retain a bit of humour. After agreeing with Erasmus's criticism of the Ciceronians, for instance, Budé surprisingly dates his letter the day after "our festival of Liberalia" (Easter), thereby comically closing in fine Ciceronian fashion. In his last extant letter to Budé, moreover, while preparing his case against the critics of *The Ciceronian*, Erasmus deigns to choose Budé as his "advocate in this case," even though he also is "the one against whom I am charged with a crime," a turn of wit Budé must have enjoyed, though we will never know for sure.[79]

Behind these exchanges rests a remarkable agility of mind and speech that allows Erasmus and Budé to coyly adjust their postures and proposals to make way for understanding by means of ironic surprise. Erasmus is a master of irony, as is well known, so often capable of juxtaposing unexpected opposites or playfully juggling appearances and realities in a manner that generates unexpected insight.[80] Budé, for his part, is keenly aware of the ironic quality of Erasmus's literary persona, depicting him appreciatively with the help of one of Erasmus's favourite ironic devices as a "Silenus"—quite ordinary in "general appearance and bearing," but "upon closer examination […] a "Mercury in speech, a Genius in intelligence, Venus and the Graces in the charm of his style, carrying the goddess of wisdom herself in his head as Jupiter once carried Pallas."[81] Ten years later, however, in the testy letter in which he complains of Erasmus's contempt for the French, Budé has lost his tolerance for Erasmian

78. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 915, *CWE* 6:231–32; *Allen* 3:477: "ut in mari ille et pelago antiquitatis, quod omnium iure naturali commune est (si iuris peritis credimus), expiscari unus homo bellissimum quodque permittat sibi et piscationis usu omnibus interdicat"; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1004, *CWE* 7:39; *Allen* 4:37. Erasmus was well aware that proverbs are—as Kathy Eden puts it—"a literary form that by definition defies individual ownership." Eden, *Friends*, 144. It is true, however, that Erasmus took pride in his own Herculean efforts in collecting proverbs. See Erasmus's "The labours of Hercules," in *CWE* 34:181; *ASD* 2.5:39–41.

79. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1812, *CWE* 13:78–79; *Allen* 7:39: "Liberalium"; and "To Guillaume Budé," letter 2047, *CWE* 14:343; *Allen* 7:493: "non alium mihi patronum delegerim in hac causa quam eum cui reus existimor." Erasmus here profits comically from the fact that Budé received legal training, published a renowned work on Roman law, and maintained an active role in the judiciary.

80. On irony in Erasmus, see Martin, *Truth and Irony*, 24–27, 229–34.

81. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 583, *CWE* 4:359–60; *Allen* 2:568: "Mercurium in ore, Genium in praecordiis, Venerem in stilo cum Gratiis, postremo Palladem in capite, ut Iouem quondam illum, habere."

irony, bluntly declaring that he is fed up with his "Socratic irony and carping criticisms."[82]

Despite this late loss of suppleness, however, Budé shows a remarkable capacity for irony as well, most spectacularly when he rhetorically turns himself into Erasmus to advise him—in exactly the manner in which Erasmus counsels others—to rise above the fray in his dispute with Lefèvre.[83] Erasmus should not have responded to Lefèvre, Budé suggests, precisely "because you are Erasmus"—a theologian and a man of hard-earned reputation and, he might have added, an author known for his complaints on behalf of peaceful resolution of conflicts.[84] Erasmus responds at length with detailed arguments in his defence, apparently missing the irony of Budé's well-cast Erasmian counsel, or so it would seem, though Budé's counsel very conveniently gives Erasmus the perfect opportunity to publicly justify his *Apology against Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples*, so he may have appreciated Budé's Erasmian advice more than it seems.

Understanding humour and irony can be difficult, however, even for Erasmus and Budé. For his part, Budé knows from the beginning that he is dealing with a "slippery customer" in Erasmus, even while he enjoys exchanges with someone so quick and witty and eloquent.[85] At one point, in fact, Budé offers a marvellous description of his "vacillating state" when reading a letter from Erasmus:

> I was flushed and pale, smiling and showing my teeth, by turns indignant and grateful, relaxed and troubled, a prey to conflicting emotions, every-

82. "From Guillaume Budé, letter 1812, *CWE* 13:75; *Allen* 7:37: "Ironem Socraticum et Momum Satyricum."

83. See "From Guillaume Budé," letter 744, *CWE* 5:247; *Allen* 3:174–75; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 810, *CWE* 5:368–73; *Allen* 3:269–73. Budé also adopts an Erasmian voice when suggesting that Tunstall or Vives might helpfully serve as mediators between Budé and Erasmus. See "Guillaume Budé to Cuthbert Tunstall," letter 583, *CWE* 4:360–61; *Allen* 2:568–70; and "From Guillaume Budé," letter 987, *CWE* 6:401; *Allen* 3:616. Erasmus declines Budé's proposal to use Vives as "a kind of cement between the two of us." "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1004, *CWE* 7:39; *Allen* 4:36.

84. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 810, *CWE* 5:368–73; *Allen* 3:269–73; as well as "From Guillaume Budé," *CWE* 5:378; *Allen* 3:277, where Budé calls attention to the fact that he is reciting the words of Erasmus. See also "From Guillaume Budé," letter 744, *CWE* 5:247; *Allen* 3:174–75.

85. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 493, *CWE* 4:150; *Allen* 2:401.

> thing you can think of all at once—sometimes longing to be quit of this debate between us, and then again warming to the fray.[86]

So Budé is tossed back and forth, torn between opposing reactions, unsure how to take the nuanced and varied words of Erasmus, and in fact demonstrating almost as much agility in trying to understand the letter as Erasmus spent in writing it. We find a similar letter by Erasmus, interestingly enough, where he complains to Budé that he cannot tell when Budé is being serious and when he is joking, such is the remarkable subtlety of Budé's writing. Indeed, he continues, there are "joking remarks of yours which look exactly like serious abuse"—so much so, in fact, that "scarcely any besides myself can appreciate or interpret [them] as not serious."[87] Like Budé reading Erasmus, therefore, Erasmus is being tossed back and forth, torn between understanding Budé's words as jest or as seriously meant, and unable to discern a criterion to settle on one or the other meaning. But the ultimate problem, as Erasmus remarks, is that it is even more difficult for others to rightly understand their subtlety and irony; or, more seriously, it is much easier for others to misunderstand them.

The satirical humour of *The Ciceronian* was badly understood by many in Paris, though it seems only fitting—demanding only minimal generosity on our part—to grant that Budé understood the reference to himself in the ironic manner in which it was intended. In earlier days he certainly would have laughed, and then likely have followed with a clever reply. In 1528, however, Budé does not respond at all. Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie sees in this "une barrière d'incompréhension et de silence" stemming from "des oppositions fondamentales de caractère et d'esthétique."[88] It is true that there

86. "From Guillaume Budé," letter 1011, *CWE* 7:66; *Allen* 4:60–61. This letter responds to "To Guillaume Budé," letter 1004, *CWE* 7:38–43; *Allen* 36–40, in which Erasmus expresses his confidence in the friendship with Budé and at the same time rehearses—in the detailed manner of writing found in many of his controversies—a number of places where Budé misunderstood his words.

87. "To Guillaume Budé," letter 906, *CWE* 6:198–199; *Allen* 3:450–51: "Quid hos dicturos censes, si iocos tuos seriis conuiciis simillimos legant, quos ego pene solus omnium iocos esse vel sentio vel interpretor?" Erasmus here responds to Budé's letter 810 and 896 counselling Erasmus to end the controversy with Lefèvre.

88. La Garanderie, *Christianisme*, 383. Margaret Mann Phillips similarly speaks of the "confrontation of the severe, correct Budé, dignified and *grandiloquens*, writing only for the learned, with the persuasive charm of Erasmus, artistic, unassuming, colloquial, humorous, writing for all and sundry." Phillips, "Erasmus," 349–50.

are differences in character and style, though granting this should not obscure the common aspirations that originally sparked and continued to animate their correspondence—nor should it conceal the shared prospects to which both pointed over the course of their exchange of letters. Whatever is made of the silence of Budé, I suggest, one must acknowledge both his continued investment in humanist scholarship and the fact that he simply did not express publicly any bitterness against Erasmus over *The Ciceronian*.

What he actually did was to refuse to join his partisan supporters in attacking Erasmus, a reaction that seems to manifest a distaste for continued public controversy, even while it leaves open the possibility that he still respected Erasmus, especially since there is no evidence to suggest—as some have claimed—that he either "approved, tacitly" or "did not disapprove his friends' objections to Erasmus's personal attack."[89] Budé did not express anger about *The Ciceronian*, and he did not lash out at Erasmus. What he did was recoil from the public clamour over the words of Erasmus, and that meant simply ending his correspondence with the man. What proved impossible was to continue with playful banter and dueling irony in the midst of escalating public fury, as the partisan crowd demanded perfectly clear recrimination. Such is the peril of humour and irony where suppleness evaporates and subtlety is shunned. In this environment, Budé's retreat into silence bespeaks a case of epistolary exhaustion and tactical prudence amid the clamour of his supporters and the weight of external pressures.

The correspondence of Erasmus and Budé represents an exemplary performance of the kind of intellectual exchange highly prized in humanist circles of their day, though its demise has continued to puzzle interpreters. The closing silence of Budé, in particular, has proved difficult to decipher, though

89. McNeil, *Guillaume Budé*, 74, 69. A third-hand report from Daniel Stiebar claims that "Erasmus was so far from appeasing Budé by his letters that they do not hesitate to say that Budé has not yet unsealed them, never mind read them." See the introductory note to "To Guillaume Budé," letter 2047, *CWE* 14:342–43. See also "To Jacques Toussain," letter 2449, *CWE* 17:286–87; *Allen* 8:184, where Erasmus mentions "two letters" (*duas epistolas*) that Budé has kept "for two years without breaking the seal" (*totum biennium apud se seruauit non resignatas*). Though intriguing, these reports remain hearsay, telling us nothing directly or specifically about Budé's attitude towards Erasmus, as not unsealing letters could just as easily manifest a prudent resolve not to continue what had become a tiresome exchange in a treacherous political setting. In the end, Stiebar's report does not justify judgment about Budé's interior state of mind any more than the second-hand assurances from Brie (see note 56 above) can be taken at face value, as neither comes directly from Budé.

that has not slowed those who wish to resolve the enigma by recourse to guesses about his state of mind. I have suggested instead—since we have no direct and reliable access to what Budé was feeling—that we tend to the prospects and perils of their epistolary venture set against the circumstances of the time. Their correspondence floundered, I have argued, on fissures lurking in the rhetorical landscape over which they wished to travel when faced with certain cultural, political, and religious pressures.

As we have seen at each turn, the prospects turn out to be inextricably bound up with certain perils that make their exchange precarious and eventually unsustainable. The beneficial prospects of publicity for humanist scholarship, for example, yield to crippling self-consciousness and regrettable indiscretion; the grand prospects for an international community of scholars prove to be unstable, collapsing from the divisive pressure of partisan forces; opportunities for the enrichment of reputation by way of praise and duly tempered with modesty are undermined by interpretive uncertainty; and the possibilities for insight by way of humour and irony prove unbearable in the midst of heated public controversy. Given the varied pressures facing Budé, terminating the correspondence with Erasmus proved to be the only viable option to avoid unwanted publicity, quell partisan clamour, sidestep official suspicions, and escape overt controversy, while still protecting his reputation, maintaining public support, and preserving his connections to the world of humanist scholarship. For his part, Erasmus was ready to continue their correspondence, though his weariness is equally evident in some of his darker comments of this period. And yet, exactly like Budé, he continues to contribute to the cause of the *studia humanitatis*, as that cause—and their energetic commitment to it—certainly did not expire with the collapse of this remarkable correspondence. What remains for posterity is a rich and intricate theatre of humanist letters, one that fully embodies both the prospects and the perils of their shared venture, and thus one that provides a helpful reminder of both the noble aspirations and the inherent fragility of humanist discourse.

Works Cited

Beaulieu, Benoît. "Utilité des lettres, selon Érasme." *Études littéraires* 4, no. 2 (August 1971): 163–74. https://doi.org/10.7202/500180ar.

Bietenholz, P. G. *Basle and France in the Sixteenth Century*: *The Basle Humanists and Printers in Their Contacts with Francophone Culture*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971. https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487571917.

Budé, Guillaume. *Guillaume Budé: Correspondance*. Vol. 1, *Les lettres Grecques*. Translated by Guy Lavoie. Sherbrooke, QC: Université de Sherbrooke, 1977.

Budé, Guillaume. *L'étude des lettres: Principes pour sa juste et bonne institution*. Translated by Marie-Madeleine de La Garanderie. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988.

Carrington, J. Laurel. "The Writer and His Style: Erasmus' Clash with Guillaume Budé." *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 10 (1990): 61–84.

Charlier, Yvonne. *Érasme et l'amitié: D'après sa correspondance*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1977.

Delaruelle, Louis. *Répertoire analytique et chronologique de la correspondance de Guillaume Budé*. Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1907. Reprint, New York: B. Franklin, 1962.

Delaruelle, Louis. "Une amitié d'humanistes. Étude sur les relations de Budé et d'Érasme d'après leur correspondance." *Musée Belge* 9 (1905): 321–52.

Eden, Kathy. *Friends Hold All Things in Common: Tradition, Intellectual Property, and the* Adages *of Erasmus*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Collected Works of Erasmus* [*CWE*]. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami opera omnia*. Edited by J. Leclerc. 10 vols. Leiden: P. van der Aa, 1703–6.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* [*ASD*]. Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing, 1969–.

Erasmus, Desiderius. *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* [*Allen*]. Edited by P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, and H. W. Garrod. 12 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906–58.

Fantazzi, Charles. "The Evolution of Erasmus' Epistolary Style." *Renaissance and Reformation* 25, no. 3 (1989): 263–88. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v25i3.12055.

Farge, James K. *Orthodoxy and Reform in Early Reformation France: The Faculty of Theology of Paris, 1500–1543*. Leiden: Brill, 1985. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004475069.

Farge, James K., ed. *Religion, Reformation, and Repression in the Reign of Francis I: Documents of the Parlement of Paris, 1515–1547*. Vol. 1, *Documents: 1515–1543*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015.

Gadoffre, Gilbert. *La révolution culturelle dans la France des Humanistes: Guillaume Budé et François Ier*. Geneva: Droz, 1997.

Gray, Hanna H. "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, no. 4 (October 1963): 497–514. https://doi.org/10.2307/2707980.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Gueudet, Guy. *L'Art de la lettre humaniste*. Edited by Francine Wild. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2004. https://doi.org/10.15122/isbn.978-2-37312-620-4.

Guillén, Claudio. "Notes toward the Study of the Renaissance Letter." In *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, edited by Barbara K. Lewalski, 70–110. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

Halkin, Léon-E. "Érasme et l'Europe." In *Érasme: Sa pensée et son comportement*, 82–101. London: Variorum Reprints, 1988.

Halkin, Léon-E. *Erasmus ex Erasmo: Érasme éditeur de sa correspondance*. Aubel: P. M. Gason, 1983.

Henderson, Judith Rice. "Erasmus on the Art of Letter Writing." In *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, edited by James J. Murphy, 331–55. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

Henderson, Judith Rice. "Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?" In *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, edited by Toon Van Houdt, Jan Papy, Gilbert Tournoy, and Constant Matheeussen, 17–38. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.

Henderson, Judith Rice. "On Reading the Rhetoric of the Renaissance Letter." In *Renaissance Rhetorik / Renaissance Rhetoric*, edited by Heinrich F. Plett, 143–62. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110857184.143.

Horace. *Satires; Epistles; The Art of Poetry*. Translated by H. Rushton Fairclough. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Jardine, Lisa. *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of a Charisma in Print*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

La Garanderie, Marie-Madeleine de. *Christianisme et lettres profanes: Essai sur l'Humanisme français (1515–1535) et sur la pensée de Guillaume Budé*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995.

La Garanderie, Marie-Madeleine de, ed. *La correspondance d'Érasme et de Guillaume Budé*. Paris: J. Vrin, 1967.

La Garanderie, Marie-Madeleine de. "Qui était Guillaume Budé?" *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 2 (June 1967): 192–211. https://doi.org/10.3406/bude.1967.2975.

Mann, Margaret. *Érasme et les débuts de la réforme française, 1517–1536*. Paris: H. Champion, 1934.

Martin, Terence J. *Truth and Irony: Philosophical Meditations on Erasmus*. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18z4hst.

McNeil, David O. *Guillaume Budé and Humanism in the Reign of Francis I*. Geneva: Droz, 1975.

Mesnard, Pierre. "Le commerce épistolaire comme expression sociale de l'individualisme humaniste." In *Individu et société à la Renaissance: Colloque international tenu en avril 1965*, 15–31. Brussels: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1967.

More, Thomas. *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Vol. 15, *In Defense of Humanism: Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk*. Edited by Daniel Kinney. New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1986.

Najemy, John M. *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513–1515*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691194615.

Phillips, Margaret Mann. "Erasmus and the Art of Writing." In *Scrinium Erasmianum*, edited by J. Coppens, 335–50. Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1969.

Rummel, Erika. *Erasmus and His Catholic Critics*. Vol. 2, *1523–1536*. Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1989.

Sanchi, Luigi-Alberto. *Les commentaires de la langue grecque de Guillaume Budé: L'œuvre, ses sources, sa préparation*. Geneva: Droz, 2006.

Thompson, Craig R. "Erasmus as Internationalist and Cosmopolitan." *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 46 (1955): 167–95. https://doi.org/10.14315/arg-1955-jg13.

Vaillancourt, Luc. *La lettre familière au XVI^e siècle: Rhétorique humaniste de l'épistolaire*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2003.

Wallace, Joseph. "The Merits of Being Obscure: Erasmus and Budé Debate the Style, Shape, and Audience of Humanist Scholarship." *Moreana* 46, no. 177–78 (2009): 199–229. https://doi.org/10.3366/more.2009.46.2-3.11.