

A Bibliophile's Dilemma: Cicero's Early Correspondence with Atticus

While Cicero and Atticus share many of the same tastes as dear friends, their correspondence reveals that the two have fundamentally different approaches to books: Cicero views books as providing intellectual sustenance, whereas Atticus largely correlates books with business. I shall examine the writing style and reasoning that Cicero employed to convey his desire for books in the early correspondence of *Letters to Atticus*. I shall also engage Hall's use of Redressive Politeness to shed light on how Cicero requests books from Atticus (Hall 2009). Friendship, not pride or social constructs, is the main force behind Cicero's creative approach to, and description of, books with Atticus.

Between Nov. 68 and Nov. 44 BCE, Cicero writes 426 letters to Atticus, in which he discusses books in various contexts. Scholars have examined the early letters on books (c. 67-60 BCE) to understand better the complex process of the book trade. But the letters also provide an opportunity to delve into Cicero's portrayal of his personal longing for books and his relationship with his chief book supplier, Atticus. Their diametrical views on books could have caused tension between the friends, but Cicero, through thematic phrases and jokes, conveys his complex wishes without offending Atticus or losing face. In one letter, Cicero, with a subtle touch of wit, reminds Atticus to obtain both the Greek and Latin books, insinuating that his philhellenic friend might leave behind the "lesser" Latin texts: *nam et Graecis iis libris quos suspicor et Latinis quos scio illum reliquisse mihi vehementer opus est* (I really want the Greek books, which I suspect he [L. Papirius Paetus] left, and even the Latin books, which I know he left)(*Att.* 1.20.7 [SB 20]). Employing a simple *et...et* construction allows Cicero to express his desire to have all the books in a clearly playful manner, since Atticus surely would not forget the Latin books.

Cicero balances his anxious feelings of bothering Atticus with jovial moods in order to create a light-hearted writing style in which to discuss his feelings. The lively style is not grandiose, nor is it meant to be, which becomes obvious when compared to the grammatically complex letters towards the end of the correspondence. Hall's description of Redressive Politeness outlines the basic protocol of Roman courtesy, but Cicero's language manipulates the system with sincerity due to his close relationship with Atticus.

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