



Introduction

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The present volume, issue 1.1 of *Humanist Studies & the Digital Age*, represents the fruition of an extended conversation. “Francesco Petrarca from Manuscript to Digital Culture” was a day-long symposium held in April of 2010.¹ Hosted by Massimo Lollini and the Romance Languages Department at the University of Oregon, the event was conceived of in conjunction with the graduate seminar “Humanism and Culture of the Book” co-taught by Massimo Lollini and Leah Middlebrook the spring of 2010 and was attended by an international, multigenerational cohort of scholars and readers. Participants engaged two widely held tenets regarding humanism: (1) as a practice, humanism is inextricably entwined, first with the technology of the word, and then with the book; and (2) while humanist praxis is a logical activity within modernity (whether “modernity” be construed in terms of the European Renaissance, the baroque modernity of the Americas, or twentieth-century industrial modernity), the concerns and the methods of humanism are eclipsed in the contemporary, technologized, and “posthuman” age.

The events of that Saturday in April exposed the latter assumption, certainly, as *giovenile errore*. The philological impulse that motivates humanism entails, to borrow words from Edward Said, “getting inside the process of language already going on in words and making it disclose what may be hidden or incomplete” (59). And what has the digital revolution fostered, if not a wholesale return to the “processes” of language, whether those processes be considered at the level of production and reception, of semantic flux and change, of grammar and syntax, or as they shape and are shaped by technologies from the alphabet to the book to computer code? Standing at the head of an exciting new series, this collection forwards the recognizably Petrarchan claim that the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf*) is a touchstone through which to consider the new horizons that are opened in literary studies by digital technology. A salient local example is the Oregon Petrarch Open Book, which provides access to an ever-expanding inventory of materials, from photographs of manuscripts and diplomatic editions to Renaissance and modern editions and commentaries to translations, in the interest of allowing scholars and more casual readers



Figure 1

alike to choose among what Massimo Lollini conceptualizes as “platforms of critical attention.”

The contributions are divided into three categories. The first, “Perspectives,” explores the principal themes of the symposium, including the reception of Petrarch across cultural, linguistic, and generic boundaries, and manuscript studies in the digital age. Taken together, the contributions in this section demonstrate the vibrancy of traditional humanist practice. The section is opened by a presentation of Giuseppe Savoca’s new, recently published edition of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and continues on to address some strikingly eternal concerns. For example: “what is an original?” In his lucid study of manuscripts and editions of the *Rvf* from the well-known *Vat. Lat.* 3195 through editions from the late 1500s, Wayne Storey makes a compelling case for the assertion that “original” and “*ipsa manu*” have been used “both with striking historical and critical significance and with disconcerting abandonment of philological principles.” These principles have undergone significant renewal in the twenty-first century. As Massimo Lollini observes, some of the most important philological advances in Petrarch studies, such as the recent facsimile of the *Vaticano Latino* 3195 edited by Gino Belloni, Furio Brugnolo, H. Wayne Storey, and Stefano Zamponi (2004) or Savoca’s edition of the *Canzoniere*, demonstrate that philology is as relevant to the digital world as it is to those mediated by parchment and by paper.

Humanism undergoes such transformations because it is not only shaped by tradition; it is also informed by a scholar-critic’s present. In the twentieth century, Petrarch studies often foregrounded Petrarch’s striking abilities to represent the fragmented, desiring self. This preoccupation exercised effects on how critics have viewed the history of Petrarchan *imitatio*. In his contribution to this collection, Ronald Martinez calls traditional views of sixteenth-century English Petrarchism into question when he points out that Chaucer both imitated Petrarch and served as a source for later English Petrarchans to a greater extent than is generally acknowledged. In a similar fashion, no small percentage of the contributions to this volume demonstrate a shift in consciousness as *format* assumes renewed prominence in the cultural imaginary. Adherents of the modern critical edition were for some time permitted and even encouraged to overlook the artifactual nature of the book. But Robert Durling reminds us that debates about how to present the poems of the *Canzoniere* to readers are as old as the text itself. He inquires: “What should a modern version of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf*) look like?” Petrarch himself employed almost exclusively a horizontal format; however, scribe Giovanni Malpighini used three format types, presumably at Petrarch’s request. Foregrounding a reader’s comprehension of the semantic and syntactic structures of the poems, Durling advocates a vertical format for sonnets and *canzoni*, with indentation used to mark formal and logical structures and an extra space instead of boldface to indicate internal rhymes. In her contribution to this volume, Alicia Colombí Monguió presents a characteristically rich and nuanced reading of the legacies of *Canzone* 323 to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish and Spanish American letters. Arguably, however, her final point—that the version of the poem which appears as part of the *comedia*, *Amor es más Laberinto*, represents *imitatio* as it is

influenced by the “difficult geometry” of the baroque *retablo*—demonstrates the influence of visual culture on twenty-first-century ways of approaching literary texts.

The question of approaches is central in the second section of this volume. In “Interventions,” current and former students of the Department of Romance Languages, along with University of Oregon professors, address the transmission and reception of Petrarch from a variety of perspectives. The entries by current students reflect their engagement with humanist practices in the digital age through their own work on the Oregon Petrarch Open Book under the guidance of Massimo Lollini. Nobuko Wingard exposes the challenges of digitizing parts of a Japanese translation of the *Canzoniere* and, in particular, the formatting of the Japanese text, which uses both ideographic and syllabic scripts. Drawing from another major work available in digital, searchable form on line, Diderot and D’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, Ana Maria M’Enesti investigates how certain eighteenth-century French *philosophes* and intellectuals express ambivalent attitudes towards Petrarchan poetics and, in a reflection of nationalist concerns, tend to situate Petrarch within the French lyrical tradition. Luis Gonzalo Portugal considers the role of literary *imitatio* and creativity in Petrarch and the early modern period, drawing parallels between the breakdown of representation in the *Canzoniere* and in the baroque period.

Other essays in the “Interventions” section underscore the pervasive, if not ubiquitous, presence of Petrarch in European letters and philosophy and the creative adaptations of Petrarchan models. Warren Ginsberg deftly considers the translation of “S’amor non è” (*Rvf* 132) in Chaucer’s *Troilus*, revealing how Chaucer makes rich use of the various contradictions implicit and explicit in Petrarch’s poem. Nathalie Hester argues that Petrarch was an essential model for seventeenth-century Italian travel writers, from the *Familiars* as a paradigm for epistolary travel accounts to the figure of the wandering, exiled *letterato*. In analyzing examples of Petrarchan poetry written by women, in particular Sapphic poetry, Amanda Powell demonstrates how European women poets bring a parodic twist to Petrarchan commonplaces, especially the objectivization of women, creating poetry that speaks profoundly about the status of women. Enrico Vettore elucidates how Petrarch was a powerful model for Schopenhauer, who quotes him in significant parts of *The World as Will and Representation* and *Parerga and Paralipomena* which center on the topics of ethics and the art of living.

The volume’s final section, “Projects,” represents the work of an Italian research group at the University of Bologna, led by Giorgio Forni, on the reception of the sonnet “Solo e pensoso” (*Rvf* 35) in Italian literature from the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries.² As expressed by Gian Mario Anselmi, the director of the University of Bologna Center for Renaissance Studies, in his opening remarks at the symposium, “The exploration of some paths of Petrarch’s reception ... is a way to study from different points of view the exemplary cultural function of Petrarchism throughout the centuries.” Forni characterizes Petrarch’s reception in spatial terms, advocating the “mapping” of such reception by, for example, focusing on individual poems. Forni supports both “vertical” and “horizontal” mapping: that is, to study the reception of a single or a few components through time on the

one hand and examples from one chronological period on the other hand in order to better understand the phenomenon.

Carlo Varotti reveals how Machiavelli was a careful reader of Petrarch, not just the political, proto-national Petrarch, but the Petrarch negotiating the relationship between ideals and reality. In his analysis of fifteenth-century neo-Latin poetry in Italy, Andrea Severi makes the case for Petrarch's popularity among humanist poets, although they tended to appreciate the classical resonances in the *Canzoniere* rather than the plight of the desiring subject. Alessandra Mantovani gives an insightful comparison of *Rvf* 35 and Guido Gozzano's "Un'altra risorta." The *Canzoniere* provides the lyrical and thematic paradigms for Gozzano's representation of the skeptical lover, and Gozzano's version of the Petrarch sonnet underscores the conflicted relationship of modern Italian poets with the language of the Italian lyric tradition.



Figure 2: Performance of Marenzio's setting of "Solo e pensoso"

In a final note, the Petrarch Symposium was not just a conversation made of words and images, but also one of melodies. The day ended with a presentation and demonstration by Lori Kruckenberg and Aaron Cain of Petrarch transformed into music, with Marenzio's musical reading of Petrarch's "Solo e pensoso." The madrigal was performed by University of Oregon music students and provided lovely, sound evidence of Petrarch's reach beyond the realm of letters.³

As this collection demonstrates, Petrarch studies broaches questions that help focus humanist endeavors at the juncture of the digital age. What are the implications of translation, of transposition, of transcoding for literary studies, for the history of ideas, and for studies of cultural and aesthetic production and reception? Centering on Petrarch's legacy, the essays suggest multiple avenues of investigation for future volumes of *Humanist Studies & the Digital Age*.

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³ Performers included Aubrey Louise Bauer, Aaron Cain, Joy Anna Huether, Josh Koller, and Jeffrey Parola, under the direction of Lori Kruckenberg.

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