



#LauraSpeaks: Remediations of Pellegra Bongiovanni's "Risposte"

Elisa Briante, Marena Lear, and Gerardo Pisacane

Abstract: This paper examines the implications of digital remediation which translates and transforms an older text, endowing it with new life, in relation to the project #LauraSpeaks, a translation and remediation of Pellegra Bongiovanni's *Risposte di Madonna Laura alle rime di Messer Francesco Petrarca, in nome della medesima*. Divided into three different sections, it describes the steps involved in this project, from the discovery of the original text and the analysis of Bongiovanni's contribution within the realm of Petrarchism, moving to a discussion of the translation of her work from Italian to English and the creation of the "Twitterature" version of the text, then finally to an analysis of the text's transformation into the film medium. This paper also investigates the theoretical premises of digital remediation and the role that hypertext plays in multiplying opportunities for meaning-making and in enriching the act of reading and writing.

Introduction

Much recent Francesco Petrarca scholarship has focused attention on the idea that the powerful vernacular voice of Humanism was not a singular voice, but a plural one. He fashioned and refashioned himself and his work throughout the course of his life, and "the inner conflicts, the self-doubts, the subjection to love, the yearning for earthly glory, and the following penance and regret are as much carefully constructed postures in dialogue with a web of other texts and voices as they are reflections of the writer's inner, psychological conditions" (Ascoli & Falkeid 1). Petrarca deliberately positioned himself as the lynchpin in a network of voices from classical antiquity, from his contemporary milieu, and from the future readers he envisioned. This positioning contributed to the key role he played in the formation of the European lyric discourse, which was in large part shaped by his conception of the act of writing as creation of the self, and thus never fixed or complete. The continuous emphasis on the practice of writing that permeates the *Canzoniere*, and the idea that the individual consciousness created through the act of writing "cannot transcend the practice that makes them possible" (Lollini "Return" 71) parallels Petrarca's own obsessive revisions of this work. It is this quality of Petrarca's work that made him an inspiration for the Petrarchist style of writing that followed him, as well as an ideal subject for a digital project based on translation and remediation. This was the seed for the Oregon Petrarch Open Book (OPOB) project, a digital hypertext which "document[s] the multiple, potentially infinite lives of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*" (Lollini "Return" 72). The methodology behind the OPOB was the basis for our project, the translation and remediation(s) of Pellegra Bongiovanni's collection of poetry, *Risposte di Madonna Laura alle rime di Messer Francesco*

Petrarca, in nome della medesima. This project is both a creative and critical endeavor which highlights Bongiovanni's unique style and contribution to the tradition of Petrarchism by creating the first translation of the poems into English, and draws it into the digital sphere through two different remediations: Twitter poetry and a short video. Through the connection of this project to the OPOB, our work becomes an extension of the database of RVF scholarship and works based on the RVF, and thus another iteration of the 'afterlife' of this important and influential collection of poetry.

This paper then addresses the following questions: given the long tradition of Petrarchism, what is important about Pellegra Bongiovanni's particular contribution? And what does it mean to connect this work to a larger digital database of RVF scholarship? Following the hermeneutic mode of interpretation, the remediations linked together by a hypertext such as the OPOB allows for an understanding of the meaning of individual texts to be co-constitutive with other texts and with a specific historical context. In a kind of digital poetics of relation, each individual text retains its particularity and opacity, but is understood in its relation to other texts. In its position as one star in a constellation of Petrarca scholarship, Pellegra Bongiovanni's poetry does not become merely subsumed into the large body of work, rather it becomes one important node within a non-hierarchical network of connections which contributes something new to the whole, and in return is fed by those connections. By creating remediations of Bongiovanni's unique work, and connecting them to the OPOB, we allow her work to add a fresh perspective to Petrarca scholarship, opening a new dimension of interpretation of Petrarca's work that arises in the conversation between the two authors. Translating and transforming the poems into a hypertext format is also a remediation of a different kind of 'hypertext' that existed in Italian society at the time the poems were written, when it was common to share writings among authors, who would draw from and add to one another's work. In addition, given that the poetry itself is an "answering back," an interrogation of and reaction to Petrarca's poems about Laura in the voice of Laura herself, our remediations of the poems emphasize the dynamic and dialogic quality of Bongiovanni's work. The metanarrative of the video focuses on the act of writing as itself relational and dynamic; moreover, it brings into focus the collaborative nature of not just writing, but different forms of media (hypermediacy). Given the collaborative nature of this project – including that of the three participants but also the digital readership and rewriting made possible through hypertextualization – this work embodies Pierre Lévy's concept of a "collective intelligence" which is the symbiosis between personal learning and collective learning, a growing ecosystem of ideas.

1. Voicing Laura: Pellegra Bongiovanni's Challenge

Elisa Briante

1.1 Petrarca and Petrarchism in the Digital Era

Why is Petrarca so important? Why do we still talk about him in 2019, and why can we still identify ourselves in his poetry? It is not just for the quality of his literary production. Petrarca tried to create a relationship between his readers and himself through the experience of love, the most common and yet dehumanizing personal experience. The love tradition on which Petrarca relies talks about a kind of love, called *amor cortese* (courtly love), which tortures the poet with fire, arrows and chains, and which is never consummated or even reciprocated. As opposed to the love towards the women

described as angels by the poets of the *Dolce stil novo*, Petrarca's love for Laura is a more earthly love, grounded in images of nature, though in the end of the *Canzoniere* she is what makes a vision of God possible for Petrarca: "Menami al suo Signor. Allor m'inchino,/ Pregando humilmente che consenta/ Ch'?' stia a veder et l'uno et l'altro volto" (Petrarca, OPOB poem 362, *Incunabulum*). In Petrarca's lyric, the figure of Laura becomes both an incarnation of love and a representation of the poet's desire to reach God.

But who is Madonna Laura? For many years, she was considered just a fictional and allegorical character invented by Petrarca to justify his love towards *laurum*, the laurel, which represented poetic glory. Petrarca himself, in some epistolary exchanges with his friends, often defended the real existence of his beloved, but "few seemed to believe that Laura was ever *spirans*, alive" (Russo 500). Whether Laura was a real person or not was considered an important issue by the Petrarchists, as a key to fully investigate and understand Petrarca's intentions. So, from the second half of the XV century on, some intellectuals began to carry out research about her. Vellutello found out that she could have been a member of the De Sade family, and this hypothesis was supported in 1533 by the discovery -or maybe the creation- of her tomb inside the De Sade family sepulcher. According to a 1764 biography of Petrarca, written by a descendant of the De Sade family, Laura was identified as Laura de Noves, wife of Hugo De Sade, mother of 11 children, who died of disease in 1348. Obviously, the interest towards Laura cannot be separated from the will to dig up Petrarca's life, in order to better understand his poetry. Though it is uncertain whether or not Laura was indeed a real person, it is perhaps more interesting to consider how she functions symbolically in Petrarca's work, and how his characterization of her led him towards his unique style. Through the literary existence of Laura, Petrarca created an alter ego, which allowed him to write himself through an 'other' and explore two different kinds of alterities: the first one, as Petrarca becomes aware of his inability to appropriately reduce and describe Laura's figure through poetry, is the revelation of his ethical consciousness, inherited by Platonism and stoicism. Secondly, Laura's death allows him to probe notions of time and death in order to understand his earthly mortality. Petrarca's love for Laura is a mechanism through which Petrarca the writer is able to investigate what it means to be human. "Even before the invention of the printing press [...], Petrarca's philology and humanist style initiated a new form of knowledge, in which memorization and literal transcription are substituted for an endless process of intellectual research" (Lollini 75). Petrarca's research was carried on by several writers, who started imitating his style. This literary phenomenon is called "Petrarchism" and it began during Petrarca's lifetime and continued to grow over the next three centuries.

According to Berdan, imitations of Petrarch can be generally divided into two different categories: the form-based imitation or the content-based ones; Gigliucci even distinguishes between 13 different styles of Petrarchism that can sometimes be overlapped: Classicist, Pastoral, Solemn, Anti-solemn, Philosophical, Madrigalist, Experimental, Feminine and homophile, Nuptial (for the wife), Spiritual, Hybrid, Artificial and New-courtly. The literary productions which fit into these different categories would nowadays be considered, to various extents, as forms of plagiarism; indeed, until the Romantic period, imitation was considered both as a tribute to the original author, and a reliable and effective compositional method. As Jossa holds, the question of authorship and imitation from the XVI century up to Leopardi had completely different values, compared to the contemporary ones, since reading and writing were inter-dependent: "every reading experience led to writing, and every written

composition was partially a re-writing of previous readings” (Jossa 13). This process and the imitation practice of Petrarchism, even though it could sound far from contemporary standards of authorship, is extremely familiar for contemporary digital writers/readers, as the Internet is an almost-unlimited repository of words and different forms of literature. Especially on social media, people are expected not only to read those words, but also to go through a process of personalization and re-writing of what they found -by chance or by research- on the web. The result is a continuous and self-nourishing circle of readings and writings which allows a wide spreading of culture never seen before, but which also gives rise to problems linked to the idea of authorship.

Unfortunately, after the Romantic literary classification process, Petrarchists’ productions were dismissed as pure imitations of Petrarca and some of them, mostly those written by women, completely disappeared from the body of Italian literature. This is exactly what happened to Pellegra Bongiovanni’s work *Risposte a nome di Madonna Laura alle Rime di Messer Francesco Petrarca in vita della medesima*, as well as her other works.

Petrarchism is such a widespread and complex undertaking that only a digital project could do justice to it, as Petrarca influenced not only Italian literature, but other national literatures and linguistic traditions, as well as working across all kinds of media. A digital project can bring together words, images, audio and video; moreover, it is always open to contributions, modifications and implementations. The project we are describing is what one might call “a spin-off” of the OPOB hypertext: the digitalized *Canzoniere* speaks to another *canzoniere*, and the words of Petrarca finally get an answer coming directly in the voice of Laura, embodied by Pellegra. Pellegra Bongiovanni represents a special case: she is not the only female Petrarchist but, as far as we know, she was the only one who created a real dialogue between Petrarca and Laura. Despite the criticism that buried her work in the shadows of Italian literature both as a woman and a Petrarchist, her style, writing quality and innovative spirit deserve to be recognized.

1.2 Pellegra Bongiovanni: Life and Works

Pellegra Bongiovanni’s name is seldom mentioned and mostly in depreciative ways from the second half of the XIX century. The only exception we found so far is a textbook for a girls’ school published in Palermo in 1873, in which Bongiovanni was defined as “an expert in painting, music and poetry [...] wise and full of virtues” (Pedone Lauriel qtd. in Spallicci 105). The entry about Pellegra in the *Treccani Encyclopedia*, one of the most important encyclopedias in the Italian language, defines her work as “an irrelevant proof of Petrarca’s legacy in the XVIII century” (Marziano). This is even more surprising when we compare this definition to her popularity during her life and up to fifty years after her death.

Pellegra Bongiovanni was born in Palermo at the beginning of the XVIII century; her father was a painter and he was the first who recognized her intelligence, supporting her education. Pellegra was able to read Latin, Greek and was skilled in poetry, music and painting. In 1742 she married the lawyer Jacopo Rossetti and they moved to Rome, where they had a daughter, Marianna, who also became a poetess. Pellegra was a recognized member of the “Accademia dei Riaccesi” of Palermo and of “Accademia degli Arcadi” of Rome under the pseudonym of Ersilia Gortinia. Her importance within the Literary Academia is proven by her epistolary exchange with Casimiro Drago, who asked for her opinion about his translation of Virgilio’s *Ecloghe pastorali*, and mainly by the fact that she was one of

the few women among the Arcadians who performed her poems for the celebrations of the miraculous healing of John V, king of Portugal, and of the coronation of Joseph II as king of Romans. Her name is also mentioned in several marriage celebration records and she composed two musical plays, *Aminta* and *Aristodemo*, which went missing, and an oratorio in four voices, *La Madre della Patria Santa Rosalia*, with music by Michele Maurici.

1.3 “Riposte di Madonna Laura”

In 1762, the Roman publisher Frazesi e Paperi, which specialized in erudite and ecclesiastic books, published Pellegra’s most famous work, *Risposte di Madonna Laura alle rime di Messer Francesco Petrarca, in nome della medesima*, with the authorization of both the Catholic Church and the Arcadia. The book opens with an introduction divided in two parts, a dedication to the Tuscan Cardinal Neri Corsini and a warning: Pellegra recapitulates similar, previous works and presents her own, claiming that whatever the readers find to be “weak, it is attributable to the stupidity of my [her] genre; and if they will find something praiseworthy, it is due to the strength of imitation” (Bongiovanni, qtd. in Crivelli & Fedi 15). In this clear example of *captatio benevolentiae*, she tries to evoke some sympathy in her readers but, while Petrarca constantly does it in his poems, Pellegra restrains it to her introduction, since he is the only direct addressee of her poetry. According to the spirit of her time, in which the epistolary novel was the main style⁶, she turns the *Canzoniere* into a dialogue between Petrarch and his muse, finally not silent anymore.

Pellegra was not the first author who tried to give voice to Laura, however: Hyeronimo Maripietro in 1536 and Stephano Colonna in 1552, both mentioned in the *Risposte*’s introduction, had already voiced Laura, but as a spirit that tries to purify Petrarch’s desire and bring him closer to God. In the mid XVI century, by contrast, Camillo Scroffa parodied Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* in his *Cantici di Fidenzio*, portraying Laura as a man. The *Risposte* are not just love poems, nor are they parodies or moral corrections of Petrarca’s *Canzoniere*. Pellegra is the only author who provided Laura with a plausible, corporeal, female voice, fulfilling a literary space left empty by previous authors and by Petrarca himself. Pellegra writes 235 poems, whereas there are 366 poems in the *Canzoniere*. She only answers those poems directly addressed to Laura while she was alive, since “the spirits detached from the bodies are not able to feel those emotions that are able to trouble them while they are still enclosed in flesh” (Bongiovanni 15). The muse becomes a writer, the object of love becomes a reasoning subject: the poetess, as a married woman herself, shows the struggle of a married woman seduced by the long courtship of a single poet who then consciously surrenders to this forbidden and bitter love. As Fedi and Crivelli point out in their introduction to the most recent edition of the *Risposte*, the dialogue between Laura/Pellegra and Petrarca assumes the shape of a “bourgeois” love story (Crivelli-Fedi, “Introduzione” 26), with everyday situations, in which Laura needs to hide her love in order to respect her social role, but she also suffers because Petrarca seems unable to understand the signs she keeps sending to him, giving us a portrait of their perpetual miscommunication. Laura/Pellegra is not intimidated by Petrarca’s love, but refuses physical passion for its own sake, instead considering it as the first step towards real love.

Even if Pellegra followed both the Arcadia rules, which established a writing style recalling XVI century works, and Petrarca’s style, her modernity and her linguistic background show up in some vocabulary choices of Spanish-derived words or structure (i.e. “unqua” from “nunca”, never; “penso

in” from “pienso en”, I think about...; endings of the first person singular of the Italian subjunctive following the Spanish scheme) and the loss of Latin, archaic forms (i.e. H drop, “Huom” – Petrarch/ “Uom” – Pellegra; assimilations i.e. ct > tt.).

In the introduction, Pellegra claims that she only began imitating Petrarch as a stylistic exercise: she kept the last word of every line in each poem, maintaining the same rhymes, but played with the verses through metaphors and processes of trans-codification and reordering, showing extraordinary writing skills and language control, but also wit and irony. She wanted to publish Petrarca’s poems (in Italics, on odd pages) alongside her own, not with the arrogance of putting herself at the same level as Petrarca the author, but with the will to show a direct and equal interaction between the two lovers Petrarca and Laura.

The decline of Bongiovanni’s fame started in 1832, when Antonio Lombardi continued Tiraboschi’s *Storia letteraria* (*Literary history*) erasing the equality provided by the dialogue structure and defined the *Risposte* as “an affected female variation of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*”. In 1859, Scinà claimed that her work was “full of effort but empty of value”, just a mixture of “miserable dullness which would have defused Petrarch’s love” and up to 1991, in a publication for the third centennial of the Arcadia, Bongiovanni’s poems were still considered “almost ridiculous” (Graziosi). It was only in 2014, thanks to Tatiana Crivelli, professor of Italian Literature for the University of Zurich and Roberto Fedi, professor of Italian Literature for the University of Perugia, that Pellegra’s work was finally restored to its original dialogic form and value. Their critical edition includes an Introduction that finally recognizes the value of Pellegra’s poetry, and the text republished in Milan in 1763 by Antonio Palazzi, discovered by Prof. Fedi at the Newberry Library of Chicago, while he was carrying out other research (Fedi, Interview).

1.4 The Project #LauraSpeaks

The aim of our project is to remediate, through different media and languages, the *Risposte di Madonna Laura*, in order to make it known and accessible to a broader, international public. We divided the workload in our team according to our background and expertise, also scheduling weekly meetings to discuss and peer-evaluate our individual work.

The *Risposte* had already undergone a first remediation process even before we started our project, because it moved from printed paper to digital images, and so we did not use printed books but two scanned copies of the *Risposte*, as published by Crivelli and Fedi in their critical version and Palazzi’s version. We chose to type the poems into a simple Word document, turning the digital images into digital text, in order to work more easily and to be able to analyze the internal coherence of our translations at the end.

We selected 24 of Bongiovanni’s sonnets and translated them into English. We developed our project restoring the dialogic, original form of the *Risposte*: using the pre-existing resources of the Oregon Petrarch Open Book, 7 we put together Petrarch’s original poems digitized from the critical versions of Savoca and Contini, Petrarca’s poem translations and tweets together with Laura/Pellegra’s voice. From the comparison between Petrarca’s critical editions included in the OPOB, Pellegra’s original words and Pellegra’s periphrases we drafted a basic prose translation and then turned it into a poetic translation. After deep analysis and translation, we condensed the poems’ meanings into tweets following the methodology elaborated by the OPOB (Lollini-Rosenberg),

creating a Twitter dialogue between the pre-existing Petrarch tweets and the new ones from Pellegra/Laura. This dialogue shaped the underlying structure of our final remediation: a short movie that will be published on YouTube. Our hope is that this project would only be the first step towards a full translation of Pellegra's *Risposte* and towards restoring her well-deserved but long-forgotten literary legacy.

2. A Living Text: Pellegra Bongiovanni's "*Risposte*" and Theories of Remediation

Marena Lear

2.1 Translation as Transformation

Unease over the "adequacy" of translations has dominated the field of literary studies almost since the practice began. Many have written extensively about what makes a good or a bad translation, and examined the ethics of translation within the global system of exchange. These are issues that do require close examination, as translations of a work can have profound impacts on the way the original is received and understood. In undertaking the translation of thirty of Bongiovanni's poems, we have attempted to, as Walter Benjamin put it, create the latest "unfolding" of the life of the source text. By "unfolding" a new iteration of the text, our goal was not to close its meaning, but rather open a work that was overlooked for centuries to a new readership, highlighting its place on the periphery of Italian literature. In the spirit of poststructuralist translation theory, which "calls attention to the exclusions and hierarchies that are masked by the realist illusion of transparent language, the fluent translating that seems untranslated" (Venuti 329), our translations of Bongiovanni in a certain sense intentionally highlight the *impossibility* of transparent translation – the "failure" of equivalence becomes the disjunction that seeds new possibilities of reading and interpretation. The goal was to destabilize both languages in order to deconstruct accepted or familiar understandings and establish new relations. Given that language itself is a living symbolic system that is constantly transforming and evolving, this destabilization, first through translation into English and then remediation into Tweets, is not such a radical step, especially considering the long tradition of compiling, rewriting, and imitating texts in European literary history.

Our Twitter versions of the poems are not only condensed forms of the translations, but creative remediations that within the hypertext, take on a living quality that the reader can choose to engage with alongside other Petrarca poems, musical and artistic renderings, poetic re-writings, and translations. Bongiovanni's work is an important part of the Petrarchism tradition, and its inclusion into the OPOB highlights its essential relationship to the RVF and places it on a level equal to other Petrarchists to whom history has been kinder. At the same time, "this apparatus of metatexts that constitute the corpus of the OPOB hypertext around Petrarch's RVF allows us to trace in a new, more accurate and comprehensive fashion its reception over the centuries as a collection of poems that maintain their individuality and autonomy while at the same time entering in multilateral relationships both within Petrarch's forms of the *Canzoniere* and in the broader and multifaceted contexts represented by what we call Petrarchism." (Lollini "Return" 76) Thus, the inclusion of the *Risposte* within this hypertext in turn enriches the readings of the RVF itself. In creating the English translation of the *Risposte*, and recreating it in and through digital mediums, our goal was to give

Laura/Bongiovanni's voice a strong echo throughout the vast realm of Petrarchan scholarship, and to bring this dialogue between Laura and Petrarca into the 21st century English-language digital conversation.

2.2 A Digital Poetics

The process of translation of this work was multi-layered. First, a native Italian speaker (Elisa Briante) read the original poem and then created a literal translation into English. Secondly, looking at both the original and the first translation draft, I created a second draft in English, with the intention to make the literal translation into a poem that conveys as much of the content of the original as possible while paying attention to the form. Next, our team (consisting of two native Italian speakers, Briante and Gerardo Pisacane, and myself, a native English and Spanish speaker) revised the second draft together and evaluated the quality of the second translation. One challenge of course was my limited knowledge of Italian, but I found that in practice this was not as much of a barrier as it first appeared to be. The collaborative nature of this translation work resulted in a capacity to shift away from my habitual thinking in English and examine that familiar language anew, from a distance. Not only was I engaging with a language that was foreign to me, I was attempting to make the translation accommodate three individual interpretations of the source text, and because of these factors I was consistently obliged to expand and shift the borders of my target language, and question my own interpretation of the text. Another significant task was transposing the poetic form; the Italian lines balance a lilting rhythm with a strict rhyme scheme. Despite Roman Jakobson's assertion that "poetry by definition is untranslatable" (143), I have attempted it nonetheless, and I chose not to prioritize rhyme by attempting to force the poems into a rhyme scheme and iambic meter. Instead, I maintained the content of each line, kept the sonnet sequence of an octave followed by a sestet, and embraced end rhymes and internal rhymes when they seemed to occur naturally. At certain moments it was fitting to emphasize alliteration or assonance, such as in sonnet number eleven, where the repetition of the soft "f" and "s" serves to sound out the frustrated, persistent sighs of Francesco the lover:

But the soul can only be free when the body has failed.
Your gazes, sighs, and fickle face
made the force of your flames all too clear to my soul;
thus it was fear that made me veil my breast and face...

As Lawrence Venuti asserts in *The Translator's Invisibility*, "both foreign text and translation are derivative: both consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials that neither the foreign writer nor the translator originates, and that destabilize the work of signification, inevitably exceeding and possibly conflicting with their intentions" (18). I take this as my point of departure when considering my role as translator: there exists no such thing as a 'fixed,' authentic, definitive text that is then distorted by translation. Rather, every text's 'meaning' is contingent upon its specific linguistic and historical context. Friedrich Schleiermacher argues that the hermeneutic mode of interpretation brings the text into dialogue with other texts, and this comparative approach does not deny the uniqueness of an individual text, rather it acknowledges its distinctive attributes as relational rather than ontological. When I work on the translation of Pellegrina Bongiovanni's text, I do so with the awareness that I am reconstituting this text in accordance with values, beliefs and representations that preexist

in 21st century English, and therefore I am not under any illusion that I am translating with perfect semantic equivalence – on the contrary, my attempt has been to emphasize the *difference* of the Italian text without completely domesticating it, or making it perfectly digestible for a modern English-speaking readership. This is the method Venuti refers to as “foreignization”. It is for this reason that the poems, although in Italian they follow a strict rhyme scheme, and thus maintain a more natural flow, in English they have not been forced into a rhyme scheme. I also chose to maintain the delayed-subject organization of many phrases, rather than moving the subject closer to the beginning of the sentence as is more common in English. One example of this is in sonnet number 67:

*Pigmalione invidiar non dei,
Ch'ora in sasso, ora in donna, e assai più volte
Mi trasformo di quel, che non vorrei.*

Do not envy Pygmalion,
because into stone, into woman, and into many other forms,
I am transformed against my will.

Here, the delayed subject is the *I*, and the delay in finding the *I* within the phrase mirrors the main idea of the poem, which is that the speaker, Laura, is not able to find herself within the many transformations and metamorphoses to which the poet Petrarca has subjected her. For him she lives, quite literally, in his imagination, and therefore the real Laura always eludes him as he attempts to find her in everything but her flesh-and-blood body. Throughout the poems, Laura insists on her autonomy, drawing attention to every moment in which it is denied her in Petrarca's poems. At the same time, she conveys a deep understanding of the lover's (or writer's) condition as reliant upon the expression of that love for its continued existence. Bongiovanni, like Petrarca, was cognizant that writing is the only tool through which language can define the borders of the radically singular self, but this consciousness that is developed in writing does not transcend writing itself, thus it is of necessity a continuous process. As Massimo Lollini argues, “writing for Petrarch is not simply the neutral technology devoted to registering his emotions and the idols of his desire. It also constitutes the fundamental tool to appreciate the borders of human and individual consciousness and the limits of representation of the self and the other that he does not conceive in ontological terms but as a performative gesture” (“Return” 71). This is strikingly similar to the way in which today, our continuous engagement with digital text, via social media, blogs, vlogs, etc., seems to be the primary way we perform our selfhood. We firmly delineate the borders of our online selves through our carefully curated profiles, yet we know those selves to be dependent on how they are received, read, shared, and rewritten. This is essentially the premise behind remediation. According to Bolter and Grusin, remediation did not begin with the appearance of digital media, rather it has been an ongoing process throughout the last several hundred years of Western visual representation. Remediation is “the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another”; it is “the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (59).

2.3 Twitterature and the Digital Remediation of Bongiovanni

In 21st century digital culture, text has reached another stage in its evolution. It is no longer bound to just one form, attached to just one author (but not for the first time in human history). It can be the image of a meme, shared by thousands around the internet, acquiring new meaning in each context; or it can be a vlog which consists of someone reciting Beowulf in the original Old English. The form and material of the text contributes to its meaning, and therefore every change in the text's material body produces new meaning. This re-mediation is also a form of translation: text that originated in one form is translated into another form, thereby creating a new context in which the reader can forge a relationship with it, and provide it with a unique meaning. This was our foundation for the final step of our translation: rewriting Bongiovanni's poems as 180-character Tweets, released as responses to Petrarca Tweets already created by the Oregon Petrarch Open Book project. This is the progenitor of our translation project. Initiated at the University of Oregon by Lollini, it is a hypertext and digital tool created for the purpose of facilitating new ways of studying and teaching Petrarch's *Canzoniere* "in their making, evolution, and afterlife in translations, rewritings, and intersemiotic transpositions" (Lollini "Return" 72). The website contains many different methods for reading this text – critical editions, manuscripts, incunabula, and many different rewritings including a Twitter version – one Tweet for each of the 366 sonnets and songs. The OPOB's point of departure is the idea that the *Canzoniere*, from its inception, was always a work-in-progress, a living project, a text that was never stable at any point in its life. Petrarch continued to revise and edit his masterwork up until his death. Therefore, that others continue to rewrite and revise this text is not a destructive process, but a creative one that honors the original author's artistic and methodological approach; this is true as much for the Petrarchan women poets of the 17th and 18th centuries, as for contemporary reading and writing that engages with this form.

Cyberspace is not merely the vessel through which the text is transmitted to the reader, but it is an active medium in the text's creation. In creating a "Twitterature" version of Bongiovanni's work, our goal was twofold: first, to make it a 'living text' in the 21st century sense of the phrase – that is, interactive, able to appeal to a wider audience than the printed version would be likely to have, and second, to engage with hypertext. "The digital environment provided by Web browsers and hypertext facilitates a multimodal and discontinuous kind of reading" (Lollini "Circles" 10). Thus, whereas linear patterns of thought associated with print impose narrowness and decontextualization in our reading and writing, hypertext destroys the physical isolation of texts, thereby embodying the Derridean idea of the borderless text (152-153), enabling nonlinear practices. To place the text in a hypertext environment such as the OPOB and then disseminating it through Twitter is to lift the borders from the text and allow a nonlinear reading of the poems that even allows the reader to become a kind of co-author; every comment and retweet is another transposition.

In translating and remediating Pellegra Bongiovanni's work, our intention is to make visible for the first time in English her unique way of engaging the Petrarchan poetic tradition, as well as to empower her female voice to make what has been traditionally a monologic meditation on love, into a dialogue between lovers/writers. We also aim to bring her voice closer to a modern audience by rewriting it for an interactive digital platform, which as we have seen is just the most recent step in the ongoing, living project that is Petrarchan literature.

3. *Francesco, You've Got Mail* – the Movie. Literary Criticism Through Cinema.

Gerardo Pisacane

In this section of our critical paper, we investigate the pros and cons of the third cinematic remediation of our project, *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, intending to answer the following questions. First, what does making a short film on Pellegra Bongiovanni's responses to Petrarca's poems entail? Namely, what does our short movie neglect to narrate in comparison with the original sonnets and highlight instead? Second, and more importantly, how does our cinematic remediation embody the changes that the digital era has been producing on our way to approach and study literary works? In order to dig into the details of *Francesco, You've Got Mail* and answer the questions raised, I believe that a broader discussion on cinema as a medium is necessary to better understand the core of our project. I propose an analysis that takes into account both the effects on social consciousness and changes in human perception that are introduced by cinema. Whereas the study on the effects of cinema builds on Marshall McLuhan's maxim that "the medium is the message" – and it sheds light on the impacts that the seventh art brings about apart from its content, – the analyses of the changes of cinema is based on the concept of remediation. In *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, the remediation is twofold, and it affects both the literary work by Petrarca and Bongiovanni, and the medium. On the one hand, the remediation of the literary work embodies the cinematic transposition of the Twitter dialogue that we produced earlier based on the responses to Petrarca's sonnets by Bongiovanni. On the other hand, the remediation concerning the medium represents what Bolter and Grusin define as "the way in which one medium is seen by our culture as reforming or improving upon another" (59). Here, the improvement does not only point to the cultural and technical legacy that cinema inherited from previous media such as painting and photography but also the digital changes that films have been going through. As a matter of fact, our short movie represents a digital product which further complicates the discourse on remediation.

3.1 Remediating Our Body with Cinema

As McLuhan points out in his *Understanding Media*, each medium is capable of affecting both cultural practices and social behaviors of a community. The introduction of the railway, for example, revolutionized not only transportation but also cities' morphology, facilitating urbanization and development. As a consequence, even the social interactions among individuals changed as people started to move and gather more dynamically. Taking into account the effects of media, one could ask how cinema as a medium has changed people and society? McLuhan already provides us with valuable insight to illustrate the effects of cinema on our lives, theorizing the idea of the medium as an extension of our body. "As an extension and expeditor of the sense life, any medium at once affects the entire field of the senses" (55). In the case of movies, close up and extreme close-up confirm McLuhan's theory. Both a close-up and an extreme close up show a subject in detail and from close range. For instance, through an extreme close up of an eye, the viewers can distinctly discern the eye's iris in a way they would not be able to do only with the help of human sight. Functioning as a body extension, the medium of cinema, therefore, enhances viewers' sight.

In a broader sense, the body's extension argued by McLuhan also has to do with the collective consciousness of a society. McLuhan highlights that back in the golden age of movie stars, actors and

actresses from Hollywood films served as trendsetters and influencers in the world of beauty, fashion, and home design. As a consequence, commercials and ads would resemble well-known movie scenes in order to be performative and urge consumers to buy the advertised products. French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin offers perceptive insights on the effects of cinema on the collective consciousness. In his in *L'Esprit du Temps* which aims to examine mass culture and its outcomes on society, Morin argues that Hollywood cinema has spread all over the world the paradigm of Americanness and its values, such as middle-class lifestyle, happy endings, leisure, youth, and hypermasculinity (124). As soon as Hollywood movies became popular, those values started to take root in Western society, shaping our way of thinking as well as our consumption habits. Following Morin's idea of social imaginary affected by cinema, we claim that the title of our project *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, for example, brings automatically to mind the concept of online dating since it is a reference to the rather popular movie *You've Got Mail*.¹ The cinematic quote serves precisely to engage the viewers, exploiting a relatively famous hint.

Going back to the enhancement of the human body through media, cinema strengthens and expands the senses of vision and hearing also because it enables viewers to go back and forth within a story and to be in two places at the same time. The possibilities of traveling both through time and space are due to the practice of editing. The editing consists of assembling separate cinematic sequences that happen in different moments and spaces. By doing so, the editing not only takes to extremes the fundamental distinction between story and plot of a film, but it also displays the cinema's faculty to expand human senses. Whereas the story represents both events and actions of a film, the plot pertains to how the movie narrates the facts. The technique of flashbacks and cross-cutting are good examples of how editing works to fulfill an engaging plot. If a flashback unveils previous events of a narrative, thus enabling viewers to travel through time, the cross-cutting alternates on the screen two different actions that occur in two different locations, allowing spectators to go across places. Being able to cross more than one space and time in the movie's narrative because of the editing proves that during a film screening, viewers oversee and overhear the narrated events and hence confirm the general idea of the human senses' enhancement through media. That augmentation of senses is even more effective in *Francesco, You've Got Mail* since the plot interweaves words and stories from different centuries. It does so also because the encounters between digital and cinema brings the body extension that McLuhan connects to media to an even more spectacular improvement with a cognitive dimension. For instance, consider how sharply viewers can notice the details of a landscape thanks to high resolution images. That is why in the next paragraph, I take into account George Landow's reflections on digital cinema explaining how they worked as a remarkably hermeneutical and technical tool to construct our short movie.

3.2 Immediacy of *Francesco, You've Got Mail*

In his *Hypertext 3.0*, George Landow claims that computer technology has profoundly transformed cinema both in the process of shooting and editing. As Landow explains, the digital remediation of the seventh art has generally improved the quality of the image and the visual experience. Leaving aside the important and broader debate on the consequences, not always "positive", of the digital

¹ *You've Got Mail* is a mainstream film from 1990s, whose plot pivots on a passionate and anonymous Internet romance between the two protagonists.

revolution on cinema, here, I want to argue that by improving images' standard, digitalization also contributed to reinforcing the sense of immediacy in cinema. I am using here the term immediacy as understood by Bolter and Grusin. Namely, it refers to the ability that each medium has to make its presence disappear while conveying a message in order to give its addressee the chance to perceive only the “unmediated” content. Bolter and Grusin also claim that *immediacy* is not only a prerogative of new and digital media: “A painting by the seventeenth-century artist Pieter Saenredam, a photograph by Edward Weston, and a computer system for virtual reality are different in many important ways, but they are all attempts to achieve *immediacy* by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation” (11). Following Bolter and Grusin's argument, high-quality digital images convey nowadays a sense of even more powerful *immediacy* because of their outstanding verisimilitude. In the logic of immediacy that digital cinema aims to pursue, it is furthermore possible to consider as valid tools computer-manipulated images, special effects, and graphics, which are all constitutive of the digital editing and contribute to making viewing experience extremely engaging. Also, when it comes to our film project, they provided us with insights that turned out critical to the construction of our cinematic remediation.

In *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, for instance, the digital editing was fundamental to put Francesco, Laura and Pellegra, the three main characters of an unrequited love story, in dialogue with one another. In the movie, Francesco and Laura ‘cybermeet’ on Tinder. Here, it is worthwhile to highlight that the use of the dating app Tinder functions, as Morin would argue, as a mass-cultural reference that the plot employs as a narrative element to catch viewers' attention. Given the rise of dating apps these days², in fact, it is reasonable to believe that our *Francesco, You've Got Mail* might have more chances to convey the remediation of the *Canzoniere* to millennials by merging the relation between Francesco and Laura with the widespread practice of online dating.

However, the use of Tinder works at another level of remediation as well. I want to claim that staging the meeting on Tinder embodies our attempt to recreate on screen the patterns of the first intertextual interaction that occurred between Petrarca and Bongiiovanni. In reality, although the two poets never met in person, they nonetheless did virtually on paper as the Sicilian writer studied and replied to the original poems of the *Canzoniere*. In a way, it can be argued that Bongiiovanni's remediation of Petrarca's poems is as virtual as to communicate on dating apps for two strangers. Both forms of information exchange are displayed, accessed, and collected by a medium. While in the case of Petrarca and Bongiiovanni that medium is the book, whether it is manuscript or printed, in our cinematic remediation it turns to be the smartphone. The smartphone's choice, as a medium, cannot be considered accidental since it is nothing but the quintessence of the digital landscape where the text has become so *fluid* that triggers a potentially infinite mode of remediation. As Landow claims, “digital text is always open, unborded, unfinished and unfinishable capable of infinite extension” (Landow, 196). That openness of the digital text depends on its replicability. On the internet, users can find texts that they will adapt to their needs and reshare with such simplicity never experienced this way by any medium before. That is precisely why there was no better medium than smartphone to express the replicability of the text already practiced, on paper, by Bongiiovanni.

² For example, “Love and dating after the Tinder revolution” at <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-42988025>.

In *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, the emphasis on virtuality becomes then the leitmotif of the entire plot. Right after the match on Tinder, Francesco starts messaging Laura with poetic loving words. Laura, however, does not requite Francesco's feelings, nor is she willing to meet him in person. Eventually, she confides in her best friend Pellegra, asking for help. As a result, in order to rescue Laura, Pellegra decides to catfish Francesco, pretending to be Laura and responding to Francesco's messages. In the end, Francesco will never meet in person either Laura or Pellegra, except for the last scene in which he bumps into the Sicilian poet. Although Pellegra knows who exactly Francesco is, Francesco ignores her since he never made her acquaintance. In the same way, the author of the *Canzoniere* never came across the Sicilian poet because of the centuries that separate them, yet Bongiiovanni knew Petrarca very well through his poems.

Despite the fact that the characters never meet in person, the plot still intertwines the three protagonists' storylines so that viewers watch live the give and take between Francesco and Pellegra (alias Laura). The plot's aim is, once again, to preserve the pattern of the intermedial exchange that involved the two original poets. As Briante discussed above, Bongiiovanni gives voice through her rewriting to the character of Laura, who never speaks within Petrarca's sonnets. She imitates Petrarca's poetic style, echoes his words, and thus corroborates in a way the afterlife of the *Canzoniere*. Looking at the paradigm of Bongiiovanni's remediation, the viewers can understand then why, for example, our cinematic Pellegra takes the floor and performs as Laura or why Francesco can never acknowledge her.

From a cinematic perspective, I want to point out that the digital remediation of cinema turned to be a fundamental factor in carrying out our intention to be as faithful as possible to the remediation of Pellegra, which is specifically the input of our entire project. Digital editing, special effects, and graphics, as far as simplistic they might appear in our short movie, helped to display the virtual encounter of the previous remediation. In detail, what puts in dialogue the characters of our story are both cross-cutting editing and on-screen text messages. The cross-cutting follows the paradigm of the continuity editing, which represents in cinema the coherent juxtaposition of shots so as to avoid misleading interruptions or confusing incongruences in both sequence and storytelling. In our short movie, the continuity editing connects, for example, the scenes that present the sender Francesco and the addressee Pellegra while they exchange messages. To understand the coherence that the continuity editing demands, for example, consider that where the shot A displays Francesco texting, the shot B needs to report on screen the recipient of his message. Perhaps, he is merely navigating on the Internet or swiping left on tinder. If so, those images will be following the frame A. In short, no matter what, in the continuity editing, each action visually has to correspond to its reaction. On the other hand, even the on-screen text messages which consist of part of the Twitter series produced in the second remediation intend to highlight the protagonists' correspondence. By working as cinematic dialogues staging the characters' verses, they show without filters the most intimate thoughts of two potential lovers.

Given the specificities of cross-cutting editing and on-screen text messages, it goes without saying that both make viewers feel as if they participated live in the give and take between Francesco and Pellegra. That feeling embodies precisely the *immediacy* discussed above when people engage in the message overlooking the medium and its negotiation. In *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, I want to claim that the message threads together two narratives, both Petrarca's sonnets and Bongiiovanni's responses,

presenting them as if they were happening at once. After all, it is not different from what Bongiovanni did when she replied to Petrarca's verses as if he could read her words. Moreover, it is not different from what we made Petrarca and Pellegra do on Twitter either, staging an online interaction between their 'fake' profiles.

Reasonably, the added value of our short movie is in the simultaneity of the message that it conveys. In other words, while for the Twitter thread, for instance, users must visit either Petrarca's profile or Pellegra's, and scroll Twitter's wall in order to participate in their exchange, our movie offers a selection of their words on one pixelated surface at the same time. Although our video might seem to address a more traditional, passive audience given the absence of hypermedia links, however, I want to point out that our movies also include in the credits a barcode that redirects the active viewers to the OPOB page and Petrarca and Pellegra's Twitter profiles simply by taking a picture with their phone. By doing so, the movie proves to have in mind as an ideal audience, the *wreader*. The term, coined by George Landow, suggests that readers nowadays consume data but yet improve it with the aim to share with the collective community. Following Landow's idea, therefore, our viewer will not only watch *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, but also potentially reposts, retweets, and thus remediates our content.

By calling to action our ideal audience through that barcode, in a way, our movie manifests another significant effect that the digital had on the seventh art and that Landow defines as hypertext cinema. He points to the hypertext narrative in the digital movies, showing how some films allow viewers even to lead the movie's story. They do so demanding the viewers' interaction so that the story can go on. By clicking either a window or another appeared on the screen at some point in the narration, the audience will determine the plot twists. Certainly, we are not asking viewers to lead our movie's narrative, and our unsophisticated expertise in digital techniques did not permit us to produce a real example of hypertext cinema. However, by inviting them to navigate the OPOB and the Twitter profiles after watching, we expect them to interact with a hypertext that exceeds the confines of our cinematic message and dialog with both the *Canzoniere* and Bongiovanni's remediation with the hope that they might continue a potentially unfinishable story.

3.3 Hypermediacy of *Francesco, You've Got Mail*

When analyzing the concept of remediation that inevitably determines the medium's nature, one must also bear in mind the principle of *hypermediacy* that Bolter and Grusin define as a medium that remediates another. It is precisely the combination of two or more media in one that represents *hypermediacy*. This process is not as recent as one might think. For instance, consider how incunabula included illustrations to supplement the written words back in the 1500's. What ensues from Bolter and Grusin's analyses is also that media must be considered as an entanglement of social, economic, aesthetic and cultural meanings that denote a community: "Media have the same claim to reality as more tangible cultural artifacts; photographs, films, and computer applications are as real as airplanes and buildings" (19). Taking as its starting point the legitimacy of media to be examined as cultural products, I want to put in dialogue our *Francesco, You've Got Mail* with the concept of *hypermediacy* in this last paragraph to finally highlight that the complexity behind our cinematic product makes it not less valuable than any close reading in the realm of literary criticism.

In general, *hypermediacy* echoes McLuhan's idea that any medium embeds other media's content as well. He conceptualizes that "[t]he content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the Telegraph" (23). In cinema, it is clear that such an idea suggests something more than a movie can be based on a literary work. Indeed, McLuhan indicates that each medium potentially borrows and develops other media's specificities. Following this principle of entanglement, one should consider cinema, for instance, as the encounter of oral literature, writing, photography, and digital among other things. First, cinema echoes oral literature considering that a movie works, in a way, as an ancient storyteller. However, storytelling and orality had already undergone another substantial remediation by radio in the 20th century. As a consequence, one could argue that cinema remediated radio as well since we might think of the voiceover that some movies adopt as the remediation of radio host's talks. Second, cinema incorporates writing. Indeed, any movie is, before being the practice of filming, a screenplay in which the written (and digitalized) word describes story, characters, and setting. Third, cinema is grounded in photography's techniques such as light and perspective, which, in turn, embodies the specificities of painting. Finally, I have already discussed above the encounter between the digital and cinema, and its outcomes, such as digital editing, special effects, and graphics on the one hand, and the development of hypertext narrative on the other. To sum up, therefore, cinema represents a marvelous example of what Bolter and Grusin call *hypermediacy*, a multilayered work of art, where each layer incorporates languages and techniques borrowed from another previous medium based on a principle of aggregation with no exclusion.

In our short movie, *hypermediacy* is easy to find in both medium and content. As regards medium, *hypermediacy* takes place in three forms. First, the on-screen messages between the characters recall the massive return of writing that is affecting our identity as both reader and writer to the point that we embody the figure of *wreader*. Second, the on-screen text messages which use the distinguishable interface of Tinder also highlight the presence of the phone. As mentioned before, the phone has become the embodiment of the digital and its infinite possibilities, including looking for a soulmate. Third, the use of soundtrack with the choice of specific songs whose lyrics function as lines between the characters, thus compensating the lack of dialogues. Each song conveys a particular meaning, which represents one semantic layer within the multifaceted message. Following the hypertext's principle of entanglement, the songs cannot be understood without the images and vice versa. However, in our video, *hypermediacy* goes even further and follows Jill Nelmes's definition of film. As Nelmes states:

Film is a linguistic as well as a visual medium [...] since movies have linguistic communication through the presence of dialogue or voiceover on the soundtrack, as well as the inclusion of printed text within the image (such as intertitles, shots of newspapers, books, letters). (80)

Some shots of *Francesco, You've Got Mail* display the presence of more than one medium. One sequence in particular emphasizes *hypermediacy* very well, staging together not one but five media on the screen: on the one hand, books and a blackboard which are both references to the writing, on the other, a phone, laptop, and television which represent the advent of digital media.

Finally, *hypermediacy* also concerns the content of our cinematic product. *Francesco, You've Got Mail*, its story and words derive from the collective criticism, circulation of ideas, and production of new meanings first carried on by the people of the OPOB project. Later on, the meanings produced

by previous readers/*writers* encountered our team's aim to negotiate their *Canzoniere's* remediation and Bongiovanni's. Our movie is the latest stage of very long remediation that pass through several media, such as vellum manuscript, paper, digital writing, cinema and new media, and several play of interpretations. All this work would have not been possible without the collective intelligence made possible by the creative use of the Internet. As a matter of fact, our movie is only the latest result of a new digital literary criticism that is based on virtual community's labor. Here, I am referring to the *writer* who is, as mentioned before, the ideal audience addressed by our cinematic remediation. The *writer* is the ideal player within what Pierre Levy defines as *cosmopedia*, namely, a cybernetic space that not only [...] "makes available to the collective intellect all of the pertinent knowledge available to it at a given moment, but it also serves as a site of collective discussion, negotiation, and development" (217). It is worthwhile noting that the way Levy conceives *cosmopedia* makes all of its users all potentially critical thinkers and of the internet the ideal place for critical analyses. This turning point into the reader's outline is crucial within the discourse of literary criticism anchored in the digital environment since it deterritorializes knowledge and facilitates a potentially infinite as well as democratic circulation of ideas and meanings without which our movie could have never come to life. Going back to the questions that I raised at the beginning of this section, I want to conclude emphasizing that our movie does not diminish neither Petrarca's sonnets nor Bongiovanni's responses. In the same way, Bongiovanni was able through her remediation to perpetuate the afterlife of the *Canzoniere* providing us with different readings of the text, I believe that *Francesco, You've Got Mail* is capable of enriching the virtual conversation that occurred between the two poets. The movie does so acknowledging her as a poet and displaying her words through a cinematic validation. Despite that some critics might consider despicable the televisual transposition we made of Bongiovanni's poems, I want to claim that *Francesco, You've Got Mail* must be merely understood as another reading of the literary work; a reading that we made from distant range, as the etymology of the word televisual itself suggests. Perhaps only by distancing oneself from the text can one glimpse different facets of it. Bongiovanni did so too, as she was able to portray a silent Laura to whom she decided to give voice. As Bongiovanni 'dared' to respond to the untouchable Petrarca, we 'dared' to give voice, through a cinematic product, to a forgotten female poet.

Project Conclusion

In one of her sonnets, Pellegrina Bongiovanni writes, "My admiration is so great in these immortal pages/ that if my recitation did not contain fault/I would amaze the world without art." We can say the same, for in our translations and remediations, we have attempted to portray our admiration for an artist whose work has not been sufficiently appreciated. The translation of her sonnets from Italian into English, and then the transformation of sonnets into Tweets, has restored the dialogue form of the work's original printed version, with the aim of highlighting her own rewriting of Petrarca and Laura "love story" that finally gives voice to the muse, and gives solid presence to the woman who for so long was only an objectified image with no agency. Bongiovanni not only presented us with a new characterization of Laura, she also remediated Petrarca by creating a retelling of the story. Although she followed Petrarca's style of writing, she also altered the tradition of Petrarchism itself by making it a dialogue between two writers/poets, not just between a man and a woman, thus making her Petrarca's equal. She claims her own authority as poet and as humanist independently of her

identity as a woman (and thus compelled to speak on behalf of Laura) and this sets her apart from other Petrarchists who only imitate his style. In this sense, Bongiovanni anticipated how remediation works in placing a previous text in a new context but also repurposing the text to create new meaning. “The goal of remediation is to refashion or rehabilitate other media. Furthermore, because all mediations are both real and mediations of the real, remediation can also be understood as a process of *reforming reality* as well” (Bolter & Grusin 56). Bongiovanni reformed the idea of being a female in the Petrarchan tradition – which refers to both refiguring the character of Laura, and to being a woman writing poems in the style of Petrarca.

In our project, we are following Bongiovanni’s example of refashioning the Petrarchan tradition by translating her remediation into both a digital language and audiovisual content, thereby engaging a digital readership. Within the larger field of literary criticism, texts cannot be understood as isolated from other texts, and interpretation of text is not a matter of uncovering a hidden ‘meaning’. Rather, just as hermeneutic interpretation compels us to understand texts in their relation to other texts and as historically located documents, the same can be said of remediation in the digital era: meaning is created in the relationship between reader and text, and in the relationship between text and other texts (broadened to include film, music, song lyrics, social media posts, tags, etc.). This is the theory behind hypertext. As Pierre Lévy states, “a conventional linear text, even digitized, can’t be read as a true hypertext, or database, or a system that will automatically create texts as a function of interactions fed by the reader” (Lévy 50). Thus, we as readers are also writers in the sense that we produce text in our interactions with hypertext. “We could consider the contemporary trend towards the hypertextualization of documents as a movement toward indistinctness, the blending of the functions of reading and writing...in the hypertext every act of reading is an act of writing” (Lévy 58). This idea, in a broader sense, makes clearer the connections between texts, and the entanglements between reader and writer, which defines that new space of knowledge that Levy names ‘cosmopedia’. In the cosmopedia, every information becomes potentially accessible to every participant in the collectivity, and each information becomes the result of both negotiation and developments. Our remediations, in conclusion, continue to honor the Petrarchan tradition, hopefully inspiring further reading and perhaps future remediations of both Bongiovanni and Petrarca, by bringing them into the 21st century and returning to a method of imitation as tribute, and reading as re-writing and re-creation.

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Appendix

Translation of Pellegra Bongiovanni's *Risposte di Madonna Laura alle rime di Messer Francesco Petrarca, in nome della medesima*

The following translation includes 23 sonnets (n°1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 9; 14; 28; 46; 58; 63; 66; 67; 73; 74; 79; 85; 96; 109; 195; 196; 198) and a madrigal (n°99). From n°46 to n°198, the poems present double numbering: the first number refers to Pellegra's poem, the second one refers to the exact number of Petrarca's poem of reference, as numbered in his RVF. The numbering follows the order of Fredi and Crivelli's critical edition of the *Risposte*. In the first edition of her *Risposte*, Pellegra published Petrarca's poems side by side with her poems using progressive numbering, while Fredi and Crivelli respected the original numbers of Petrarca's *Canzoniere*.

We decided to maintain the structure of the Italian sonnets, made by two quatrains and two tercets, and to create a system of rhymes and rhythm less traditional but more appealing to modern e-readers.

Petrarca's sonnets are not included in this appendix, but they can be read on the OPOB database. Also, we are currently digitizing the full text of the Pellegra's 1762 original edition of the *Risposte*. It will be available in the OPOB in 2020.

Responses in the Name of Madonna Laura to the Poems of Messer Francesco Petrarca

Translated by Elisa Briante, Marena Lear, and Gerardo Pisacane

1.

I hear the sound of scattered rhymes,
that from your vibrant heart you sent,
when, dazzled by love's tricks,
you made me appear what I am not:

And so I ponder:
Why blame me for your pain?
If I was the innocent cause of your love,
Why should I ask forgiveness?

For Heaven knows, and the whole world too:
it was only you who often raved;
it was not I, of myself I am not ashamed;

I ask for mercy, for I know what is the fruit of Lovers,
I know Love, and I see clearly:
he is not sweet, or only sweet in dreams.

2.

It was not, no matter what you think, Love's revenge
against your many wrongs;
and if he took his golden bow in hand
like a man preparing to fight for victory

he did not tame the virtue barricaded within,
which had until then been defending you,
and which made the mortal arrow
fall uselessly through your heart.

And even if he won this last assault,
Within you there remains such strength, and space –
you can still arm yourself against the victor.

Let him despair who cannot obtain virtue from Heaven,
and who, caught in the harsh torments of Love,
says: I could, but Love will not help me.

3.

The first time your cheek paled
when you fixed your eyes on mine, and on my soul
Love assaulted us both, but I protected myself –
he ensnared you but did not bind me.

I hastened to protect my heart,
remembering the day our mighty Maker
suffered Death, and our woes
and obstructions to happiness began.

So Love, finding neither unarmed,
did not open a passage to the heart
and did not await me at the gate;

but turned to you to give him justice –
you, who were in such a perilous state –
and to me Love never even showed his bow.

4.

Nature and Art have long toiled,
investing all their noble mastery,
to make, in this and in the other sphere,
Heaven's only soul on earth, the City of Mars,

faithful guardian of the holy scriptures,
through which the higher truth was revealed to the world:
in choosing it for Peter's post, Heaven willed it
to be a part of its immeasurable power.

God showed less mercy to Arezzo,
but it was raised to a glorious state
when He made it your birthplace;

thus Heaven and Nature, who have given it
such a sublime honor, now always give thanks,
for with you, their glory to the world was born.

5.

How can I believe that Love
has already ruled you so harshly,
that he, giving you no hope for freedom,
tightly binds you in his snare?

If your name has the sound of freedom,
and then escape follows? Facing his strength,
you can say to Love: with all honor,
I FRANKly Can ESCape your arrOws!

Unfurl, then, the battle flag;
and beneath it gather every virtue
for the lofty endeavor so becoming of you.

But if your cowardly heart disdains
to use its strength, never will the wreath
of Apollo crown your head.

6.

Stop, O my heart, the unjust and vain desire
to follow my soul, which turns and flees:
it is surrendering too far to Love's cure
to indulge my fiery passion.

When I send my soul the sweet sights of my eyes,
when pain speaks, oh! it does not hear me;
yet in running to it, you cannot turn,
mad heart! You should be reluctant.

What sour fruit is harvested
from a sweet Love! And yet I give myself to him,
seeing to what torture it leads me.

But who could ever reap something better from it?
Oh, for seeing another's despair deprives one of hope,
instead of giving comfort.

9.

Neither the Sun's warmth, nor the shadow's cold,
have extinguished in you
that sweet, errant desire for love
that releases your heart from impure desires,

which come from thoughts concealed inside.
But the soul can only be free when the body has failed.
Your gazes, sighs, and fickle face
made the force of your flames all too clear to my soul;

thus it was fear that made me veil my breast and face
and made me veil the willing gaze that gathers into itself
if the beauty is taken away from your fervent eyes.
Do not blame the veil –
it is not the Sun or the cold I seek protection from,
but your passion; it intimidates me and clouds my eyes.

14.

If the white turtle dove disdains its nest
when the winter season ends,
he leaves his little mate astounded,
crying, missing her companion,

she then moves her wings and to her partner's side
(for she wants to spend her whole life with him)
she clings, and they help each other fly;
thus their strength never tires;

Like her, I am stunned, and I follow my beautiful desire
if he goes away from me –
he, my Angel of eternal hope,

he is my beloved, and I know I am his –
I would never fly to Heaven with another,
for in him alone resides sweetness, and true virtue.

28.

At least you can bring your moist eyes
and slow steps to the solitary fields,
without your chest burning to keep the lips from their intention,
so that the air is not imprinted with the sound of sighs,

but on this crowded earth, where should I go
to save myself from the gaze of idle people?
For my wan eyes and lifeless face make clear
how much I am feigning, and I flush.

While caves, mountains, and beaches echo
with your scattered, bitter-tempered odes;
I laugh, and move none to pity.

Even the wild souls of plants,
sensing love, always honor it
but plebeians who experience it only mock.

46. (56.)

Strong desire destroys Reason so much
it leaves Man to his own devices:
and so from you, even memory flees,
since you forgot what I have promised you.

Is the flame for you that burns me lessened now
that I live with my soul so close to you?
And may the burning heart's roar not lessen
now that some ice has been set on it?

To make your beloved fall in love is the greatest good
that makes a happy love life:
to desire and hope for something else is illicit.

A less graceful thought never originates in the mind,
but in a heart emptied of honesty;
compliant with neither pity nor courtesy.

58. (69.)

Did your promptly followed advice release me, O Love?
Being faithful – what was it worth?
If my pity, if other false voices,
only trapped me, as prey in your fierce talon.

But this pain no longer bewilders me,
for you never cared for firmness
as the sea never cared for the foam that salts the waves,
or the whirlwind for the lily it tears from the field.

Yet I will take the highest alpine path,
and I will not leave the unstable waves,
until I stop the errant Pilgrim,

for I know well where he goes, and whence he comes,
he, who guides my destiny;
nothing is ever hidden from the eyes of Love.

63. (74.)

When I see you, when I think of you, oh how
I am all alive in you and dead in me,
life becomes uncertain, and I abandon
the heavy burden of my pain.

And now I reflect not on the face, nor the hair,
nor the sweet gaze, nor the hand,
but I ponder the divine beauty, and the sweet sound,
that forms the honored name inside my heart.

And beyond this earth, freed thoughts
turn to contemplate him from whence
one cannot go with mortal steps.

My admiration is so great in these immortal pages
that if my recitation did not contain fault
I would amaze the world without art.

66. (77.)

Even if he kept his thoughts, kept his gaze fixed,
invoking the counsel of intellect and art,
Apelle himself only one part could depict
of the beauty that has conquered my heart.

Only I, thanks to his grace, can yearn
to observe side to side the beauty of Paradise
and faintly outline on the page the graceful ideal
I saw within that eternal face.

It's one thing to see how the image shines in Heaven,
another to see it encircled by us
like the Sun by clouds, in a terrestrial veil;

But not even you, my soul, can portray him
for admiration freezes you
just thinking about his eyes.

67. (78.)

The concepts that Simon colored with said style
had humbler ambitions
for he knew that his fine art could never acquire
the inspiration of voice and intellect.

And even if he could have placed within my chest
that part, neither mortal nor base,
the resemblance would have been poor
and I would have been different from my true form.

I live in your soul and ponder it
and even if it is through my body that I speak, and listen,
my senses do not reach my spirit.

Do not envy Pygmalion,
because into stone, into woman, and into many other forms,
I am transformed against my will.

73. (84.)

If weeping can deaden you, o passionate heart,
then we will cry: but if pain sustains
the flames, crying is of just as much use
as your engendering of error.

At least, Love is vented through weeping,
but the cries surge from within me, reaching my eyes;
I, who am ever burning and bereft of hope
because as soon as hope is born, it dies:

so if we both have equal burdens,
without hope, without the sight of the beloved
why do we greedily keep hold of life?

Because cruel Love, who troubles and grieves us,
prevents our death; out of our uncommon pain,
Love, the ingrate, acquires life.

74. (85.)

O cold fear, why do you still come
After the night, to muddy my day,
Oh why do I always turn and turn my mind
to that thought which stabs my heart the most?

I seem to hear the fleeting hour tell me:
Your beloved, who is far from you, now goes
To another beauty adorned with superior grace
and so the one falls in love with the other

and after staying together in contemplation,
one stays, and so the other goes
leaving that heart there which I yearn for and love in vain.

O fierce desperation defeats me,
and if Love lives well, hope is dead,
because, more than life, I long for death.

79. (90.)

My desires were free, my thoughts were scattered
Love had not yet trapped me in his web,
he, whose fires burned inside many minds,
had for me scarce effect.

When within me a strange change took place
and dying, I felt I was reborn,
and that pleasure which I had never tasted
I drank in through my eyes, and, astonished, I was burned,

when you, who in appearance are much more than a mortal Man,
assaulted me, armed with words
for defeating beasts, not merely a human soul.

And you assail me with the sweetness of your brow,
the double suns that brand my heart,
which neither art, nor time, can heal.

85. (100.)

When the dawn approaches the Sun can be seen
turning from the first hour to survey the ninth;
In the time when the wind is quiet,
and the breeze caresses us more than it wounds;

When the night sits in highest Heaven,
and the soul reasons with ghosts,
when for the Occasion – to awaken the pain of every person –
evening rushes to its feet;

I am always troubled by that fatal love,
which brings to mind the manner, the place, the year,
when, how, and where the wounds came to be.

Oh sour memories that stick in my mind
and lacerate my heart,
which loves – betrayed again – those two dim lights.

96. (116.)

So alive is the pleasure, such is the sweetness
my thoughts draw from your virtue,
that I would contemplate forever
your inner angelic beauty.

And so accustomed is the soul to subsisting
on the sweetest qualities of your virtue,
its mind rapt, it despises
every other good, every other care.

Of circling round and round the divine ray,
thoughts never tire,
nor is Love sated, nor desire slowed.

But happier I will be if shadows and stones
do not deprive the eyes of the bright day,
and my gaze could still be part of the good.

99. (121.)

The woman who is mistress of herself is not a slave to Love,
and the man who cares not for a woman's love does not risk his own.
I know not for how long one can remain safe,
who has for a habergeon only a fragile skirt,
who wears as a helmet only a grass wreath;
Whosoever was sure of her virtue,
can tell of her defeat, and the wounds she maintains.
I do not want to expose myself to that ungodly arrow,
that stings me all the more when I struggle for revenge.

109. (132.)

I know Love is the cause of this delirium I feel:
I know it is for him that I prepare to live
like someone who slowly drinks a mortal poison,
and dies without suffering death's torment.

I do not lament because of him,
for torment is not worthy of him;
it is only I who transform his good into bad,
who freely consent to my worst.

I want, even if my will pains me,
I fear the peril of the afflicted boat,
and I avoid the port, even forgetting how to steer.

Even so, this weight, this burden of the spirit,
I will carry as long as I am able,
whether it be summer, spring, fall, or winter.

195. (223.)

Love kidnapped me from my dreams to his carriage,
so high that the ground seemed black to me;
and traversing the ether and the Moon,
he urged the runners to a faster pace.

Arriving in the highest skies, to the great lights I narrated
my ardor and my pains, one by one,
and with my feet at the threshold of Fortune,
I spoke my defense to her, who listened.

Moved to pity, "Let your pain be nothing,"
she answered; and sent Dawn's Messenger
to awaken my gracious Sun.

I emerge from sleep, and he who makes my heart rise,
he, who livens my eyes with his eyes,
Comes sweetly to serenade my soul.

196. (224.)

If in your presence I assume
a pleased aspect, civil only to you;
If my lights brighten with joy
to see you wander the labyrinth with me;

If, whenever you are near, I have painted
love on my pupils, fixed and intent on you;
If my cheeks, violated with blush,
display the affection with which the heart is tainted;

If at your parting what befalls me
is what always happens to the Sun-following night:

You are the Sun of delight, and I the night of grief;

If Love is close by in dreams and in waking,
so that I always burn and all is torment,
one shared cause has this ruin.

198. (226.)

I leave the roof, my home, without you,
alone I flee to the wood I frequent,
to press the footsteps I know by scent
printed on my heart by my dear intent.

My one delight has passed through here,
that cave echoed his Tuscan meter,
here by his bright eyes the dark was lightened,
this sweet grass, those flowers, made him a bed.

Compassionate Love meanwhile portrays
your figure to me, to keep partially at bay
that desire which keeps me in pain.

Poor me! So far I went! My happiness relies
on dreaming you in these lands,
my only joy is this delirium