BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature
Jacopo Sannazaro and the Uses of Pastoral

Authorizing Petrarch

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another interpretation of Petrarch’s poetry congenial with or opposed to circumambient ideologies.

In an effort to consider how commentators and imitative poets approached some of these matters, I examine in this book the process of Petrarch’s authorization in several representative texts. Chapter 2 will examine the canonization of the *Rime sparse* in its earliest printed editions from 1476 to 1582. Chapter 3 will examine the canonization of the *Rime sparse* by Petrarch’s most effective advocate, Pietro Bembo, who established Petrarch’s composite language as authoritative for Italian verse. Chapter 4 will explore how the aristocratic patina of this language activated not only the conflicting interests of social class but also conflicting representations of gender and social identity in later Petrarchian poetry. It will focus first on texts by Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara, who deployed Petrarch’s style to reinforce their aristocratic prerogatives while challenging codes of practice and belief inscribed in it. Then it will turn to sixteenth-century Lyon, where texts by Perrette du Guillet and Louise Labé register quite another set of concerns. Published under circumstances that reinforce local civic pride and a patriotic effort to outdo Italian achievement, they question rivalrous male codes and the possibility of a female intervention that would undo the logical consequences of these codes. Chapter 5 will focus on Spenser’s *Amoretti*, a sequence that celebrates the courtship and marriage of an English poet of middle-class origins who rose to the gentry without arms by virtue of his Cambridge education and service to the state. A sharing of qualities by the speaker’s mother, beloved, and queen—among them a name, a power to command, and an inscrutable capacity to give and withhold grace—masks a potential conflict between his modest beginnings and his exalted aspirations. Its exposure invites a critique of social, political, ecclesiastical, and artistic institutions that encourage and deter the speaker’s pursuit of his beloved. The rhetorical uncertainty of the Petrarchian style heightens this drama, and major commentaries on Petrarch’s poetry illuminate it.

As these commentaries project discordant ideologies about the meaning of Petrarch’s poetry, they encode genetic memory traces that animate Petrarchian imitations. They offer a treasure trove of information about and insights into early modern attitudes toward amatory relationships, gender roles, class differences, social consciousness, and national identification. If this book displays only some of their hidden riches, it will have served its purpose.

**Chapter Two**

Authorizing Commentaries

Authorizing Literacy and a Readership

Petrarch’s texts and the pioneer critical reactions to them straddle a fault line between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. To question either Petrarch’s rhetorical authority or the rhetorical authority of subsequent interpretations and imitations is to evoke a scandal of authority in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Conflicting interpretations of fundamentally unstable texts lay bare this scandal, and commentaries on Petrarch’s *Rime sparse* exemplify it in dramatic ways. Sixteenth-century poets exacerbate it when they rival one another to imitate Petrarchan models in different guises, drawing upon implications and applications that expose the master text in a new light. In the wake of the commentators, some poets aim to create new, deliberately unstable texts like Petrarch’s that lend themselves to extended understandings from several angles, palimpsestic texts whose meanings take on distinctive new shapes with each performance.

Neither medieval nor early modern readers recoiled from challenging textual authority, but the ways they challenged it differ. If a medieval reader or interpreter disagreed with prior readings of a canonical text, he or she would unapologetically substitute a new reading. The hermeneutic principle was additive rather than disputative; each new commentator simply juxtaposed his or her commentary against existing ones. Thus when Bernardus Sylvester (ca. 1136) finds Fulgentius’s commentary on the *Aeneid* sketchy or incomplete, he posits his own moral equiv-
criticism. An increased production of books and of commentaries on them makes available a bewildering variety of interpretations, all sanctioned with the authority of print.3 Expanding in geometrical progression, they invite further refutation, argumentation, and confirmation. Economic competition plays a role, too. In efforts to produce new and better or more attractive versions of familiar texts, editors print innovative commentaries, sometimes side by side with old ones, and so they may impel successive readers to take a critical stand, argue an approach, and generate yet more controversy.

Fifteenth- and sixteenth-century commentaries on Petrarch’s Rime sparse exemplify this mode of criticism and they exert a powerful effect upon creative imitations of Petrarch’s poetry. They reflect not just a particular use of sources nor even a general orientation toward them. They reflect a rhetoric—an early modern rhetoric—situated temporally in an age of poetic imitation when commentaries on Petrarch’s text assert their authority beyond the text. This authority deters serious readers from taking any single reading as definitive, but rather urges them to view each one as a stage in the progressive unfolding of many possible textual meanings. Diverse and sometimes contradictory interpretations of the Rime sparse propel its readership into a series of ongoing and unresolved encounters with the text. These commentaries instruct imitative poets how to understand and extend Petrarchian textuality, how to read into and out of it, how to construe it as a literary model.

Readers and writers define themselves by defining their differences from others, and they define such differences by locating them upon a landscape of interpretive acts. As “regular and essential social acts,” commentaries provide a rich context for understanding reading, interpretation, writing, and publication.4 The question is not how they may prompt consumers to read or write in a passive or applied manner. It is rather a question of “pre- vision or theory effect” that “occurs whenever an attempt is made to make something explicit.”5 By expressing meanings that were previously implicit, ignored, or repressed, commentaries transform the representational powers of texts and make them work in


new ways. They canonize texts, authorize specific understandings of textual meaning as official or legitimate, and ordain their reproduction or replacement according to the needs of the present.

Medieval and early modern commentaries raise questions about ideas of authorship as well as of readership. What concepts of authorship prevailed from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries? Most commentators prefaced their glosses with biographies of their authors. The classical type descends through the lives of Virgil introducing the fourth-century commentaries of Aelius Donatus and Servius Honoratus. Similar vitae poetae, or at least biographical details about the author, the place of composition, and the time (persona, locus, tempus), define the circumstaniae of early medieval prologues to individual texts. What is new in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century humanist commentary is a marked attempt to contextualize the author’s life so as to claim the text for some particular historical, political, philosophical, or ideological view.

Late medieval Aristotelianism seems to offer a conceptual base for this renewed interest in authorial identity. Its theory of four causes associates a text’s efficient cause with its historical author, and so foregrounds the author’s integrity and individuality in explaining the text’s meaning. Even commentators on Scripture come to regard the literal sense as a distinct expression of its human, and not just divine, author. Thus Nicholas of Lyra in his Postilla Literalis (1331) symptomatically explores “the mind of the prophet” David as the author of Psalms: “God as the principal agent and the mind of the prophet as the instrumental agent come together” (Minissi and Scott, eds., p. 272). In their studies of secular literature, Giovanni del Virgilio (fl. 1322–23) and Albertino Musato (1261–1329) likewise examine the historical conditions of classical authorship, while commentaries on the Divine Comedy by Iacopo Alighieri

6 For a strong sense of culture as cumulative and implicated with political power in these vitar, see Annabel Patterson, Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 21–42.

7 Generally speaking, however, the medieval accessus subordinated its vita auctoris to an analysis of the spiritual or allegorical sense over historical or literal ones. In allegorical readings developed at the School of Chartres, the characteristics of a human author or historical context take second place to “an underlying sensus mysterii” explained by Winthrop Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 43–47. The reader directs attention to the text’s “inseminum” covering as Bernardus Sylvius defines it in his commentary on the Aeneid: “The inseminum is a kind of teaching which wraps up the true meaning inside a fictitious narrative (fabulosa narratio), and so it is also called ‘a veil’ (involvaturum)” (A. J. Minissi and A. B. Scott, eds., Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1000–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press 1999), p. 155).


These ideas in his canzone 127.5–6: “Perché il proprio de gli amanti è di scrivere & cantar tutto quello, che è loro da Amore dettato; onde il Petrarca; Colui che del mio mal meco ragiona / mi lascia in dubbio, sì confuso ditta” “Because the property of lovers is to write and say everything that is said to them by Love; whence Petrarch's "He who speaks with me about my ills leaves me in doubt, so confusedly he dictates"." (Hollander ed., p. 270).

Despite increasing "literacy," book production still has very strong oral elements that shape reception. Petrarch and Boccaccio, for example, compose their texts in private acts of writing, but they "publish" them after lengthy periods of incubation during which they read aloud from the text, consult friends, and make revisions.12 Private, individualized acts of silent reading become common, but well into modern times the usual procedure is to oralize the text aloud word by word.13 Authors, lectors, and friends read texts to a circle of invited listeners. Others offer set readings in public, introducing authors to larger, and largely illiterate, audiences.

The rate of literacy throughout Europe multiplies with the advent of print. Even a cursory examination of the issues uncovers startling information. Data about fifteenth- and sixteenth-century book production, book ownership, and the quality of available schooling suggest that powerful social, cultural, political, and economic factors impinged upon one's ability to read.14 In Florence, for example, adult literacy may have approached a range of 25 to 35 percent by 1500, though with sharp differences among professionals, the commercial elite, and specialist artisans according to status, wealth, occupation, and sex.15 In the mercantile patriciate of Venice in 1450, 61 percent of the male citizenry

11Robert K. Root, “Publication before Printing,” PMLA 28 (1913): 417–31, pp. 423–29. Upon formally handing over to patrons or friends a correct presentation copy (“exemplar”) from which other copies might be made, the author could no longer prevent further circulation in any form.


13François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 149–66.

14Paul Grendler, Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 71–86; see also Grendler’s discussion of reading curricula in vernacular schools of northern Italy that by the mid-sixteenth century included the chivalric romances of Pulci, Boiardo, and Ariosto along with popular religious texts, pp. 275–99.
appears to have some reading and writing skills and by 1650 the figure reaches 98 percent. Though the peasants and farmers of rural Italy surely did not attain such levels, famous exceptions occur. In 1584 the literate Friulian miller known as Menocchio quoted a dozen or so titles in his personal library ranging from translations of the Bible and Golden Legend to Mandeville’s Travels and Boccaccio’s Decameron. When such a library was large, however, one might assume that not all of its volumes were carefully read. Libraries of the Visconti at Pavia and the Este at Ferrara, for example, contained more belles lettres in the French vernacular than in Italian. Some owners doubtless purchased books for their status and prestige, and right from the start the printing industry developed highly coded formats marketed to affirm both. Then as now style came with a price tag.

Internationalism indeed marks the book-collecting community in the early age of print. Data for France is thin before the seventeenth century, but evidence since the twelfth century suggests a steady increase of literacy, especially in the north and east. The timeless social institution of the rural veillée, evening gatherings among local villagers, offered music, song, storytelling, and, upon the advent of printed books, no doubt oral reading. Much of this reading may have been improvisational, as lectors “translated” the vernacular French texts into local patois or regional dialects, perhaps even editing texts, rearranging, embellishing, or abridging them for their listeners.

The clientele for print in France seems highly varied. Cathedral cities of Rouen, Poitiers, Angers, Lyon, and Caen had academic markets for their schools, but they also competed for large nonacademic markets.

Potential readers might have been drawn from all who could read—from bourgeois professional classes, artisans, lawyers, apothecaries, barbers, and mere clerks, as well as from elite clienteles. In the 1530s and 1540s Calvin’s promotion of Scripture in the north and east implies general literacy in these regions. On the other hand, literacy in southern and western France surely lagged behind. At Languedoc in the 1570s and 1590s, for example, only 3 to 10 percent of the peasants could sign their names. Nonetheless, the first printing of Petrarch’s Rime sparse outside of Italy occurred in France at the press of Jean de Toursne in Lyon in 1545, and Guglielmo Rovillio reprinted it at Lyon in 1550 with the commentary of Antonio Brucioli, a supporter of Lutheran reform.

Higher general rates of literacy in England suggest that native sonnet collections of the 1590s might have found a wider general readership than their Italian or French counterparts. English literacy climbed from 11–25 percent of the rural male population who signed the Oath of the King’s Succession in 1534, to 39 percent of the rural males and 78 percent of London males who signed the Protestant Oath in 1641. This apparent rise was by no means steady or cumulative, nor did different social groups register constant levels of proficiency in relation to one another. Irregular fluctuations in schooling chart instead a general unevenness, from rapid progress in the 1520s and 1530s to regression in the 1540s and 1550s, from renewed energies in the 1560s and 1570s to recession and decline between 1580 and 1610, and finally to the Stuart recovery of the 1620s. The ideological push of English Protestantism with its injunction to read Scripture and the utilitarian pull of commercial activity with its summons to record business transactions likewise inflect various patterns of acceleration and arrest.

What kinds of books most frequently surfaced in the urban centers of Italy, France, and England from 1460 to 1600? With a good deal of variation affecting specific titles throughout Europe, theological and devotional works comprised 45 percent of the volumes printed before the Reformation, books on law just over 10 percent, and scientific, pseudo-scientific, and technological manuals about 10 percent; the remaining
close that a merchant’s or artisan’s library might include a vernacular Golden Legend, a translated Bible, a Book of Hours, and a technical manual relating to the owner’s trade. Libraries among comparable classes in England appear better stocked than French ones, but even where we might reasonably expect rich literary holdings, we can be disappointed. A recently recovered seventeenth-century catalog of the Sidney family library at Penshurst suggests that Henry Sidney and his talented offspring Philip, Mary, and Robert consistently favored books of history, law, and current events over poetry and fiction, reflecting their preoccupation with affairs of state, political advancement, and matters of public consequence rather than belles lettres.

In these contexts of book production, book ownership, literacy, and reading preferences throughout Europe, Petrarch’s poetry became commonplace or controversial to the extent that it could be seen to occupy one or another side of a public issue. In a climate of religious and political controversy, every issue counts, and fifteenth- and sixteenth-century commentators on the Rime sparse record their understandings of them with sometimes combative intensity. What one articulates as Petrarch’s point of view, another contests. While most commentators pursued their work as largely commercial ventures, and some concocted controversy in order to market their products for certain readerships, their attitudes toward these concerns—even when they might seem blandly conventional—register important shifts in social thought and popular opinion. As individual commentators explore each text from the horizon of their own understanding, they disclose a wealth of information about contemporary attitudes toward religion, art, moral conduct, specific roles assigned to gender and class, and concrete ideas about politics and political action.

In this light the commentators fashion and construct Petrarch’s social and political involvement with monarchical forms of government and ways of life other than Florentine republicanism; his insertion of public, professional, and amatory affairs into the narrative of his poetry; his rhetorical skill in discursive cultural relation to that of other canonized

30–35 percent consisted of classical, medieval, or contemporary literature. Seventy-seven percent of invenabula was in Latin, encompassing most titles in theology, law, and science; in the vernacular, the number of editions of modern literary texts regularly exceeded that of the ancient classics. In Italy, the number of editions of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio collectively equaled that of all other vernacular literature, including romances and tales, facetae and sensationalized histories, poetic anthologies, and translations of the classics.

Printers’ lists do not necessarily indicate which texts consumers actually bought and read. For fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Florence, post mortem inventories of books possessed by middle-class lawyers, notaries, merchants, and artisans permit some assessment. Throughout this period Dante remains among the top five authors cited in these inventories, but his status diminishes as Petrarch’s rises. Petrarch emerges from twenty-fourth position between 1413 and 1453 to first between 1457 and 1520, whereas Dante slips from first position to third. Petrarch’s ascendance during the Medici years balances Boccaccio’s decline from third position at the beginning of the fifteenth century to twelfth at the end of the sixteenth century. Throughout the period from 1531 to 1608 Petrarch retains an edge over Dante. Only Ariosto rivals Petrarch in popularity from 1531 to 1570.

In some respects the popularity of poetry throughout Italy appears to compensate for a decline in formal religious and theological publication during the Counter-Reformation. Notably at this time a bizarre spiritu- alizing redaction of the Rime sparse by the Franciscan friar Girolamo Malipiero, Il Petrarcha spirituale, first published in 1536, underwent six popular editions (1545–87) and it initiated a flood of imitations, including Stefano Colonna’s I sonetti, le canzoni, e i trovami di M. Laura in risposta di M. Francesco Petrarcha (1552). This remarkably derivative sequence rewrote Petrarch’s amatory complaints as a series of exemplary replies by the virtuous Laura.

The priorities of a contemporaneous readership outside of Italy were vastly different. In Paris and Amiens sixteenth-century inventories dis-


authors; and his proto-Protestant discovery of scriptural meaning, his rejection of corrupt Church practices, and his growing emphasis on inner spiritual reform. If these themes do not seem always to match those of the historical author or the poems that he wrote, they do adumbrate—as succeeding chapters will show—major themes of Petrarch’s later imitators. In this way the sheer variety of commentary helps to account for the interest with which the Rime sparse were transported across time and historical circumstances from fourteenth-century Avignon to sixteenth-century Florence, over the class structures of early modern society and material conditions of daily living, beyond the social and political institutions and cultural differences inscribed in them, into their own constantly changing environment and ultimately into other milieus throughout Italy and the emerging nations of Western Europe.

Authorizing Monarchism: Antonio da Tempo, Francesco Filefello, and Hieronimo Squarciafico

The earliest Florentine biographies of Petrarch were written by Filippo Villani (1381), Pier Paolo Vergerio (1397), Leonardo Bruni (1436), and Gianozzo Manetti (1440s). They emphasize the eloquence of his Latin prose and verse, the example of his scholarly accomplishments, and the piety of his Christian sentiments, but they offer relatively few comments on the Rime sparse or Triumphi as models for Italian poetry. Above all they reclaim Petrarch’s Florentine ancestry and depict him as sympathetic to the republican spirit of civic humanism. They focus on the poet’s earliest years in Arezzo, his nostalgia for Italy while in Provence, his travels through Italy, his residence in Milan, Parma, Venice, and Padua, and his discoveries of lost works by Cicero and Livy, with their consequent insights about the Roman Republic. In a letter written shortly after Petrarch’s death on 20 July 1374, perhaps in an effort to secure editorial rights over the poet’s unpublished papers, Coluccio Salutati proclaims Petrarch “not just the shining splendor of Florence, but the light of all Italy, the light of our age.”32 Of his vernacular poetry, Salutati barely mentions in passing that “his rhymes tickle the ears of the common people” (Thompson-Nagel 9).

Leonardo Bruni’s influential “Life of Petrarch” (1436) represents Petrarch from a quite different historical perspective.33 In Bruni’s view, Petrarch initiated methods of humanist philology that, “having grown since then... have reached their present heights” (Thompson-Nagel 75). His greatest discoveries teach us that Rome’s golden age coincided with its republican liberty:

It can be said that letters and the study of Latin went hand in hand with the state of the Roman Republic, since it increased until the age of Cicero; and then after the Roman people lost their liberty in the rule of the emperors, who did not even stop at killing and ruining highly regarded men, the good disposition of studies and letters perished altogether with the good state of the city of Rome. (76)

Petrarch did not have the good fortune to experience republican freedom. Strapped economically, he served popes and princes in order to win their patronage, “not so much by his own choice as constrained to it” (77). He nonetheless found solace by avoiding fictional dispute—he was “wise and prudent in choosing the quiet and leisurely life” (82)—and he maintained a constant and consistent point of view with regard to politics: “He did not keep changing and modifying his position like Dante” (82).

Commentaries on the Rime sparse written under the auspices of monarchical governments in northern Italy were more precise than the Florentine biographies in interpreting Petrarch’s Italian poetry. The earliest ones appeared in Padua, Milan, and Venice not as products of historical scholarship or republican fervor, but as constructions of an aristocratic humanism initiated at ducal courts, or of a commercial enterprise managed within the orbit of Ghibelline monarchism and Venetian oligarchy. The commentaries of Antonio da Tempo at Padua (written before 1440, published 1477), Francesco Filefello at Milan (written 1445-47, published 1476), and Hieronimo Squarciafico at Venice (written after 1476, published 1484) expound ideological imperatives at odds with the Florentine view of Petrarch, each supporting claims sympathetic to autocratic interests. The first represents Petrarch from the perspective of Paduan humanism, amenable to the patronage and protection of its local Ghibelline lord; the second represents Petrarch from the perspective of Milanese imperialism, celebratory of an Italy potentially united under...

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Visconti rule; the third represents Petrarch for a commercial readership content with the status quo of Venetian prosperity.

Each of these commentators could claim a special relationship with the historical Petrarch who spent the longest period of his Italian residence in their territories. From 1353 to 1361 Petrarch served the Visconti of Milan; in 1361 he moved to Padua and then to Venice where the senate gave him a palace; after 1368 he settled in Padua and Arqua where Francesco da Carrara, the despot Duke of Padua, granted him an estate. These later years of Petrarch's life reveal a shift in the poet's attitudes about the respective merits of republican government and monarchical rule. When he began his epic Africa in 1358, he praised the republican age of Catone as an era of liberty and heroic achievement: "Post haec meliora sequuntur / Tempora, et hinc nostri libertas incipit evi" (Then better times ensued; our age of liberty began) (Africa 3.773-74: Bergin trans., 3.98-95). After Cola di Rienzo's republican experiment failed at Rome in 1347-50, Petrarch abandoned his Africa. More and more he came to support the imperial cause of monarchical rulers in northern Italy. By 1355 he was commending Emperor Charles IV as Italy's—Europe's—greatest hope. Finally in 1368 he answered Francesco da Carrara's request to continue De viris illustribus in praise of kings and the nobility. Petrarch's monarchism surely pleased the lords of northern Italy who would recruit Petrarch's literary prestige to strengthen their own authority as enlightened rulers.33

The Carrara lords, Petrarch's benefactors in the last years of his life, typify the situation.34 They ruled over Padua from 1318 until 1405 when the city, long a buffer between Milan and Venice, fell to the latter. Jacopo da Carrara, who arranged for Petrarch to receive a canonry in the Padua cathedral in April 1349, was assassinated in December 1350. His son, Francesco, invited Petrarch back to Padua in 1367, asking the poet to accompany him to Udine to petition Emperor Charles IV for aid against the Visconti. For this favor he awarded Petrarch a home at Arqua. When boundary disputes between Padua and Venice were at war in 1372-73, Petrarch accompanied the latter's heir, Francesco Novello, to Venice to make submission before the Senate. After Petrarch's death, however, Venice stood by as Padua fell to Giangaleazzo Visconti in 1388. By 1399 Padua had sued for peace with Milan and even boasted about its pro-


grandmother of Filippo Maria. Though the circumstances of its composition are unclear, its critical bias toward Visconti monarchism and its rejection of Bruni’s Florentine republicanism are manifest.

From Antonio’s perspective the *Rime sparse* dramatize Petrarch’s career as an exemplary public servant who advances the cause of central government in northern Italy. The commentator’s prefatory “Life of Petrarch” draws extensively from earlier Florentine biographies by Pier Candido Decembrio and Leonardo Aretino, but it scrupulously replaces their laudatory references to the Florentine Republic with a different assessment of Petrarch’s character, “per excitare qualunque altro de mazzor doctrina & facundia” “to stimulate others to think about his greater teaching and productivity” (Avi). Thus Antonio represents the poet as a moral hero, a trusted confidant of popes and kings, one who performed excellent service and preserved his own integrity. Petrarch’s love for Laura hardly kept him from public affairs. Antonio cites an apocryphal story that Pope Urban V offered the poet a dispensation to marry while yet retaining his benefices, but that Petrarch refused on grounds of conscience:

E quantunque li volse esser data per donna ad instantia di Papa Urbano quinto il quale singolarmente amava concedendoli di tenere con la donna li benefici insieme non volse mai consentire dicendo chel frutto che prendera de amore a scrivere dappoi che la cosa amata conseguito hauese tutto se perderia. (Avi)

Even though he wished to marry, at the urging of Pope Urban V who held him in the highest esteem, allowing him to retain his benefices while taking a wife, he refused, saying that the fruit he earned from writing about love would be lost after he had obtained what he wanted.

Antonio discloses Petrarch’s hidden motivation—that poetry derives from lack, which marriage would cancel—but even this disclosure advances the poet’s image as a loyal public servant. By valuing his literary skills above amatory fulfillment, Petrarch succeeds as a good citizen; he devotes his talent to the public weal.

In Antonio’s narrative, Petrarch spends his happiest, most productive years serving the Viscontis in Milan and Parma:

Da principi & signori temporali da cardinali & papi era la notizia sua desiderata infra i quali maggiormente dal magnanimo & invidio bisconti Galeazzo alhora di Milano duca da lui per littere evocato alquanto tempo sotto titolo di suo consiglier dimoro & tal volta in Milano e quando a Parma: ma a

Milano per la magior parte hebbe la sua habitatione in uilla longo de la cita miglia iii. (Avi)

He was called upon to serve by princes and lords and by cardinals and popes, and among them chiefly the generous and magnificent Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan; summoned by the latter, Petrarch remained for a while with the title of counselor, sometimes at Milan, often at Parma; but for the most part at Milan he lived in a summer home three miles away from the city.

Petrarch’s attachment to the Visconti and his devotion to their cause fulfilled a Christian Stoicism in his nature. He renounces honor, wealth, and freedom to pursue his literary career under the protection of an absolute ruler. Antonio’s profile assumes that the competing claims of a republican government would have sapped Petrarch’s energies, but that the centralized command of the Visconti government insured stability, efficient rule, and prosperity. Above all, the Visconti offered patronage. Petrarch could climb upon the shoulders of his Italian predecessors because he enjoyed Milanese advantages.

The commentary of Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481) builds upon these assumptions. Filelfo served Duke Filippo Maria Visconti, who commissioned his annotations on Petrarch’s *Rime* in the mid-1440s. His gloss on sonnet 8 refers to Leonardo Bruni, who died on 9 March 1445, as deceased (“Leonardo...soleua chiamare” ‘Leonardo used to call,’ 11’), thus implying its subsequent composition. Filippo Maria’s motives for sponsoring this commentary were to identify Petrarch as a beneficiary of Viscountian patronage, but Filelfo’s motives for responding were evidently to strengthen his own standing at the Milanese court.

Even in this regard Filelfo sees himself inheriting the mantle worn by Petrarch in an earlier generation. Not only does he fashion his own social identity upon Petrarch’s precedent, but he also discovers an immense gratification in reenacting his predecessor’s career at the Visconti court.

This reenactment provides Filelfo with the security he had sought throughout his own long career. Born at Tolentino in 1398, he had taught rhetoric at Padua, Vicenza, Venice, and Bologna, and had studied Greek with Chrysoloras at Constantinople. He settled in Florence in 1429, but upon Cosimo’s election in 1434 he was banished for his alignment with the anti-Medicane Alibizzi faction. Exile from Florence in the 1430s soured his ideas about republican government just as surely as his acceptance in Milan in the 1440s disposed him to celebrate Viscountian rule. After Filippo Maria’s death on 13 August 1447, Filelfo abandoned

his commentary on the *Rime sparse.* When Francesco Sforza succeeded to the ducal throne in 1450, Filippo joined his retinue and expeditiously began an epic *Spfortias,* modeled partly on Petrarch's *Africa.* In 1471 he moved to Rome as secretary to Pope Sixtus IV, and then within the decade to Florence when Lorenzo de' Medici, the son of his old enemy, offered him the chair of Greek at the Florentine Studium. He died there a few months later.

Filippo's commentary, completed only as far as Petrarch's sonnet 136, reinterprets Bruni's link between Florentine politics and literary greatness. Whereas Bruni associated eloquence with republican freedom, Filippo equates it with monarchical power. In dedicating his commentary to Filippo Maria, Filippo views as part of his task the need to inspire higher thought, noble action, patriotic sentiment, and devoted service to the state, "dicendo tanto essere più laudabile l'opra quanto sotto leggiera scorza grave medolla si nasconde" saying that the text is so much more praiseworthy as serious substance is hidden beneath a pleasing exterior" (2e). His commentary should benefit not just the educated few who can read classical texts, but the illiterate populace who will about at public readings: "Ma perché possa forsi essere opinioni di più gente il presente volume per la magior parte inteso" "So that the present volume can be understood by the greater part of more people" (2e). For the Visconti ruler whom it addresses directly, the commentary can strengthen claims to sovereignty wherever Petrarch's language is spoken.

Filippo knows, however, that Filippo Maria can spare little time reading Petrarch's poetry. He therefore limits his commentary to succinct lessons, memorable and easily transferable to concrete situations: "Ma non manco a tua sublimita in governi & regimenti amplissimi & molto degni occupa la dovra essere caro se quanto per se stessi leggiermente intendere si potra per me non sia in prolixita di commento dilatato" "For your highness occupied in governing, it should be valuable if I do not elaborate through prolixity whatever can be easily understood" (2e). In this way Filippo privileges an audience whose influence, prestige, and achievement he is proud to augment.38

Filippo professes to paraphrase and improve upon Antonio da Tempo's annotations, supplementing their details with scholarly references to classical texts, and sharpening their claims about Petrarch's succession from poets of the Roman Empire. He did not circulate his commentary very widely in manuscript form, perhaps because its praise of the Visconti seemed inappropriate after Lodovico Sforza seized power. It was eventually printed in Roman type in a folio edition of Petrarch's *Sonetti et canzone* (1476, reissued in 1478 and 1481) at Bologna, a university city whose ruling Bentivoglio family had distinct ties with both Milan and the papacy of Sixtus IV.39

Within a generation Hieronimo Sforzatico completed Filippo's commentary and published both in folio with large Gothic type at Verona in 1484. Sforzatico, later an editor of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1491) and author of an important "Life of Boccaccio" (1490), took pains to reproduce Petrarch's linguistic peculiarities as best he could, and the result is the most accurate text of the *Rime sparse e Trojan* before Bembo's Aldine edition.40 Like Filippo, Sforzatico follows Antonio da Tempo's gloss, but he does so even more slavishly. His reluctance to depart from this precedent suggests that the ideological view of Petrarch established at Padua earlier in the century prevailed throughout northern Italy.

At a later date Sforzatico reinforced his own Paduan and Venetian sympathies. In 1501 he lent his efforts to a second collective edition of Petrarch's Latin works, published at Venice by Andrea Torresani, the father-in-law of Aldus Manutius. To this edition Sforzatico contributed his own Latin *vita Petrarchae,* but this *vita* acknowledges a strong debt to the work of Pier Paolo Vergerio (1351-1444) who had lived at Padua in 1390-1404.41 In addition to writing a *De monarchia* (ca. 1490) for Francesco Novello Carrara, Vergerio devoted himself to the legacy of Petrarch. Rescuing *Africa* from the oblivion to which Petrarch had consigned it, he edited and circulated the poem in the 1590s. To him Petrarch's attitude toward the Roman Republic must have seemed ambiguous at best as, on the one hand, *Africa* celebrates the republican age of Cato and, on the other, it applauds imperial absolutism. Vergerio also composed a "Life of Petrarch" (1397), likewise for Francesco Novello Carrara, though it amounts to little more than a grammatically revised version of Petrarch's own "Letter to Posterity" with third-person verbs instead of first-person ones.

In his *Vita* Sforzatico confesses his indebtedness to Vergerio, both for the latter's curatorialship of Petrarch's Latin texts and for his perefunctory *Vita.* For responses to *Africa* by Petrarch's contemporaries, for example, Sforzatico summons the testimony of Vergerio: "Carmina sue *Africæ* cantare coeperunt, protinus cum audivit, lacrimas emisit, reganos ne ulterius procederent. . . . Vergerius non minus clare hoc demonstrare

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39Dionisotti, "Fortuna," pp. 78-86.


41For Vergerio in Padua see Baron, *Crisi,* pp. 126-34.
videtur” “They began to recite verses of his Africa; as soon as the audience heard them, it shed tears, enthralling him to proceed no further. . . Vergerio seems no less clearly to describe this reception’ (Solerti ed., p. 359). Suardafico follows Vergerio in ordering the details, though he hesitates to paraphrase Petrarch’s “Letter to Pusterly” so closely. He meanwhile celebrates Petrarch’s dealings with Venice more elaborately than earlier biographers: “Venetiis cum Andrea Dandulu, cum Michaelae Celso et Mariano Falerio Venetiaram ducibus, et cum alis multis patrisitis et doctis viris haud parvam duxit consuetudinem, ut ex epistolis eius et aliorum mulorum videri potest” “With Andrea Dandulo, Michele Celso, and Marino Falero, Venetian leaders, and with many other patrons and learned men, he adopted this not insignificant custom, as can be seen from his letters and those of many others” (Solerti ed., p. 354). Squarzaftico’s life of Petrarch thus reaffirms the poet’s loyalty to northern Italy’s principates, dukedoms, and oligarchies, now incarnated in the patrician class of Venice.

The joint commentary of Filelfo and Squarzaftico, prefaced by Antonio da Tempo’s “Life of Petrarch,” was reprinted ten times between 1486 and 1497. In 1503 it finally appeared alongside Antonio da Tempo’s commentary in an edition published by Albertino da Lissona at Venice to compete with Bembo’s Aldine text that had appeared two years earlier. Between 1507 and 1522 eight subsequent editions printed all three commentaries side by side. Until 1525, therefore, the commentaries of Antonio, Filelfo, and Squarzaftico dominated editions of Petrarch’s Italian verse. Either singly or in combination they accompanied twenty-four printings of the Li canzoneti del Petrarcha between 1476 and 1522, while without them only fifteen printings of the Rime sparse e Trionfi appeared before 1525. Among these printings, the chief competitors for Antonio’s, Filelfo’s, and Squarzaftico’s texts were five unannotated Aldine editions (1501, 1514, 1521, 1533, 1546), the first supervised by Pietro Bembo, and four unannotated editions published by Filippo di Giunta at Florence between 1504 and 1522.

Meanwhile, some unpublished commentaries on Petrarch’s poetry doubtless circulated in manuscript form, amid reports of others planned or currently in progress. Francesco Patrizi at Siena in the fifteenth century, Girolamo Avogadro degli Azzoni at Ferrara in 1513, and Antonio da Canal at Venice in 1516 had compiled detailed notes on the Rime sparse in manuscript, while at Venice Bembo’s disciples, Lodovico Becadelli and Trifone Gabriele, circulated their ideas about Petrarch in public lectures. The former announced a publication that never appeared, while the latter refrained from publication altogether. In the absence of these texts we may conclude that the monarchical attitudes of Antonio, Filelfo, and Squarzaftico shaped the reception of the Rime sparse in the early sixteenth century. Markedly different from Florentine constructions of Petrarch as a civic humanist in the republican mold, and largely unconcerned about Petrarch’s achievement as a Latinist in either prose or poetry, whether literary, scholarly, political, or philosophical, these commentaries represent Petrarch as a figure at home in the expeditious courtly, monarchial, hedonistic world of northern Italy. The official Florentine view of Petrarch’s republican austerity and Cicero-in their integrity counts for little in these editions, just as it would mean little to the reception of Petrarch at the monarchical courts of Spain, France, and England later in the sixteenth century.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Italy’s political, social, and economic conditions changed dramatically. The French expeditions of 1494 and 1499 devastated Tuscany and Naples; Spain’s appropriation of Naples in 1503 and its repeated incursions into the peninsula weakened Italian unity; the contest between France and Spain for control first of Naples, then of Lombardy, depleted hope. Internal conflict between Florence and Pisa in 1494–1509, the papal designs of Alexander VI and Julius II upon Romagna in 1491–1501 and 1506–10, and the League of Cambrai (1508) of most Italian city-states against Venice turned Northern Italy into a land of strife. With political turmoil came social and economic upheavals. Their effects upon Petrarch’s Italian readership called for new modes of commentary on the Rime sparse, modes that would respond not only to the crisis of Italy’s cultural identity amid internal conflict, but also to the philosophical and theological questioning occasioned by late humanist and early Reformation thought. Alessandro Vellutello supplied a paradigm for these approaches.

Vellutello was born of a prominent family at Lucca, emigrated to Milan and then to Venice in the 1520s, and became active at the press of Giovanni Antonia da Saggio. There he published Le volgari opere del

46Details in Fowler, Cornell University Catalogue, pp. 75–92.
Petrarch in 1525 in quarto with neat Italic type. His other publications include a preface to a comedy by the Bolognese Antonio Ricchi, I tre tiranni, which examines classical models for the play (1530); an edition of Virgil with Servius’s commentary (1534); and his own annotations on Dante’s Commedia, greatly indebted to Cristoforo Landino (1554). Vel- lutello’s approach to Petrarch’s Rime sparse e Trionfi situates their literary values in a narrative and dramatic context that activates a new set of social, cultural, literary, and political constructions.

By no means a learned humanist or professional scholar, Vellutello upon arriving in Venice initiated a friendship with Bembo. Their mutual friend Niccolò Delfino reports that Bembo provided many suggestions for Vellutello’s commentary.65 The relationship soon soured over Vellutello’s rejection of Petrarch’s autograph manuscript (Vat. Lat. 3195) as authoritative. Previously on the margins of Bembo’s circle, Vellutello came to be denounced by the group’s leaders, Lodovico Beccadelli and Trifone Gabriele, for heretically discrediting their master’s Aldine edition. Equally criticized was a shadow of linguistic heterodoxy that darkened Vellutello’s writing. His own style remains by turns rough and declotted, even though in successive editions of his work Vellutello modified its diction and syntax to accord with precepts of Bembo’s Prose della volgar lingua. The latter, published in September 1525, one month after Vellutello’s first edition (August 1525), had already circulated in large portions of manuscript for several years, and its principles were well known. In his edition of Dante published a decade after Bembo’s death (1554), Vellutello’s antagonism to the Prose would emerge more clearly in his deliberate flouting of its precepts.66

Like Bruni, Antonio da Tempo, Filelfo, and Squarzafico before him, Vellutello announces strong convictions about the meaning of Petrarch’s poetry, and he inscribes them directly in his commentary. Whereas his predecessors served the aims of Florentine republicanism, Paduan monarchism, Milanese absolutism, or Venetian oligarchy, however, Vellutello serves the aims of a purely commercial self-interest. Unlike his predecessors in submission to Florence, Padua, Milan, or Venice, Vellutello professes an ideological detachment that underwrites the claims of Venetian humanism.67 He celebrates an abstract ideal of Italian cultural unity, one that is at odds with both the local civic humanism of Florence and the expansionist ducale absolutism of Milan. He imbibes classical values, but only as a supplement to contemporary values and pragmatic concerns. He prefers Aristotelian logic, applied judgment, and material realism to Platonist dialectic, speculative judgment, and metaphysical idealism, but only so long as they take no precedence over practical interests.

Vellutello’s major contribution is to reorder the sequence of poems in the Rime sparse. To establish a new arrangement that squares with known events in the author’s public life, Vellutello appeals to the authority of history, ethnography, and Petrarch’s own biography. Fashioning for himself the ethos of a cultural anthropologist, he selects his information from accounts in Petrarch’s letters and from the writings of Petrarch’s contemporaries, but he also relies upon his own personal experience, his travels in Petrarch’s footsteps throughout Avignon and Vaucluse, and his interviews with descendants of Petrarch’s intimates. He judiciously transcribes their texts and conversations, maps their geographical boundaries, constructs genealogies that link them with his subject, and uses them to establish a rapport with the otherness of Petrarch. His claim to validity rests upon an interpretation of the past as it is recorded in Petrarch’s poetry.

Vellutello’s commentary develops as a narrative that seeks to confer continuity upon discontinuity, coherence upon incoherence, through a web of words spun over Petrarch’s unspoken assumptions. Thus it constructs an alternative fiction to explain the record of Petrarch’s life, a version of the Rime sparse whose contestability draws every succeeding commentator into debate. Either implicitly or explicitly editors and commentators who follow Vellutello refine his insights, argue his assumptions, expand his evidence, and overturn his conclusions. His influence flows in two directions. The first encourages philosophical and rhetorical readings that would extract complex and often contradictory meanings from Petrarch’s text, as do the commentaries of Sylvano da Venafro (1533), Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo (1533), and Bernardino Daniello (1541), each of whom shares an interest in humanist sources for classical and modern texts. The second encourages more or less historicized readings that would assimilate Petrarch to some relevant contemporary situation, as do the commentaries of Fausto da Longiano (1532), Antonio Brucioli (1548), and Ludovico Castelvetro (1540s, published in 1582), each of whom shares an interest in the Protestant Reform movements of pre-Conciliar northern Italy.

Vellutello adumbrates the complexity of this project in his prefatory “Life of Petrarch.” To establish his own standing as a credible ethnographer and historian, Vellutello dismisses the limited biographies of Bruni, Antonio da Tempo, and Squarzafico and he rejects the faulty

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65 On this relationship see Belloni, Laura tra Petrarcha e Bembo, pp. 71-79.
66 Parker, Commentary and Ideology, pp. 119-21, 196-97.
biographical claims of Filelfo, “a similitudine di ciechi da simil guida condotti, sono con quella in una medesima fossa caduti”’ who, like blind people guided by the blind, have tumbled into the same ditch’ (AA7). The authority for his ideas is a more extensive reading of Petrarch’s texts and those of his contemporaries than any earlier biographer or commentator had offered: “Ma noi, che ne le altre sue opere, e ne le istorie del suo tempo habbiamo di lui molte altre cose investigato volendoli più distintamente scrivere, vi giungeremo quelle, che giudicheremo degne da non esser tacute.”’ But I who have investigated many other details about his life from his other writings and from the histories of his time, wishing to write about them with greater precision, will add here what we judge worthy of publication’ (AA7).

Vellutello claims that his reading has yielded not only more observational detail but also a fuller, richer, more powerful sense of Petrarch’s cultural milieu. No earlier biographer, for example, had referred to the struggle for power in the Holy Roman Empire between Ludwig of Bavaria and Frederick of Hapsburg in the 1320s and 1330s, but Vellutello evokes it as an appropriate frame for Petrarch’s diplomatic mission to Rome in 1337. “Questo medesimo anno essendo Lodovico Bavaro vigesimo imperatore de Germania’ ‘when Ludwig of Bavaria was the twentieth emperor of Germany’ (AA8). Likewise Vellutello depicts what no earlier biographer had mentioned about Petrarch’s friendship with Philip VI, King of France, “tanto che appresso di lui pareva che fosse in grandissimo favore’ ‘such that it seems he enjoyed the highest favor with him’ (AA8). In Vellutello’s commentary on sonnet 27 and canzoni 28 and 128, Ludwig and Philip play significant roles in Petrarch’s historical drama.

Vellutello balances his biography of Petrarch with a parallel “Life of Laura.” To understand Petrarch’s motivations, he examines the record of the woman who inspired the poet to act and react. Again Vellutello bases his authority on a careful reading of Petrarch’s texts and upon deductions from the poetry, but he also displays his credentials as an investigator of social, religious, and amatory mores that shape the Rime sparse. His “Life of Laura” sets the beloved in a quotidian context remote from any in current society. Its norms seem both strange and familiar, different from those of the contemporary reader, yet understandable in their difference as motivations for plausible behavior. Laura’s world constitutes the poet’s imaginative universe. Its very geography maps the coordinates of Petrarch’s literary experience. Like a good ethnographer, moreover, Vellutello has visited the actual site and has conversed with its present inhabitants. Their accounts of customs and conventions in Petrarch’s day yield two results.

The first comes from Vellutello’s sojourns in Avignon where he has interviewed descendants of Laura’s alleged husband, Hughes de Sade, “col quale, per due volte che in Avignone sono stato, m’è ocorso sopra di tal cosa molto lungamente parlare’ ‘with whom I had the opportunity to discuss her genealogy at length both times that I was in Avignon’ (BB2). From this information Vellutello concludes that Petrarch’s Laura could not have been “Laurette de Sade.”’ Family documents record the latter’s maturity during the reign of Louis XI in 1361-83, but Petrarch’s sonnets 211 and 336 announce that the poet met her on 6 April 1327 and that she died on 6 April 1348.

Ma quello che questa opinione dimostra in tutto esser vana si é, che domandato in che tempo egli fa, che ella sia stata risponde, che secondo certo testamento, nel quale di lei si faceva memoria, che egli hava veduto, & che poi fu mandato al re Luigi… fu di matura età, fra il LX. e ’l LXX. anno sopra MOCC. onde si conosce, questa essere stata diversa da quella del Poeta.’ (BB2)

What反对 against this opinion is that, when asked when she lived, he responds that according to a certain will he had seen that mentioned her and was recorded with King Louis… she came to adulthood between 1360-70; whence this woman is recognized to have been different from the poet’s beloved.

Vellutello pursues his quest of Laura’s identity in another direction. Referring in sonnet 4 to “Ed or di picciol borgo un sol n’ha dato’ ‘And now from a small village He has given us a sun,’ in sonnet 246 to “Candida rosa nata in dure spine’ ‘White rose born among hard thorns,’ and in sonnet 305 to “et vedra’ vi un che sol tra l’erbe et l’acque’ ‘and you will see there one who among the grass and the waters,’ he hypothesizes that she was either a commoner or of impoverished nobility and that, as implied in sonnet 8, “A pie’ de’ colli ove la bella vesta’ ‘At the foot of the hills where the lovely garment,’ and sonnet 288, “d’aspri colli mirando il dolce piano / ove nacque colui’ ‘gazing from the harsh hills at the sweet plain where she was born,’ Laura lived in the desolate plain between the rivers Sorgue and Durance, probably at the town of Cabrières. At this point Vellutello reproduces an extraordinary topographic relief map of Vauchese and its environs, focusing on exaggerated detail upon the region where the Sorgue river passes through Cabrières, “la

*A related reaffirmation of Laura’s marriage to Hughes de Sade is Jacques François Paul Aldonce de Sade, _Mémoire pour la vie de François Pétrarque_ (Amsterdam: Aldocè & Mercus, 1764–67).
qual cosa sara anchora gran lume a chi de l’opera desidera ogni sentimento havere’ ‘which will be illuminating to whoever wishes to get a complete sense of the text’ (BB3). Vellutello’s study of this locale gives rise to his central hypothesis about Laura’s identity and the circumstances of her meeting Petrarch. For crucial details the commentator accepts the testimony of an informant whom he met during his visit there, “la familiariita di costui hebbi io per lo mezzo di [due uomini] . . . da quali, andando io d’Avignone a questo luogo per le presente cose investigare, fui amorevolissimamente accompagnato” ‘whose acquaintance I made through two men . . . by whom I was most graciously accompanied as I went from Avignon to this region to investigate the matter at hand’ (BB4). Not only does the informant demonstrate from parish records the birth of a Laura, daughter of Henri Chiabau, an impoverished lord of Cabrières, on 4 June 1314, but he also affirms that she died a spinster in 1348. The congruence of these dates with those of the Rime sparse impels Vellutello to question his informant further. The latter’s response takes the form of a narrative about local observances during Holy Week, and this narrative generates Vellutello’s peculiar postulate about how Petrarch met Laura.

The event occurred not in the Church of Santa Chiara at Avignon, as the famous note in Petrarch’s edition of Virgil indicates, but rather on the flower-strewn plain of the Sorgue. According to custom, the inhabitants of Vaulcuse and Cabrières make a pilgrimage each Good Friday from the Church of Saint Varan to a monastery at Lilla. Vellutello dramatizes the meeting in 1327 as Petrarch in his twenty-fourth year and Laura in her fourteenth year reach Saint Varan simultaneously and pause to rest beneath the shade of a tree: “Forse un poco per lo caminare stanca, s’era per riposarsi e rinfrescarsi sotto un fiorito arbre . . . quando dal Poeta, il quale che da Valclusa anchora a egli, per la medio-cisma cagione a l’Illa andando fu in questo luogo la prima volta veduta” ‘Perhaps a bit tired from the journey, she paused for rest and refreshment beneath a flowering tree . . . when here she was first seen by the poet who was traveling from Vauchuse to Lilla for the same purpose’ (1’). Vellutello then supports his conclusion with evidence from the poetry that celebrates the flowers (30.1), outdoor breezes (90.1), and fresh waters (126.1) enlivening Laura where the Sorgue divides (66.32–33). The movement of a desire born in open, raw, untamed nature thus generates a complex psychological action. Petrarch has located his forbidden passion in this displaced paradise, a wilderness between two branches of a river that deviates from its own course, a scene of primitive, wild, uncontrolled urgency, “tutto quel giorno seguittandola, come in alcuni luoghi dell’opera vedremo, ardentissimamente infiam-
mumd Spenser to conceive sometimes elaborate narrative strategies for their own Petrarchan sequences.

Authorizing Rhetoric: Sylvano da Venafro, Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo, and Bernardino Daniello

Vellutello’s edition of the *Le volgari opere del Petrarcha* passed through six major printings and twenty-three reprintings at nine different publishers between 1525 and 1584. Its version of Petrarch’s life galvanized an understanding of Petrarch’s career for the rest of the sixteenth century. Though later commentators undid Vellutello’s rearrangement of the poems, they returned to the conventional order with a new perspective gained from Vellutello’s conjectures. Sylvano da Venafro, Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo, and Bernardino Daniello offer close rhetorical readings of Petrarch’s text. Frequently, as with Sylvano, their readings amount to modifications of readings posed by Vellutello. Gesualdo, whose commentary is the most detailed of any in the sixteenth century, takes explicit issue with Vellutello, among others, in lengthy arguments. Finally, the inspiration for Petrarch that Vellutello and his predecessors attributed to classical and Christian literature comes under sharper analysis by both Gesualdo and Daniello. The latter especially brings a great arsenal of new classical learning to bear upon his discussion of ancient sources and analogues for Petrarch’s texts. All three pay close attention to Petrarch’s rhetorical talent. For them Petrarch is a master rhetorician whose *Rime sparse* constitute a perfect model for elegant and persuasive discourse.

The editions of Sylvano, Gesualdo, and Daniello were above all commercial ventures. Sylvano and Gesualdo both wrote at Naples and published their editions in 1533, the former for a local audience, the latter for a much wider readership. The intellectual climate of Naples bears strongly upon their outlooks. Under Spanish rule since 1503, Naples labored to preserve its cultural identity with the rest of Italy. In 1516 Charles V inherited the crown of Aragon with the vice-regency of Naples and Sicily as well as the regency of Castile, and he brought to this extensive realm many elaborate traditions of chivalry and ceremony from the Burgundian court in which he had grown up. The court of Naples, so austere during the old regime, soon emulated the pageantry and display of Spain. The Academy of Naples at first reacted against this flourish by promoting the subdued Christian humanism of its leader, Jacopo Sanazzaro, who published his *Piscatoriae* and *De parta virginis* in 1526. Supported by members of the nobility bound to the old dynasty, the Academy eventually took in the newer currents, opening to a greater participation by women, including Princess Caterina Cybo, Countess Giovanna d’Aragona, and Vittoria Colonna, marioness of Pescara, who invigorated it with their deep interest in religion and theology. Against this background of elegant courtiership, poetical Platonism, redefined classicism, and fervent religiosity, the rhetorical commentaries of Sylvano and Gesualdo resonate.

Sylvano’s *Il Petrarcha* had a less direct influence on the reception of Petrarch’s *Rime sparse* than any other before or after it. Composed perhaps as early as 1527, but certainly after Vellutello’s edition of 1525, it was published in quarto with large Roman type at Naples in March 1533, after delays occasioned by turmoil following Charles V’s sack of Rome. Though it saw only a limited circulation in its single edition, it focused upon themes of well-bred amatory conduct that would later dominate European Petrarchism. These themes displaced the political emphases of Antonio da Tempo, Filelfo, S Quarzafico, and even Vellutello, and they displayed the communal quietism that had come to hide the trauma of foreign domination in Naples. Dedicated to Filippo della Noi, prince of Salmone, Sylvano’s commentary could only herald for its dispossessed patron the compensatory benefits of courtliness, gallantry, Platonic sentiment, and Christian piety.

The commentary explores Petrarch’s inner life. Sylvano’s learned references to Latin poetry, chiefly the Roman elegists, to the philosophy of Plato and the Stoics, and to other signposts of European culture, convey a modicum of intellectual training distilled through largely conventional sixteenth-century handbooks. Sylvano’s name does not appear in the register of Naples’s Academy, but he no doubt followed its activities as a marginal participant, receiving and processing ideas rather than creating or initiating them. A letter by Giovambattista Bacchini da Modena in Gesualdo’s edition of Petrarch, in press when Sylvano’s appeared earlier the same year, mentions this commentary as an echo of “quelli scritti che sopra il Petrarcha si scrissero, quando la nostra Accademia fioriria in quella Gitta” ‘those pages that were written about Petrarch when our


Academy flourished in that city’ (Gesualdo aii). Principles of taste and refinement learned from the Academy provide ammunition against the occasional crudeness and irreverence of Vellutello, whose lapses Sylvano takes to task. Though Sylvano accepts some of Vellutello’s biographical judgments, he argues against any reordering of the Rime sparse and he labors to correct faulty impressions about rhetoric and religion that Vellutello had registered.

Sylvano’s attraction to rhetorical form and his avoidance of politics are evident in his prefatory “Life of Petrarch.” Beginning as a free translation of Petrarch’s “Letter to Posterity,” it paraphrases the poet’s references to his inborn talent as a diplomat, but it omits nearly every detail about his highly public life as an emissary and also about his highly private life as a scholar. It omits, for example, the letter’s account of Petrarch’s political efforts to persuade Pope Urban V to bring the Papal See back to Rome and it drastically abridges the letter’s account of Petrarch’s service at the courts of Parma and Verona. Minimizing Petrarch’s narrative about his retreat from Avignon, Sylvano likewise reduces to a single sentence the poet’s long description of how he composed his major Latin texts at Vaucluse: “Ivi dal rustico & selvaggio paese inviato, la Buocolica mia con gran parte dell’Africa, e i libri de vita solitaria scissi” ‘There, summoned by the wild rustic countryside, he wrote his Buocolici and his Vita solitaria along with a large part of Africa’ (+iiif). Petrarch’s other achievements in humanistic learning and classical scholarship make no impact on Sylvano. For him Petrarch’s greatest talent is to use the vernacular to express amatory sentiment in a decorous style. Unlike Vellutello, who largely ignored Bembo’s commendation of Petrarch’s Tuscan locution, Sylvano expresses admiration of it. Petrarch’s Italian poetry offers a superb rhetorical model for courtly discourse.

Sylvano includes a prefatory “Life of Laura” addressed specifically to the women at court: “Maxime per piacere alle Donne, che haurebbon caro di intendere anchor piu di quel che ne scrisse il P.” ‘I write especially to please the ladies who might wish to understand more about matters that Petrarch writes of’ (+iiii). Mindful of sexual strategies to control the activities of women at court, Sylvano proceeds as though he were a double agent amid gender wars. On the one hand he implies that women can use his commentary as a handbook to calculate the strategies of potential suitors in tournaments of love. Recalling Ovid’s insistence upon fair play in the Ars Amatoria, he argues that women cannot respond to or circumvent their suitors’ designs without knowing them in advance: “Arma dedi Danaias in Amazonis; arma supersunt. / Quae tibi dem et turmae. Penthesilea, tue” ‘I have armed the Danai against the Amazons; there remain arms which I must give to thee, Pen-

thesilea’ (Ars 3.1–2). On the other hand Sylvano designs his commentary as a handbook for men to plan their maneuvers in anticipation of women’s responses. Again recalling Ovid, he recognizes the risk: “Quo ferox insanu? quid aperto pectore in hostem / Mettur, et indicio prodor ab ipse meo?” ‘Whither am I borne in my frenzy? Why rush I with open breast against the foe and am betrayed by my own evidence?’ (3.667–68). Contrary to Vellutello, Sylvano insists that Laura was a married woman and that Petrarch’s love was in potentia adulterous: “Nomolla volte assai per pudica, per casta, p[er] santa, per onesta, non gia per vergine” ‘Petrarch often writes of her as modest, chaste, devout, and honorable, but never as a virgin’ (+iiii). Arguing vigorously for her highborn rank, he excuses her flirtation while he grants the poet license to pursue her.

Laura’s rank in fact enables Petrarch’s pursuit. The lover importunes his beloved with thousands of intricate formalities while she protects her interests with corresponding ceremonies. Beneath the surface may lurk unresolved anxieties, thinly masked aggressions, displaced violence, residual envy, and wounded pride, but the honorific code of a noble love covers all their traces. Sylvano shows how Petrarch eschews scandal and above all vulgarity by implementing this code, turning his commentary into an ars amatoria for a lover with good intentions. As his gloss upon sonnet 216 explains, it can have therapeutic effects upon Petrarch’s readers: “Siano le testimoni coloro, che in simile stato trovandosi, si sono alle volte per disfogation di lor dolori servuti di leggerlo, o ragionarlo!” ‘Those people offer testimony who, finding themselves in a similar state, help themselves toward alleviating their own woes by reading about Petrarch’s and talking about them’ (clvii).

The lengthiest sixteenth-century commentary on the Rime sparse e Triiifi submitted the text to a detailed rhetorical analysis. Composed by Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo, it underwent seven influential editions in quarto with reduced Italic type after its publication at Venice in July, 1533, and it was granted the prestige of appearing as the magisterial gloss on the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta in the 1554 and 1581 Basel folio editions of Petrarch’s complete works. Beyond declaring his birth at the end of the fifteenth century near Gaeta at Traetto, the ancestral home of his famous mentor and blood-relative Antonio Sebastiano Minturno, Gesualdo leaves few clues to his own identity. In the mid-1520s he evidently attended Minturno’s discussions at the Academy of Naples where the latter resided after his studies at Pisa, Florence, and Rome.26 In these
discussions Petrarch’s poetry figured as a prominent topic, and Gesualdo
records what was said. The publication of his commentary, drafted per-
haps as early as 1523 but later revised and augmented, was, like Syl-
vano da Venafro’s, delayed by Charles V’s assault on Rome. The only other
remnants of Gesualdo’s literary activity are eleven sonnets included in an
anthology of _Rime di diversi eccellenti autori_. Assembled by Lodovico
Domenichi and printed at Venice by Gabriele Giolito in 1545, these _Rime_
underwent several editions and provided models for imitation in Du Bel-
lay’s _Olive_ and Ronsard’s _Les amours._

Bacchini’s letter appended to Gesualdo’s commentary, already men-
tioned for referring to Sylvano da Venafro, reveals something about the
circumstances of its publication. Minturno had urged Gesualdo to pub-
lish his work outside Naples, but while the manuscript lay at a printer’s
shop in Bologna, a Modenese acquaintance of Bacchini read it and plagi-
larized some of its best parts. The alleged plagiarist, Fausto da Longi-
ano, rushed his own commentary into print in 1532, though, as we shall
see, it bears little indebtedness to Gesualdo’s. Bacchini nonetheless uses
the allegation to proclaim the superiority of Gesualdo’s work. Fausto’s
commentary is too brief, full of error, and wilfully eccentric: “Ella è
brevisissima & poco o nulla espone del testo. In più luoghi, per dir cose
nuove, è diversa da la commune opinion.” “It is very brief and offers
little or no explication of the text. In many places, in order to assert
novel claims, it diverges from commonly held opinion” (aii). Gesualdo’s
commentary, on the other hand, offers an extensive examination of Pe-
trarch and it clarifies issues that would otherwise remain obscure.

Gesualdo’s dedicatory letter to his aristocratic patroness, Maria di Car-
donza, the marchioness of Palude, reveals other circumstances. Gesualdo
thanks Minturno “per sua humanitatem, e per quei legami di sangue, che
cön lui mi stringono” “for his generosity and for those ties of blood that
bind me to him” (aiii), and he announces that Minturno will one day
publish his own dialogue on Petrarch, tentatively entitled _The Academy._
Until then Gesualdo’s commentary may help to illuminate the _Rime sparse
e Triomfi._

I quali ragionamenti . . . sospinsero lui stesso a scriverne quel Dialogo, che
egli chiama Academia: nel quale non pur commendò il parlare Thoscano, e
soure ogni cosa le rime del Poeta, ma dimostra quanto e quale fosse lo
‘ngegno e l’arte di lui, e di quanta dottrina in ogni scientia, e di quanti
ornamenti pieno il dire. (aiii)

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Under Minturno’s spell, Gesualdo understands the text as an endless
debate between literal and figurative discourse, teeming with shifting
relations among its representational and tropological components. No
doubt working through the Academy’s controversies, acting out the dis-
agreements, and perhaps trying to rival the brilliance of other disputants,
Gesualdo defines his own position by arguing with actual or hypothetical
adversaries. His authority is rhetoric itself and his ethos is that of a master
rhetorician. He presents divergent opinions, offers reasons for each, and
nudges his readers to settle the claims in their own way. Unlike other
readers who propound a single strong thesis, Gesualdo offers many. The
result is a long, rich, and studiously open-ended commentary on the _Rime
corse e Triomfi._

Minturno (1502–74) never published the dialogue on Petrarch to
which Gesualdo alludes, but in 1556 he did issue his Latin _De poeta libri
twenty years and the best part of my life_ devoted to literary scholarship (Gilbert trans., p. 274), and in 1563–64 he presented his vernacular _De arte poeticæ: Della toscana poesia_, an expan-
sion of his Latin work with its ideas applied to Italian texts. These
treatises disclose some assumptions that Gesualdo consciously or uncon-
sciously accepts, rejects, echoes, or resists in his commentary. Like
Bembo, whose _Prose della volgar lingua_ exalted Petrarch four decades ear-
ier, Minturno esteem Petrarch as the best model for Italian verse: “Tra
noi un sol Petrarca si truoti, a cui di fari simili ogni opera, & ogni
studio por debbiamo” “Among us Petrarch alone is touch whom we
ought to make ourselves similar with all our industry and all our zeal”
(Minturno, p. 445, Gilbert trans., p. 301). Unlike Bembo, whose motives
for authorizing Petrarch were rooted in a political desire to unify the
Italian language and in a self-serving bid to gain recognition from the
Medici by exalting Florentine culture, Minturno appeals to the putatively
timeless canons of rhetoric.

Minturno recognizes that poetic reputation is, or can be, a construc-
tion of critical discourse and cultural politics rather than of intrinsic
worth, but he represses any impulse to explore this possibility. Assessing

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Bernard Weinberg, _A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance_, 2 vols. (Chi-
the merits of Bofardo and Ariosto, he appropriates the terms of Machiavelli’s historical schema for literary history when he reflects upon the virtù and fortuna that make or break poetic reputations: “O la propria uertü, ò la fortuna (s’ègì è pur uero, che ogni poema, si come ciascuna altra opera, hà il suo fato) ò l’una e l’altra hà data somma riputatione” ‘[to Bofardo and Ariosto] either their own virtue or fortune (if it is indeed true that every poem like every other work has its fate) or both together have given every very great reputation’ (Minturno 32; Gilbert 284). His resort to the play of linguistic structures, his flirtation with rhetorical undecidability, his willed historical amnesia prevent him from looking harder at fortuna and virtù in forming canons. Whether subdued by the Spanish vice-regency imposed upon Naples a half-century earlier, or by promptings of the Counter-Reformation, in which Minturno as bishop of Ugento played an active part at the Council of Trent, the literary theorist has retreated to rhetorical formalism.

Minturno’s emphasis upon the workings of language and the structures of thought leads to his focus upon Petrarch’s stylistic use of Tuscan and his formulation of moral sententiae: “Le quali si dirizzano all’amendare la uita, & al bene operare” ‘Their purpose is to make life better and encourage good works’ (Minturno 285; Gilbert 297). Authorizing Petrarch as a model for Italian verse, Minturno proclaims his own Alexandrine taste for small, highly wrought forms in the lyric genre rather than for sprawling forms of narrative or epic, for precious and precious artistry rather than for crowd-pleasing popularity: “Io per me piu stimo un sonetto del Petrarca, che tutti i Romanzi; onde conuien, che l’ulogo errante agogni” ‘I value a sonnet by Petrarch higher than all the romances; this indicates that the rabble is mistaken in its wishes’ (Minturno 26; Gilbert 276). These preferences bolster Minturno’s denial of history or biography as sites of lyric utterance. Sonnets are poetic fabrications that depict nothing of the poet’s life or avowed intentions. Thus Minturno impugns any notion of the Írime spars as a narrative of actual events or even as a dramatization of the author’s subjectivity. He views it instead as a collection of poems whose lyric persona is rhetorically invented and biographically discontinuous with the poet’s selfhood.

The Írime spars nonetheless embody principles of poetic imitation. To those who would claim that only narrative or drama imitate human action, Minturno responds that every act of speech imitates something. At the most basic level, all speakers project images that represent qualities of body and mind, habit and expression: “Percioche dir non si può non imitare colui, che ben dipinge la forma del corpo; overo gli affetti dell’animo: ò dicevolmente nota i costumi, ò qualunque altra cosa discriva talmente, che expressa la ti paia vedere” ‘He who competently

depicts the body’s form or the soul’s affects or aptly notes his habits or describes something else so that you seem to see what is expressed, cannot be said not to imitate’ (175). As lyric poets, Horace and Petrarch image forth an invented persona, “quali sono la maggior parte l’ode Horatiane, e le rime del Petrarca; ove niuoro à parlare s’introduce” ‘as, for the greater part, are Horace’s odes or Petrarch’s Írime where no one other than the poet is introduced to speak’ (175). When poets address a specific audience, they fashion for themselves a suitable voice in order to appeal to that audience: “Anzi, quando il Poeta parla ad alturai; par, che depona la persona del Poeta; e ne prenda, ò tengo un’altra” ‘Moreover, when a poet speaks to someone else, it even appears that he displaces his own persona and assumes or retains another’ (175).

For Minturno the lyric utterance need not correspond to the poet’s own intentions or beliefs; it serves rather to enact a series of assertions that acquire lives of their own. In the Írime spars Petrarch cultivates two central voices or personas as poet and lover, ‘percioche nel Petrarca due persone intender possiamo: l’una del Poeta, quando egli narra; e l’altra dell’amante, quando dirizza à Madonna Laura il suo dire” ‘since in Petrarch we can understand two personas, one of the poet when he narrates and another of the lover when he addresses Laura’ (175). These personas fluctuate in turn as private citizen, professional scholar, public figure, devoted friend, and ardent patriot. Minturno notes these variations in sonnet 212, “Sennuicio io vo”; canzone 126, “Chiare, freschi, e dolci acque”; and canzone 128, “Italia mia”; and he implies that the Írime spars sustain still others, all dissociable from any necessary linkage with the historical Petrarch.

Gesualdo takes this argument a step further. From the start he adopts Minturno’s formal and stylistic categories and especially his definitions of genres and subgenres. Gesualdo situates Petrarch as a lyric poet in the tradition of Pindaric or Horatian ode rather than Callimachian or Tibullian elegy, and he explains his reasoning in terms of Minturno’s thesis about the poetic persona: “Benchè egli nel suo cantare in guisa d’Elegia sovente si lamenti e pianga, nondimeno più simile à quel di Pindaro, e d’Horatio, ch’a quel di Callimacho e di Tibullo mi par lo sìile” ‘Although in his songs he often complains and laments in the manner of an elegy, nonetheless his style seems more like that of Pindar and Horace than that of Callimachus and Tibullus’ (ciit). Petrarch’s play of shifting voices implies that none of his texts ever fully stabilizes its author’s identity. The poet has created many different versions of himself, fictive or otherwise, to serve many different needs. A synchronic rhetorical analysis of Petrarch’s style therefore yields more insight into the diversity of his creation than any diachronic analysis of its narrative.
Approaching Petrarch’s texts through their changing style, Gesualdo’s commentary uncovers figurative equivocations, tropological dissonances, and enigmatic ambiguity. Their ambivalence locates Petrarch’s style midway between the ornamental display of the ancients and the plain style of the moderns:

Tenne egli nelle prose uno stile tempato e mezo tra l’antico di quelli ornatissimi prosatori, & il moderno de religiosi e devoti del nome di Cristo; Ne i versi il migliore che in quella età poteva tenearsi; ma, riguardandosi à gli antichi poeti, mezzano. (bvi)

In prose he adhered to a tempered middle style, between the ancient style of those most ornamental writers and the modern style of those devoted to the name of Christ; in verse, he produced the best that could be found in this age but, with respect to the ancients, a middle style nonetheless.

This same ambivalence blinded Petrarch’s contemporaries to his virtues. Gesualdo acknowledges that while earlier generations esteemed Dante for the vast design of his subject matter, later generations have been able to appreciate the more refined subtlety of Petrarch’s style:

O perché ella non affissava bene anch’ora i chiari lumi de l’eloquentia, al solo soggetto, non a gli ornamenti de le sentenze ne à le figure de le parole intendendo. Percio che quello più appreghiamo, che è più conforme à nostro costume: ne puo ben laudarsi quello, che mal si conosce. (bvi)

Either because it did not yet pay good attention to the clear lights of eloquence, perceiving its content alone and not its ornaments of thought or figures of speech, or because what we value more is more consonant with our own customs and what was poorly understood cannot be fully praised.

Notably for Gesualdo, Petrarch’s stylistic predilections resemble those of Plato’s Socrates, the ironist who questions his own understanding and disrupts naïve links between words and things: “Concosia che nelle sue scritture si vede apertamente haver saputo dissimulare, dimostrando sovente ignorare e coprendo maestrevolmente gli affetti suoi, & Intendendo altro che non sonavano le parole o gli ati scoprivano” ’In his texts he seems openly to have known how to dissimulate, often showing ignorance and masterfully veiling his emotions, and understanding words and deeds differently from how they sound or appear’ (bvi). Petrarch’s lifetime of wandering furnishes a metaphor for his text as a Socratic itinerary: “Hebbe egli ancho in costume d’andare pellegrinando per un suo naturale amore di veder molto, oltra che fu da fatale suo destino che ritrovandosi nato in esilio, non avesse mai fermo albergo, si come habbiamo nella vita sua dimostrato” ‘With his natural desire to see much, beyond his fatal destiny to have been born in exile, he was in the habit of wandering far and wide; as we have shown in his biography, he never had a fixed lodging’ (bvi). Its rhetorical complexity represents the human condition as a mimetically unstable, experientially decen- tered one.

Gesualdo’s figurative approach to Petrarch’s style informs his historical approach to Laura. For the most part Gesualdo endorses Vellutello’s account of her life, but he allows his own penchant for ambiguity to equivocate its conclusions. He questions, for example, whether Laura was so impoverished as Vellutello claims, and he evokes the rumor that she was wholly fictional. Antonio da Tempo and Fausto da Longiano also evoked this rumor, but only in order to deny it categorically or to use it to support their own tendentious images of Petrarch. With Gesualdo the doubt is radical. On the one hand he asserts that Petrarch’s own Latin writings measure her existence: “Ne finto com’alcuni sumarono ma vero. Il che senza dubio veruno troverete non pur nell’Ecloge, ma nell’ Epistle Familiari” ‘[Petrarch’s love for Laura] was not fictive as others claim, but true; you will discover that without any doubt not just in the eclogues but also in his familiar letters’ (ci). On the other hand he points out that Petrarch often uses Laura to figure his literary endeavors: “Nondimeno tal volta col nome di lei par che alluda a l’ardente suo amore verso la poesia & allo studio che vi posse per acquistareno honore’ ‘Nonetheless it occasionally appears that with her name he refers to his ardent love for poetry and scholarship that he undertakes in order to win honor’ (ci). Her figural role does not necessarily cancel her historical identity, but neither does it confirm whether the Rime sparse e Triofì or any of Petrarch’s other texts represent her accurately.

Gesualdo embraces this open-endedness as a solution to other problems in reading the Rime sparse e Triofì. He explicitly rejects Vellutello’s attempt to impose closure on the random order of the sequence: “Andar poi cercando ordine in tutte altre cose, che non si veggono esser sì manifestamente congiunti, ne con si certa sequela insieme si rispon- dono, sarebbe oppr si viene di molta fatica, così poco a grado, per non dir perduta” ‘To go looking for order in diverse components that do not seem to be related in any apparent manner and that do not follow one another in any definite sequence would be a laborious task indeed, so unrewarding, not to say utterly hopeless’ (ci). For Gesualdo this randomness constitutes a real poetic merit. Vellutello betrays its full-blooded vitality by reorganizing it into a coherent narrative. Gesualdo thus argues that a collection of lyric poetry does not need the structure of an epic
or drama and that it even suffers from such an ordering: “Così apò noi le canzoni & i sonetti non debbono esser tutti in quella maniera continuiati, che nei Triomphi, e nei Canti serviamo” “So for us his songs and sonnets do not have to be wholly continuous in the manner that we observe in the Triomfi and songs’ (ciò).”

To support his claims, the commentator refers to Petrarch’s avowal in his letters that his Rime sparse survive more by accident than by design and that they circulate again: his will. He even evokes the manifest contradiction that sonnets 118 and 122 mark the sixteenth and seventeenth anniversaries of the speaker’s love before sonnet 145 marks its fifteenth anniversary, while sonnet 266 observes its eighteenth anniversary after sonnet 212 observes its twentieth. At the same time he affirms that no manuscript authorizes any other order than the one that Vat. Lat. 3195 establishes as definitive. The sequence represents its speaker’s inner growth as something that exceeds any historical record. Gesualdo therefore considers it a moral duty to preserve the order of Vat. Lat. 3195: “Di meravigliosa & inaudita prestonzione eterno biasmo potrei riportarne ‘I would bring down upon myself’ eternal censure for incredible and unprecedented presumption’ (ciò). The poet did not bother to arrange a sequence, nor will the commentator presume to do so.

Far from displacing any moral imperatives, Gesualdo finds that aesthetic issues accentuate them. Petrarch’s complex moral sentiment fully justifies his complexity of form. Describing the verbal style of the Rime sparse, Gesualdo finally resorts to negative definition as the only adequate way to affirm its powerful accommodation of contradictory impulses:

Quanto senza durezza grave, e pieno di maestà? Quanto senza lascivia, leggiadro, piacevole e copioso? . . . Niente è in lui, che non sia di divine virtù, di celesti bellezze, d’angelici costumi, d’honestissimo amore, di somma umanità, d’ineffabile cortesia. (ciò)

How serious and full of grandeur without being insensitive? How graceful, pleasing, and abundant without being lascivious? . . . There is nothing in it that does not partake of divine merit, celestial beauty, angelic habit, the purest love, the greatest humanity, ineffable courtesy.

The moral quality of Petrarch’s style, its ethical usefulness, consists in its depth of statement, a statement that goes beyond any thematic commonplaces in semantic complexity, metaphoric abundance, and figurative oppositions.

The third major rhetorical commentary on the Rime sparse e Triomfi in the sixteenth century is the work of Bernardino Daniello. Born at Lucca in 1500, Daniello had distinguished himself as a student of the Venetian Trifone Gabriele in various tasks as editor, translator, teacher, poet, and commentator. In dedicating his Petrarchan commentary to Andrea Cornello, bishop of Brescia, Daniello acknowledges his debt to Gabriele, “Queste sue fatichie sono in gran parte di Trifon Gabriele.” These labors owe a great deal to Trifone Gabriele,” even to the extent that others, “alcuni maligni” ‘maligners’ in his view, think his work plagiarized from Gabriele (ciò). Since Gabriele notoriously refused to publish what he taught, Daniello eagerly casts himself as Plato to the former’s Socrates in transcribing and disseminating his work, “ch’ho hora di quest’altro mio novello Socrate ho fatto e di fare intendo per l’avvenire in tutte le cose: giovandomi in questo esso Platone imitare” ‘which I now have done with respect to my new Socrates, and which I intend to do on all counts in the future, rejoicing that I imitate Plato in this respect’ (ciò). Indeed, as Gabriele was Bembo’s student, and as Daniello was Gabriele’s, Daniello’s ideas might seem ultimately to derive from Bembo, whose projected line-by-line gloss on the Rime sparse failed to materialize.

Daniello nonetheless modifies the work of his predecessors as he advances beyond plagiarism. At Venice in 1536 Daniello published his own concise and illuminating La poetica volgare, based on a synthesis of Cicerò’s rhetoric and Horace’s art of poetry with references to Gabriele’s precepts. Five years later in quarto with Italic type he published his first commentary on the Sonetti, canzoni, e triomphi (1541), a project that he revised and expanded in 1549. In 1545 he contributed with Gesualdo and others to Domenichi’s and Giolito’s collection of Rime di diversi eccellenti autori, where his “Se ‘l viver nostro è breve solo giorno” became an explicit model for Du Bellay’s “Si nostro vie est moins qu’une journée” in Olive. In 1549, the year of his augmented commentary on Petrarch, Daniello edited and translated Virgil’s Georgies for an edition of Virgil’s works, and late in life he compiled a remarkable set of annotations for Dante’s Commedia, published posthumously at Venice in 1568.

The moral tone of Daniello’s “Vita di Petrarcha” in his expanded commentary (1549); there is no “Vita” in the first edition of 1541) distances it from Gesualdo’s formalism. Daniello represents the poet’s aversion to court life with a confessional pathos that condemns court intrigue: “Ma chiariossi poi de’ costumi e proceder de la corte, vegghendo che non i dotti e vertusi, ma gl’ignoranti & vitiosi vi si amavano, favorivano e
but its verbal signifiers are not consubstantial with transcendent signifieds. They correspond only imperfectly.

The problem is as broadly ontological or epistemological as it is linguistic. No human language by itself can achieve full referential meaning. Philosophy offers only a veil of truth, just as poetry does. Thus Daniello represents Petrarch’s view of philosophy in canzone 119, “Una donna più bella assai che ‘l sole” ‘A lady much more beautiful than the sun’; “Et percée le sostanze di qua giu, uere sostanze non sono; ma imagini et apparenze di quelle, conclude finalmente il dotto Poeta altro non esser la Philosophia (rispetto alla Theologia) ch’una cotale ombra & imagine di lei, facendole dire” ‘And because the substances of this world are not true substances but only images and appearances of them, the learned poet finally concludes that philosophy, with respect to theology, is nothing but their shadow and image’ (29). For Daniello all language articulates a simulacrum of reality that confounds reality. A disjunction between words and things leads to a confusion between words and things, or to mistaking human and necessarily imperfect discourse about reality for reality itself. Not only may the verbal surface obscure the substance of what it refers to, but in the case of elaborate rhetorical figuration it may even displace that substance altogether.

Daniello describes this type of discourse as gonfia ‘swollen’ and enfiata ‘inflated’ because it carries meaning in excess of its intention, and simultaneously enervati ‘enervated’ because it deprives meaning of its reference: “Oratone, . . . che più è gonfia et enfiata . . . Et enervati, quelle cose seguendo che troppo polite & leggiadre sono” ‘Rhetoric . . . that is more swollen and inflated . . . And enervated, as those expressions are too polished and pretty’ (78, 79). Petrarch’s sonnet 133 affords an example with its correspondent similes, its contrasting climaxes, its pleonastic extension:

Amor m’a posto come segno a strale,
come al sol neve, come sera al foco,
et come nebbia al vento; et son già roco,
Donna, mercé chiamando, et voi non cale.

Love has set me up like a target for arrows, like snow in the sun, like wax in the fire, like a cloud in the wind; and I am already hoarse, Lady, with calling for mercy, and you do not care.

Daniello concludes that if we empty the poem of its rhetoric, it would stand naked, devoid of meaning, signifying nothing: “Perche se noi questo di quelle corrispondenze, & contrapositioni (di che egli è pieno)
spogliassino, egli del tutto ignudo rimarrebbe, in se niuna sentenza havendo, et niente per se significando’” “But if we divested this poem of those correspondences and contrasts, of which it is full, it would be naked of everything, having no meaning in itself and signifying nothing by itself” (79). This view of the potential emptiness of Petrarch’s rhetoric conditions Daniello’s approach to the Rime sparse. His commentary demonstrates that Petrarch’s elocutionary devices at their worst suffer from inflated figuration and hollow meaning. It also shows that these devices at their best offer a profound alternative to the language of philosophy. They unfold in a semiotic universe whose verbal components refer to subjects and ideas, reality and events, with their own linguistic logic.

In his commentary on the Rime sparse e Triomfi Daniello tries to penetrate this semiotic universe. The philologist and humane scholar knows that language undergoes change in the course of time. Words lose and acquire meanings and their transmission from the past leaves them different from what they were. On one level Daniello tries to deliver the Rime sparse and its received variants from anachronistic defacement. Conscious of his remoteness from Petrarch, he attempts a transaction with the text that will acknowledge its atterity. Petrarch himself acknowledges his own dislocation from antiquity and his need to recuperate cultural and literary values that time has obscured: “Erano per l’innondazione di tante barbare nazioni smarriti e perduti molti antichi libri, buona parte de quali egli con ogni studio e diligenza, non guardando ne à spesa ne à disagio alcuno, s’ingegnò di ricuperare” “Many ancient texts were mislaid and lost in the flood of so many barbarian invasions and a good part of them Petrarch endeavored to recuperate with his own care and diligence, concerned with neither cost nor hardship’ (1549 ed.: *iir). Petrarch sought to enrich his own poetry with a language that resonates from classical texts, but he also knew that distance diminished their resonance. Daniello will chart this diminution, measuring Petrarch’s classical allusions and literary pretensions against the standard of classical learning, all the while aware that both his understanding and Petrarch’s differ from each other as well as from antiquity.

Daniello’s sense of historical contamination affects his response to Petrarch’s language but not to gaps in the sequence of his poetry. He appropriates Vellutello’s account of Laura’s identity and her pilgrimage through the Sorgue valley on Good Friday, but he does not rearrange the poems to tell a more coherent story. Nor is he interested in the question of Laura’s fictional status, though in his reading of sonnet 318 he contends that death transforms her into a symbol for the poetic enterprise: “Nel qual Son. chiaramente dimostra ch’al cader d’una pianta (per il suo caro ed amato Lauro intesa) ne vide un’altra, la quale Amore scelse per obbietto di esso Po. e le Muse lo scelseo soggetto in lui” “In this sonnet he clearly shows that upon the felling of one tree, understood as the dear, beloved Laura, appears another, which Love chose for this poet’s object, and the Muses chose it for their subject in him” (*iir). Petrarch replaces Laura, real or otherwise, by literary forms that reverberate with classical echoes.

Daniello conclusively summarizes the rhetorical view of Petrarch’s achievement with reference to language, style, and genre. By reaching so conspicuously back to the past, he shows how Petrarch has ennobled the current vernacular: “I quale à tanto honore alzò la nostra natia lingua, che non meno ha da gloriar si d’un perfetto Lyrico; di quello che si havesse la Greca e la Latina” “He elevated our native language to such heights that it can now boast of having a perfect lyric poet like those the Greek or Latin languages had” (*iir). By reconstructing fragments from the past in his own language, he shows how Petrarch collaborates with and rival the greatest poets of antiquity: “Io non so vedere in che si sia inferiore il Petr. nostro al Thebano Pindaro, o al venusino Horatio” “I don’t see any way in which our Petrarch is inferior to Theban Pindar or Venusian Horace” (*iir). By refiguring his amatory verse with dignity and propriety, he shows how Petrarch surpasses the lascivious elegists of pagan Rome: “Leggasi Catullo, Tibullo e Propertio, leggasi Ovidio, e vederai gli scrit: loro più tosto dal lascivo, furioso e ferino; che del onesto, ragionevole & umano amore esser pieni” “Read Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, read Ovid, and you will find their texts full of lascivious, untamed, savage lust rather than honorable, reasonable, humane love” (*iir). Petrarch not only recapitulates Western literary discourse before his time, he also improves upon it and transmits it to the present as a bridge over the abyss of temporality. From the complex web of allusions, echoes, and literary cross-references in Daniello’s commentary, Petrarch emerges as a contemporary not only of Dante and Cino da Pistoia, but also of Virgil and Cicero, Horace and Ovid, Plato and Aristotle, and a prophet of Bembo and Ariosto, Sannazaro and Colonna.

Authorizing Reform: Fausto da Longiano, Antonio Brucioli, and Ludovico Castelvetro

The annotations of the Rime sparse by Vellutello, Sylvano da Venafro, Gesualdo, and Daniello reached a wide and varied readership. To judge from the evidence presented in the first part of this chapter, it may have been dominated by the landed nobility and an upper-middle class urban populace including merchants, lawyers, bankers, civil servants, and oth-
ers formed by the principles of a humanistic education that reached them in a diluted form, cosmopolitan enough to savor the artfulness and exotic difference of Petrarch's verse, and appreciative enough of the efforts taken by the commentators to locate Petrarch among ancient and modern classics. Yet another kind of commentary uncovers a different dimension in Petrarch's poetry. Annotations by Fausto da Longiano, Antonio Brucioli, and Ludovico Castelvetro reveal traces of Reformationist thought that treat Petrarch as a proto-Protestant critic of the Avignon papacy, of scholastic logic, and of exegetical incompetence in scriptural study. That all three commentators were accused of Lutheran or Calvinist sympathies at Modena or Ferrara, and that their editions of Petrarch failed to gain acceptance—Brucioli's alone was reprinted, but only outside of Italy at tolerant Lyon in 1550, 1551, and 1558, and without his name at Venice in 1557, while Castelvetro's was never published within Italy—evokes the shadow of suspicion that fell upon their views.

Because it would have been commercially, let alone politically, unwise to have done so, Fausto, Brucioli, and Castelvetro do not boldly advertise their Protestant allegiances. Instead, they analyze with a new urgency Petrarch's intolerance of clerical abuse in *frottola* 105, sonnet 114, and the Babylonian sonnets 136, 137, and 138, and his reformative summons to Christian Europe in sonnet 27 and canzone 28. They call attention to Petrarch's use of scriptural sources and analogues, especially from Psalms and the Evangelists, citing scripture with the care and attention that Gesualdo and Daniello paid to classical sources and analogues. Finally, they explore the issue of civil authority and its contributions to the governance of God's Kingdom on Earth.

During the first quarter of the sixteenth century a conjunction of humanism and reform offered fertile grounds for Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anabaptism in Northern Italy. Its multiplicity of small states and independent principalities predisposed the region to heterodoxy. Before the Council of Trent, moreover, the higher clergy actively supported changes in liturgy and ceremonial, a greater attention to the reading of Scripture, and fervent efforts toward reform initiated by the laity and local rulers. After the Swabian Peasants' War of 1524–25, however, the anarchy, lawlessness, and bloodshed attributed to Protestant independence in Germany initiated new repression throughout Europe. Luther's

Address to the German Nobility (1520) had asserted the prerogatives of civil authority and, by implication, approved the claims of princely despotism. Eager to augment their power, consolidate their authority, and acquire new property through the secularization of Church lands, the princes and lords of Northern Italy monitored Protestant developments with their own self-interest in mind. Fausto, Brucioli, and Castelvetro cultivated their patronage.

Fausto da Longiano published his commentary on the *II Petrarca* at Venice in 1532 in a small octavo volume with italic type, and in it he pursues one strategic goal. Born in 1502 at Lonzano in Romagna, Fausto spent his life attaining security and advancement in the courts of Northern Italy. He annotated Petrarch's text while serving as tutor to the son of the count of Modena, Guido Rangone. Not satisfied with his progress at that court, and perhaps wary of dangerous affiliations that Modenese humanists had struck with emergent Lutheranism, he moved through various other courts where he produced a series of practical handbooks: *Dell'istituir e fin di un principe 'Educating a Prince's Son'* for Cesare Hecolani at the Marche in 1542, a *Trattato sul duello regolato alle leggi dell'onore 'Treatise on Duelling Regulated by the Codes of Honor'* for Riccardo di Merone at Muzio in 1551, and a *Dialogo intorno ai modi di tradurre in altra lingua 'Dialogue about Ways of Translating Other Languages'* at Vicenza in 1556. In the last he codified principles underlying his own previously published translations from Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Nicetas, and Aristotile. After 1550 he served at the court of Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy. Though Fausto wrote his commentary on Petrarch at an early stage in his career, its concerns already announce his involvement with religious reform, the manners of the elite, and the ceremonies of court life.

Fausto's prefatory "Life of Petrarch" establishes the coordinates of his vision. Instead of presenting a chronological account of events in the poet's life, it offers a psychological anatomy of the poet's personality and behavior, a spiritual profile of the idealism and egoism, altruism and pragmatism that beset his inner life. Though an exemplary public servant, Petrarch inclines toward luxury, comfort, and ease: "L'animò hebbe molto inchinato alla lussuria" 'In spirit he inclined greatly toward luxury' (air). To achieve his goals Petrarch submits to political powers who can advance his social standing. All the while he yearns for acceptance through the faith promised in the gospels and taught by Saint Augustine. Evidence that Petrarch played the courtier's game very well

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For the diffusion of literary commentaries as vehicles of humanist learning for the middle and upper classes as opposed to biblical commentaries for devout believers, see François Rigolot, "Introduction à l'étude du 'commentaire'," *Les commentaires et la naissance de la critique littéraire* (Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990), pp. 51-62.


exists in a long list of popes, kings, emperors, and great men whose confidence he claimed:


What might we say about these great men? Pope Clement wrote him letters of strong commitment, his successor Urban wrote others and called him to court. . . . He was called also by Pope Gregory . . . and King Robert of Sicily; . . . he was loved and esteemed by the Visconti of Milan, the lords of Parma and Coreggio, Padua, Ferrara, and Rimini . . . and he was on excellent terms with all the noble families of Italy.

Petrarch’s inner anxieties result from having lived amid the depravity and temptations of his time.

Fausto’s attraction to the public sheen of Petrarch’s life initially blinds him to the private sphere of Petrarch’s literary achievement. Fausto devotes pages to outward manifestations of the poet’s courtly success, but he accords only one dismissive sentence to Petrarch’s cherished solitude at Vaucluse: “Ultimamente si ridusse in un luogo angusto e solitario, distante d’Avignone xv miglia, detto Valchiusa” ‘Finally he stepped down to a mean and solitary place twenty-five miles from Avignon, called Vaucluse’ (ail’iii). From a worldly perspective, the poet’s retreat from court and his residence at Vaucluse amount to a scandal in his professional life, an evasion of his primary responsibility to himself and those he serves, a rejection of their ideology and a repudiation of their very values. From a religious perspective, however, it gives Petrarch a chance to revaluate his life and to initiate an inner reform. Fausto traces that reform in his annotations. There the moral drama of Petrarch’s life unfolds as the protagonist faces greed and corruption of every sort proffered by bishops and priests, popes and princes, grandes dames and whores. The struggle is unremitting and it prompts a new construction of Laura.

The conflicting courtly ethos and reformist ethic motivate Fausto to devise his own “Life of Laura” as an alternative to Vellutello’s account. Contrary to the latter’s claims about her impoverished social status, Fausto insists upon her active and affluent Avignonese nobility: “Laura primieramente fu ricca e di nobilissima ed antichissima famiglia. . . . Io tengo per ferma credenza che Laura fosse d’Avignone” ‘First of all, Laura was wealthy and of one of the most noble and ancient families . . . I firmly believe that Laura was from Avignon’ (ail’iii). In his comment upon sonnet 304 Fausto iterates his claim that Laura is buried at Avignon and he refers to a commentary upon the Baculium cænon by one of Petrarch’s contemporaries, Benvenuto da Imola: “Laura era sepolta in Avignone nella ghiesia de frati minori, vedi nella xi egloga” ‘Laura is buried at Avignon in the church of the Brothers Minor; see the eleventh eclogue’ (ail’iii). This famous woman has motivated Petrarch’s deepest moral crisis, but, as it happens, Fausto can barely provide any concrete information about her: “Ho non una volta sola letto l’opere latine del Petrarcha per raccogliere alcuna cosa di Laura, e di lei, cosa meravigliosa a credere, poco o niente si trova” ‘I have read Petrarch’s Latin works more than once to collect information about Laura, but, strange to say, little or nothing can be found about her’ (ail’iii).

This ambiguity comes to serve Fausto’s moralizing purposes. By suspending any further reference to Laura’s historical identity, Fausto manages to fictionalize her in the static image of a passive love-object and selfish distraction. He cites Petrarch’s Familiares 2.9, addressed to Giacomo Colonna, bishop of Lombez, where the poet repudiates the rumor that Laura never existed, that she is only a fiction designed to represent his endless pursuit of poetry and fame:

What in the world do you say? That I invented the splendid name of Laura so that it might be not only something for me to speak about but occasion for others to speak of me; that indeed there was no Laura on my mind except perhaps the poetic one for which I have aspired as is attested by my long and unfruitful studies. And finally you say that the truly live Laura by whose beauty I seem to have been completely invented, my poems fictitious and my sighs feigned. I wish indeed that you were joking about this particular subject, and that she had indeed been a fiction and not a madness! But believe me no one can pretend at great length without great toil, and to toil for nothing so that others consider you mad is the greatest of madmesses. (Familiares 2.9: Bernardo trans., 1.102)

Antonio da Tempo had also invoked this passage iterating Petrarch’s strong denial, Fausto, however, neutralizes the denial when he leaves his readers to reach their own conclusions: “Se fu fittione, o pur vero questo suo amore; vedilo alle, ix. del. i. a Jacomo Colonna” ‘Whether his love was fiction or reality, see Letter 2.9 to Giacomo Colonna’ (ail’iii).

Fausto’s sexual politics insistently echoes other passages in the Secretum where Augustinus warns Francis about his dissolute life and urges him to reform. In the letter to which Familiares 2.9 responds, Giacomo Co-
ionna is evidently rephrasing Augustinus’s censure of fame and glory. Fausto nonetheless tries to put a positive construction upon Petrarch’s efforts. Petrarch supplies a model of courtly behavior by enacting his conflicts in a fiction rather than in real life. Whether or not his desire for a married woman profited his soul, Petrarch has taught others how best to play the game of love, and, as Fausto remarks, he has even played the game for them by ghost-writing poetry on consignment to various courtiers: “Compose numero infinito de sonetti... molti ne scrisse a requisizion d’altri” He composed an infinite number of sonnets, ... many of them requisitioned by others’ (aii—aiii). Though most of this poetry does not survive, it shows that Petrarch capitalized upon the courtly milieu even while he resisted its amatory allure.

Fausto’s moral critique finally aims at Petrarch’s inner reform. By the time Laura dies, the poet rediscovers Scripture, integrates it into his affairs as much as possible, and modifies his behavior. In the end he comes to despise pomp, “fu dispregiatore delle ricchezze” he became a despiser of riches’ (aii), to resist advancement, “puoté mol’t’altra volte ascendere ma non vuole” he could have advanced several other times, but he did not wish to do so’ (aii), and at last to dissociate from the papacy—“[Papa Innocenzo] lo vuolse per segretario, & egli rifiutollo.... Hebbe nimico per la maggior parte il collegio de Cardinali” Pope Innocent asked him to serve as his secretary, and he refused. For the most part he had become hostile to the College of Cardinals’ (aii). Petrarch emerges as the model for a new type of secular hero. Practical, independent, and possessed of a deep faith in the divine word and God’s promise, Fausto’s Petrarch shows the way for highborn Christians of the sixteenth century to prosper in this world without sacrificing their souls to unholy error.

A second commentary with courtly origins also portends the climate of Protestant Reform in Italy. Its author, Antonio Brucioli, was born at the end of the fifteenth century in Florence and he died in 1550 at Venice where he directed his own printing press. In 1522 the syndics of his native city accused him of participating in a conspiracy against Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici, the future Pope Clement VII. Exiled in France, Brucioli encountered evangelical reformers whose ideas excited him. Upon his return to Florence five years later he faced a second exile, this time for associating with Lutheran reformers. At Venice in succeed-

ing years he published partial translations of the New Testament (1530), Old Testament (1532), and Psalms (1534); a series of Dialoghi della morale philosophia (1526, 1538); and nine volumes of commentary on Scripture (1540–46). Brucioli’s secular publications include Italian translations of Cicero’s Rhetoric (1538) and Aristotle’s De anima (1554), an edition of Boccaccio’s Decameron (1542), and his annotated Petrarch in octavo with Italian type (1548). The commentary on Petrarch’s Sonetti, canzoni, e triomphi, a small part of Brucioli’s vast output, engages his moralizing sympathies with a subdued but consistent fervor. The authority for the commentary is religion and it projects the ethos of Reform.

Brucioli registers one important support when he dedicates the volume to Lucrezia d’Este (1535–98), daughter of Ercole II d’Este and Renée of France. Lucrezia’s quiet life belied her parents’ tempestuous marriage and divergent genealogies. Her paternal grandparents were Alfonso I d’Este (d. 1534) and Lucrezia Borgia (d. 1519), whom her name honors; her maternal grandparents were King Louis XII of France (d. 1515) and Anne of Brittany. Lucrezia’s father ruled as duke of Ferrara from 1534 to 1559 against his wishes, her mother made the duchy a haven for Reformers from Italy and northern Europe. Both Clément Marot and Jean Calvin found refuge there, the former after the affaire des placards (18 October 1534) from April 1535 to June 1536, the latter in spring 1535, disguised as “Carlo d’Esperie,”

Late in life Lucrezia was married to Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino, where she retreated to obscurity. Brucioli addressed her when she was only thirteen years old, an unremarkable girl who hardly deserved his gushing encomium:

In modo che, cio che di bello, di leggiadro, di alto intendimento, et lodati costumi ha descritto il Petrarca in Madonna Laura in sua signoria illustrissima si vedra veramente ritornato in vita alla eta nostra, piu bello et piu mirabile, che mai fusse, aggiuntovi (quello che non hebbe ella, nata in humile et basso loco) che vostra eccelsiata, tiene la sua origine alta et Signorile, dagli altissimi Herculi, di lungo tempo dominanti a buona parte della Italia et della reale casa di Francia, e da quel Re, che su di piu nomati, e de piu invitti, che mai habbia havuta la christianit. (Ar

In such a way that whatever beauty, charm, high intelligence, and praiseworthy manners Petrarch has attributed to Laura, will seem wholly revived for us in you, more beautiful and marvelous than woman ever was, since your excellence, which she did not have because of her humble birth and low rank, derives its high and noble origins from Ercole, who has ruled over


a good part of Italy for a long time, and the royal house of France, and directly from that king who ruled over the undefeated, chosen people of Christendom.

Lucrezia descends from “Ercole” in two senses: first, as the daughter of Ercole II d’Este, then as the granddaughter of French royalty that claims as its mythic progenitor Hercules, the parent of Galathes after whom Gaul is named. Brucioli’s tribute to France may help to explain why the expatriate publisher Rovillio chose his edition of the Rime sparse for reprinting at Lyon in 1550. On the one hand Brucioli’s praise exalts young Lucrezia to fulfill the promise of her distinguished lineage in years to come. Not only could Petrarch’s Laura serve as her model, but Lucrezia herself might serve as a model for others. On the other hand Brucioli’s praise suggests that Lucrezia is already fulfilling her promise. It occurs in the mature figure of her mother, Renée. Not only does Petrarch’s Laura adumbrate her virtue, but Renée herself embodies the supreme virtues that Petrarch had invested in his beloved. Renée furnishes a living template for Brucioli’s interpretation of Laura.

Renée also furnishes a living template for the Reform movement in Italy. As a daughter of the French king, she was tutored along with her celebrated cousin, the sister of François I, later Marguerite de Navarre, by the evangelical humanist Lefèvre d’Étaples. Upon her marriage to Ercole d’Este in 1528, she flaunted her royal French origins when she opposed Ferrara’s alliance with the papacy and the Spanish monarch, France’s archenemy. Though she herself never broke with Rome, she extended lavish hospitality to Calvin and exiled French Calvinists. Her husband, the son of Lucrezia Borgia and hence a pontiff’s grandson, objected repeatedly to Renée’s support of the Protestant cause. After she offered assistance to the Studium of Modena in 1545, openly in sympathy with Luther’s teaching, Ercole disbanded the group on charges of heresy. When Brucioli prepared his edition of Petrarch three years later, Renée’s devotion to reform still held firm. Though Brucioli encouraged her resolve, he lived to see it falter. The duke, scandalized by his wife’s eating of meat on Good Friday, 1554, and by her refusal to take communion the following Easter Sunday, invited the Inquisition to Ferrara. Facing censure, Renée renounced heresy and pledged allegiance to Rome. In Ferrara as elsewhere in Italy, the Protestant movement gave way to Rome’s Counter-Reformation.

The Reformation sentiment of Brucioli’s commentary emerges undisguised in its annotations on Petrarch’s sonnets 136–38. Whereas other

sixteenth-century commentators approach these poems with caution, annotating them lightly for their historical references to the Babylonian captivity, Revelation 17, and Constantine’s conversion, Brucioli takes the opportunity to endorse reform. The poems refer explicitly to Petrarch’s desire to reestablish the papacy at Rome, but Brucioli directs his criticism against the institution itself and assails its present-day incarnation at Rome as much as Petrarch’s at Avignon:

Appare che i tre precedenti sonetti fussero fatti dal Poeta in abominazione della Romana chiesa, dispiacendogli sopra modo i sozi e scelerati suoi costumi e in somma la biasima e danna tanto vehementemente e con tante obbrobriose parole, che io non saprei che piu mi ci aggiungere. (cxxx)

It seems that the three preceding sonnets were fashioned by the poet in abomination of the Roman Church, its foul and wicked customs displeasing him above all, and in sum he reproves and condemns it so forcefully and with such derogatory words, that I would not know how to add more to it.

Pleading shame at repeating Petrarch’s words, Brucioli exploits the opportunity to affirm his criticism in words that are not his own: “Ne credo che si potessi pure imaginare corte più scelerata, non che chiesa di Cristo, quanto descrive qui la chiesa di Roma, le parole del quale non ardisco, non che altro, replicare, tanto mi piano obbrobriose” ‘Nor do I believe that a more shamefult court can even be imagined than the Church of Jesus Christ, in so far as he here describes the Church of Rome, in words that I nor anyone dare repeat, so derogatory do they seem to me’ (cxxx).

Brucioli brings his criticism of these sonnets to bear upon the rest of the Rime sparse. Like Fausto he emphasizes courtly manners and Petrarch’s courtly style as a setting for the poet’s moral action, and like Fausto he weighs Petrarch’s judgment against quotations from Scripture that apply to particular situations. Scriptural quotation provides a major intertext, displacing earlier commentators’ cross-references to classical literature and philosophy without quite dominating the interpreter’s moral horizon. The technique encourages readers to draw their own conclusions. Brucioli’s commentary is sometimes uneven, terse beyond clear formulation, and evasive in its rhetoric, but when it hits its mark, it makes an important statement about Christian faith and individual conscience, the relative merits of internal and external authority, and the possibility of using Scripture as a literary model.

The last major sixteenth-century commentary on the Rime sparse e Triomfi was Ludovico Castelvetro’s Le rime del Petrarcha. Published post-
humously at Basel in 1582 in quarto with the poetry in Italic and the commentary in a variety of Roman types, it appeared in only one edition and seems not to have had wide circulation. Certainly the same author’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, published in 1576, far eclipsed it in fame and influence. The Sposizione, retrieved from the commentator’s papers, assembled by his nephew and literary executor, Giacomo Maria Castelvetro, and dedicated to Alfonso II, duke of Ferrara, is unpolished. It consists of notes on isolated lines and single words, mainly lexical in nature. They contribute toward new interpretations of the poetry, but, despite their author’s reputation for taking bold and unconventional positions, their statements about the meaning or significance of individual poems tend to be conservative. Castelvetro evidently planned a longer, more detailed commentary than this one. Notes on the first three sonnets add up to twenty pages; those on ensuing poems average one page apiece. Like Daniele, Castelvetro appeals to the authority of classical philology and he projects the ethos of a careful scholar. He presents detailed factual evidence, interprets it rigorously, and reaches many conclusions that do not echo or repeat the work of predecessors. When the novelty of Castelvetro’s insight matches the originality of his literary sensibility, the Sposizione offers a splendid example of late humanist criticism.

Castelvetro was born at Modena in 1507 and he died in exile at Chiavenna in 1571. He passed his early years as a reader of law at the Studium of Modena where his sympathies with the Protestant Reform ran warm. In 1542 he signed a “Formulario di Fede” that dissociated him from the activities of radical thinkers. After Ercole II d’Este disbanded the Studium in 1545, Castelvetro devoted his attention to literary pursuits. In the 1550s he engaged in a celebrated polemic with Annibale Caro. It began when Castelvetro censured Caro’s poetry for not conforming to Petrarch’s language, and it ended when his opponent accused him of heresy. Summoned to the Inquisition at Rome in 1560 for allegedly translating the work of a heretic, Melanchthon’s *Loci communes*, he fled into exile. He left behind in various stages of completion a study of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (published 1563), an appendix to Bembo’s *Prose della volgar lingua* (published 1563), a commentary on cantos 1 to 19 of Dante’s *Inferno* (published 1572), and the commentary on Petrarch’s *Rime*. He passed the last decade of his life at Basel, Lyon, Geneva, and Vienna, where a few months before he died he dedicated to Emperor Maximilian his commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

The commentary on Aristotle’s *Poetics* vibrates with Castelvetro’s challenges against the literary orthodoxies of his day. These challenges situate his earlier views of Petrarch in a clearer light. While conventional theory acknowledges pleasure and profit as the twin goals of poetry, Castelvetro asserts that its goal is pleasure alone. Poetry should address audiences of all persuasions and of every degree of learning and sophistication. As Aristotle’s history of drama shows, poetry originated with “the common people” (Bongiorno trans., p. 19). Despite these origins, however, “the ignorant came to believe that the first poets were imbued with the divine spirit and enjoyed God’s unfailling help” (37). Poets are experts in poetic language and from earlier poetic models they develop their expertise consciously, objectively, and without reference to their own feelings: “The poet does not find the appropriate model of the emotion he seeks in what he is able to observe within himself or to learn from his past experience” (39). Petrarch emerges as a superior poet because he has mastered difficult verbal skills apart from any need to teach or to represent his own experience.

Technical competence, however, poses a problem. Petrarch in his *Familiaris* 1.7 refers to two kinds of poets, those who “take no notice of other poets, but invent their own matter and their own modes of figurative speech, while the rest cannot turn their backs on matter previously invented by others or on the figures of speech already used by them” (41). Petrarch identifies himself with the second kind, imitative poets who refine earlier conventions and techniques, but Castelvetro disparages their practice: “I am of the opinion that poets of this latter kind must never for a moment be tolerated” (41). These poets acquire their art “mechanically” as “a piece of stolen property” (42) and do not deserve serious attention. Castelvetro defines as a worthier sort of imitation one that is “in every way distinguishable from any made before that day and, so to speak, creates a model for others to copy” (43). This sort, he concludes, “is and should and may be called a contest between the poet and the dispositions of fortune or the course of human events to determine which will invent the complex of human actions that in the hearing will be judged to be the more marvelous and the more abundant source of pleasure” (43). The word “contest” is important. At his best Petrarch engages in a contest with the literary tradition that precedes him, and his weapon is language. Castelvetro’s commentary subsequently focuses upon Petrarch’s language and the particular mo-

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ment in history when it became a model for creative borrowing from ancient literature.

Castelvetro wrote most of his commentary on Petrarch before his exile in 1560, and probably did so by recording his observations over a long period of time. Internal references to his Giunte sopra Bembo, based on Benedetto Varchi’s edition of the latter’s Prose in 1549, indicate the earliest possible date for many of his notes. The Giunte sopra Bembo provides an important source for Castelvetro’s views about language. Castelvetro tempers Bembo’s purism, however, first by valorizing Dante’s example as well as Petrarch’s for certain popular expressions, and more generally by asserting the constant state of flux that besets language. Just as poets should avoid using foreign expressions, so they should avoid an exclusive devotion to the language of the past. The Rime sparse provide excellent models for contemporary poetry, but only by encouraging all poets to surpass Petrarch creatively.

When he comments upon the poetry, Castelvetro shows how this principle works by juxtaposing Petrarch with his chief precursor, Dante, and with his modern emulators, especially Ariosto. His notes teem with references to Dante’s oeuvre, but particularly to the cantos of Paolo and Francesca, Pier della Vigna, Brunetto Latini, and Ugolino in the Inferno and the terrace of the poets in the Purgatorio. Sometimes Castelvetro tries to determine Dante’s influence on Petrarch, despite Petrarch’s well-known disclaimers about studying the Comedy. Certainly in his references to Ariosto and the moderns, Castelvetro acknowledges the contamination of Dantesque and Petrarchan sources. In Dante’s Ghibelline criticism of the papacy, Castelvetro sees forerunners of Petrarch’s own views, and he uses their combined force to indict present-day clerical abuses.

Underlying Castelvetro’s philological erudition, finally, is a genuine openness to new ideas and new ways of thinking about language. As the printer Sedabonis explains in his own preface, the Sposizione hardly represents a final judgment on Petrarch because Castelvetro’s thoughts on language and style were constantly evolving: “Non piccola differenza si vede essere tra le cose, che egli scrisse nella sua giovinezza fi, quella che ando poi scrivero di temo in tempo divenendo vecchio” ‘A rather considerable difference seems to exist between the writings that he produced in his youth and those that he later wrote as he grew old’ (11). The commentary records that evolution on every page. It explores the workings of Petrarch’s language as a self-sufficient medium of exchange that reflects history without being inextricably bound to it, a medium whose life in the context of other literary discourses takes on new meaning with each turn of phrase that can be compared to those of other authors.

Castelvetro’s Protestant contribution is to emphasize the writings of Saint Augustine and other church fathers, but especially passages of Scripture—notably Psalms, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and the New Testament—as models for the Rime sparse. Castelvetro is every bit as capable a classical scholar as Gesualdo and Daniello, but more than they he knows the Bible and understands how it penetrates Petrarch’s literary art. This understanding generates at least a few new readings of individual poems. Though Castelvetro’s work consists mostly of detailed lexical notes and quotations from source materials, it summarizes interpretive consequences in headnotes to each poem. There, in a concise discursive style, Castelvetro takes issue with previous readings, suggests different modes of approach, and reinforces the possibility of a Protestant-style hermeneutics conformable with the Word of God. For example, Castelvetro’s sonnet to sonnet 346, “Li angeli eletti e l’anime beate / cittadine del cielo” ‘The elect angels and blessed souls, citizens of heaven,’ compares God’s kingdom in heaven with God’s kingdom on earth, and, after alluding to Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews 11:49, refers to the doctrine of election and “Determinatione del P.” ‘Petrarch’s determination’ as a member of God’s chosen sainthood (133)6.

Castelvetro’s commentary was published too late to make a strong impact upon the generation of Bembo and his Italian followers, or upon members of the French Pléiade who paid serious attention to Gall’s reform, but its sentiments would have found timely agreement with the Protestant sympathies of England’s Elizabethan sonneteers in the late 1580s and early 1590s. If Castelvetro’s focus upon lexical peculiarities were largely irrelevant to a non-Italian audience, the reach of some of his bolder conclusions about Scriptural meaning and doctrinal associations could attract wider attention. On the whole, it is as difficult to classify Castelvetro as any other early modern commentator in a single, inflexible mold. None of the commentators is exclusively “Protestant” or “rhetorical” or “monarchist” or “republican.” To think otherwise would be to impose an ideological consistency or a modern—and hence anachronistic—awareness of subsequent history that no commentator entertained. As each commentator responds to Petrarch’s text, each shifts gears, offering now a moral observation, now a stylistic note, now a political comment.

The dominant concerns transgress categorical boundaries. One might thus recognize Castelvetro’s interests to be as philological as those of

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Gesualdo and Daniello, or the interests of Fausto da Longiano and Antonio Brucioli to be as courtly as those of Sylvano da Venafro. From the latter perspective one might also redefine the political interests of Filelfo and Squarzafico, just as from the philological perspective one might redefine the rhetorical interests of Antonio da Tempo and Vellutello. The result can only illuminate the expanding and unstable community of different interests that these commentators fashioned, disputed, and redefined for more than a century after the first printed edition of the Rime sparse.

Nor were the foregoing commentaries the only ones produced or appended to printed editions of Petrarch. Throughout the sixteenth century an amazing variety of notes, glosses, and interpretive aids accompanied almost an equal number of other editions of the Rime sparse. Beginning in 1533 the Aldine press printed its Petrarca with twenty-eight pages of explanatory notes that Paulus Manutius attributed to his father Aldus. Ranging widely from lexical details and historical identifications to general attributions of sources and analogues, these notes were reprinted in eight later editions at the Aldine press and outside of Italy, in three editions (1545, 1547, 1550) at the press of Jean de Tournes in Lyon. In 1539 Francesco Alunno da Ferrara augmented his edition of the Rime sparse (Venice: Francesco Mariolini da Forli) with a useful rimeario and concordance that he expanded threefold in 1550. In 1546 Francesco Sansovino lightly annotated the first twenty-six poems of the Rime sparse, then plagiarized the Aldine notes for the rest of his text (Venice: Pietro Ravano). Between 1547 and 1560 Lodovico Dolce published fourteen editions of the Rime sparse (Venice: Gabriel Gioiato) that introduced many lexical emendations with explanatory notes. In 1549 Apollonio Campano offered five pages of random annotations as a preface to his edition (Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi). Five years later Lodovico Dolce enlisted ninety-two pages of explanatory notes by Giulio Camillo to accompany Vellutello’s lives of Petrarch and Laura as enrichments for his text (Venice: Gioiato, 1554, 1557, 1559, and 1560). In 1554 Girolamo Ruscelli, a popular editor of Dante and Ariosto, printed his text in Vellutello’s rearranged order with Vellutello’s lives of the protagonists, and to it he appended a concordance of 285 pages (Venice: Paolo Pesasanta). Finally at Lyon in 1558 Guglielmo Rovillo abstracted from the Prose della volgar lingua each of Bernbo’s statements about Petrarch’s text and he reattached them to the relevant poems for his Il Petrarca con dichiarazioni non più stampate (reprinted in 1564; published at Venice by Bevilacqua in 1562, 1564, 1565, 1568, 1570, and 1573).

These last mentioned commentaries surely reached a wide readership, and undoubtedly their choice of interpretive materials favored particular views of Petrarch and his achievement. Because their annotations are highly selective and largely unsystematic, however, they authorize no ideological constructions of Petrarch comparable to those of the commentators whom I have designated as major. They elucidate some textual problems, paraphrase or metaprase specific poems, and display an inventory of Petrarch’s customary diction and stylistic turns of phrase, but they refrain from projecting alternative or competitive versions of Petrarch than the major commentators do. The latter offer controversial interpretations of the text that revise readers’ habits of approaching the Rime sparse. Antonio, Filelfo, and Squarzafico try to reclaim Petrarch for Northern Italian absolutism; Vellutello for amatory narrative; Sylvano, Gesualdo, and Daniello for rhetorical innovation; and Fausto, Brucioli, and Castelvetro for reformist enthusiasm. In the process they canonize Petrarch not only for their local, regional, or national causes, but also for European literature.