

INTRODUCTION:  
PETRARCH'S CURIOUS MOUNTAIN OF VIRTUE

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The attempt to lay bare the historical and ideological foundations of what is commonly called renaissance humanism will have shown that it indisputably had strong roots in the medieval period and that the commonly accepted view of a new “era” or a “break with the medieval past” is not tenable. As it was a movement within space and time, it must be seen from a historical perspective...

(Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* 197)

It has long been recognised by historians of political, intellectual or literary European culture, that the so-called categories “Medieval” and “Renaissance,” the false dichotomies that they generate and the artificial problems of periodization that they pose, have had a distorting effect upon our study and understanding of that shifting continuum of human activity which links (by the parallel, multiple processes of transmission or mediation, loss or accretion, conflation or re-appropriation, transformation, innovation or renewal) the writing and thought of a St. Augustine, say, to those of a Petrarch or of a Montaigne. Yet any appeal to break with the habits of thought that these twin (symbiotic) categories imply—any attempt to transcend or ignore the sort of disciplinary or institutional compartmentalisation that even today may still (wittingly or unwittingly) support, nurture or exaggerate the sense of a radical discontinuity between so-called “Medieval” and “Renaissance” cultures—risks falling prey itself to an acceptance of the very periodizing divisions that it eschews, even if it focuses nonetheless on a particularly rich, important or ignored aspect of “medieval”-“renaissance” culture. (In Ullmann’s case, an understanding of the “secularisation” of government and an emerging “political humanism,” in the light of “the intellectual, and above all the religious-ecclesiastical, forces which had shaped the age” [197]).

Critical reactions against this inherited problem of historical (or rather, unhistorical) method so berated by Ullmann (and yet, it would seem, not entirely avoided either, despite the palliative of historical contextualisation), may also be understandably but unnecessarily partisan. They may take the form, for instance, of medievalist revision (largely warranted) of an over simplistic perception of the nov-

elty of so-called “renaissance” values, or, conversely (and less justifiably), of a “renaissance”-oriented, anachronistic recuperation or interpretation of elements of “medieval” culture in terms of their anticipation of, or eventual contribution to, the “movement” that was to come. Moreover, both of these opposing types of possible response still fall prey, in their turn, to an acceptance of the “medieval” / “renaissance” —or “medieval” / “(early) modern”— cultural divide. (One whose precise definition and temporal location will inevitably vary according to the particular geographical and/or disciplinary areas under investigation, as well as the lines of argument being pursued or refuted.)

It is perhaps both revealing and symptomatic of this persisting, though often questioned and resisted, habit of historical thought that a recent encyclopaedic work of scholarship such as Marcia L. Colish’s *The Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400-1400* —which ranges admirably from aspects of early and later Christian culture, and across vernacular and Latin literary culture to various manifestations of “spirituality” and “speculative thought,” crowned by the “legacy of Scholasticism” (in the natural sciences, political and economic thought)— culminates nonetheless in a conclusion devoted primarily to differentiating “areas of discontinuity, markers of medieval modes of thought and sensibility that end with the period” from “areas of continuity, markers of ideas and attitudes that make the Middle Ages the first chapter of the western intellectual tradition” (Colish 352). Indeed, such a preoccupation with the identity, and with the identifiability, of a distinctly “medieval” culture and of its legacy leads (unsurprisingly) to the further conclusion that “points in time when the Middle Ages ended differ markedly in different aspects of medieval intellectual history” (Colish 358-59).

Such highlighting of a cultural specificity and a distinct foundational legacy, combined with a scrupulous (yet ultimately pointless?) attempt to ascribe these to a particular period or flexible range of periods termed “Medieval,” will no doubt find justification as a salutary antidote to an opposing, lingering, “renaissance”-centred vision of European cultural history. However, in serving that function, armed with an historical hindsight unavailable to the “Middle Ages,” it risks constituting essentially a modern, pro-medieval counter-response *in kind* to an unjustly exclusive (and anti-historical) view of the “Renaissance” as a unique, defining moment of cultural rebirth and renewal, heralding “modernity.” In effect, revisiting old, only too familiar battle lines (cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* [1979] 85-86).

We are of course only too familiar as well with the immediate background to such contention: the clarion call of an anti-medieval championing of “Renaissance” culture which had resounded (and still resounds) forcefully in Jacob Burckhardt’s heady, influential *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860). Famously, for Burckhardt, the “discovery” of the (outer) “world” and that of (inner) “man” could be seen to meet in Dante’s writings and, above all, in those of Petrarch, who was thus for him “one of the first truly modern men” (Burckhardt, tr. Middlemore 193). Indeed, Petrarch’s (apparently) external perception of “landscape” and internal vision of self could, for Burckhardt, be seen to converge in particular in the Italian humanist’s contemplative letter-narrative of his (apparent) ascent of Mt. Ventoux (194-95, on Petrarch’s

*Familiarium rerum libri*, IV.1).

However, the necessary correction to Burckhardt and his successors has already long been supplied, and the middle path —of a proper concern with the intricate interplay of differing “strands” within early and later humanist, and indeed scholastic, culture (taking into account geographic variations and regional cultural specificities)— has already long been pursued by intervening twentieth-century scholars, notably Paul Oskar Kristeller. Kristeller’s classic essays on the diversity of elements shaping or informing humanist, or indeed late scholastic, thought and culture (e.g., *Renaissance Thought* [1961 and 1979], *Medieval Aspects*, “Humanism”) have both broadened and deepened our understanding of a whole spectrum of considerations: the importance and function of scholastic genres such as the commentary and the “quaestio”; the changing form and status of the book; the choice of humanistic or scholastic Latin, or of the vernacular, in function of the particular reading public in question; the impact of Thomism; the role of the religious orders in lay humanistic or scholastic culture; the relation of Italian Humanism to Scholasticism and that of “Renaissance” philosophy to the “Medieval” tradition; indeed, the origins of early Italian Humanism prior to Petrarch, in a pre-existing rhetorical tradition associated with Bologna —the *ars dictaminis*— and an emerging Italian grammatical tradition concerned with the reading of Ancient texts, itself grafted upon the long-standing achievements of “medieval” French and other Northern European grammarians (Kristeller, “Humanism” 127-28). Moreover, the broader, more varied and complicated picture that the study of such considerations suggests has been underpinned, in the Italian context, by painstaking research into the changing face and different make-up of Latin and vernacular school curricula, from the time of Petrarch’s infancy to the beginning of the seventeenth century (Grendler).

Such multi-faceted and detailed scholarly approaches provide us with a sharper focus than the falsely reassuring (and, on balance, unhelpful or antagonistic) demarcations of periodization, offering us as it were the thread to guide us out of the labyrinth of claim and counter-claim and of opposing, irreconcilable perspectives, and so away from the scholarly impasse whither such demarcating tends to lead. A recent positive instance has been the fruitful scholarly dialogue surrounding what Erika Rummel has called, in the Northern European context, the “Humanist-Scholastic Debate.” The tensions and polarities of this dialogue have been subsumed into a larger emergent picture, recently sketched by Charles Nauert in the wake of Rummel, of the fundamental yet paradoxical impact of “Humanism” —that “limited cluster of academic subjects, the *studia humanitatis* [grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, moral philosophy]— “as method” (Nauert 428). On the one hand, it was “never for a moment ... a comprehensive philosophical system rivalling the Aristotelian systems that we label scholastic,” and its conflict with scholasticism operated at the rather mundane level of academic and disciplinary rivalries (Nauert 428; cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* [1961]). Yet, on the other hand, it also posed a more serious rhetorical and ethical challenge to scholastic “syllogistic argumentation” and aspirations to “metaphysical certitude” (Nauert 433), whilst, above all (for Nauert, as for Rummel), the Trojan Horse of the humanist “grammarians” “philological and textual method” en-

abled them ultimately to “penetrate” the “higher” disciplinary domains of Theology, Medicine and Law (Nauert 433-38; cf. Rummel).

Even here, however, on questions of finer detail concerning, for example, humanist “reform” of learning in the liberal arts, one might legitimately question (with Philip Ford later in this volume) how accurate are assumptions of automatic sweeping change overnight in the area, say, of the teaching of Latin grammar itself (“Old textbooks—such as the *Doctrinale* in Latin grammar—were abandoned after having been used for centuries and were replaced with products of humanism such as Niccolò Perotti’s *Rudimenta* for Latin grammar” [Nauert 429]). Is the picture really as clear cut? Is the implied “break” such a *clean* cut as this? Or again, one might wonder (on reading Annabel Brett’s essay in this volume) where in the total picture might feature Scholasticism’s reinvention of itself in the face of the challenges and questions posed by the humanist “method” and by the upheavals of the Reformation.

It is important, of course, in the specifically Italian context of the early humanists, not to ignore or to underestimate the sense of mission of such protagonists as Petrarch, his contemporary, Boccaccio, and their immediate contemporaries and successors, such as Coluccio Salutati—by which these men defined themselves as reacting against, and remedying, a preceding age of “barbarity” and “darkness” (Vasoli 40-41; cf. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought* [1979] 87). If, for Petrarch, the desired restoration of ancient Rome’s civic culture would prove to be still-born after the election and demise of Cola di Rienzo as Tribune of the Roman people in 1347, nonetheless the civilisation of Rome had at least to be “restored” *intellectually*—through a *renascentia studiarum*, involving the proper re-cultivation of the *studia humanitatis*, and leading to the “re-birth” of Latin letters (Vasoli 41-43). As has been pointed out by Kristeller as well as Cesare Vasoli, such a position was clearly reiterated and reinforced by Giovanni Boccaccio in a letter to Jacopo Pizzinghe of 1372, singling out both Dante and Petrarch as the restorers of poetry to its ancient pre-eminence and to its function as the vehicle of human and divine truth (paraphrased in Vasoli 44; quoted in Kristeller [1979] 274, n. 13). Moreover, these sentiments on the high moral and spiritual function of poetry, thus restored by Petrarch, would be echoed, in 1374, in a letter of Coluccio Salutati’s written on the occasion of Petrarch’s death; Coluccio’s text pointedly contrasts this higher purpose and function with the more limited “wisdom” of “arid” scholastic syllogisms (Vasoli 44). In short, the very term “Renaissance” is “un écho lointain d’une campagne de publicité particulièrement réussie amorcée par les érudits et les écrivains de cette époque même” (Cave 11).

Even if, therefore, the polemical, propagandistic self-perception—or rather, *self-representation*—of Petrarch and his fellow early humanists risks encouraging in us (even nowadays) a similarly black and white vision of “medieval” scholastic culture versus the “renascent” culture of Italian humanistic reform—of ruin versus restoration, and of “darkness” versus light—one might again legitimately ask whether, in certain other key examples of Petrarch’s writing and rhetorical mastery, this picture (or self-portraiture) is really so obvious, so unequivocal or so caricatural. Above all, are its provocative contrasts and diametric oppositions so clearly (or so crudely) detectable *in practice* in the very epistle that has been interpreted by Burckhardt and his

successors as presenting to us the figure of a harbinger of modernity, on the cusp of the “medieval” and the early modern in the “discovery” and the articulation of the self? Composed probably in 1353—but dated symbolically to 26 April 1336 (a Friday, the day of Christ’s passion), when Petrarch, like St. Augustine at the moment of his conversion, was thirty-two turning thirty-three (the age of the crucified Christ) (Billanovich 395-96, and “*La lettera del Ventoso*” 39)—this momentous narration by Petrarch of a parallel physical, textual and spiritual “pilgrimage” seems in fact to represent much more than either a Burckhardtian alpinistic interplay of landscape and inner self, or even the “sterile, narcissistic sequence” adumbrated by Thomas Greene (in his discussion of this letter) as falling short of “a new situating of the self” (110). Indeed, in the closing study of this volume, it figures as a prime example of the co-extensivity of “pilgrim” journey and narrative, and its multiple possible significations (as a typically multi-layered expression of *peregrinatio*) are rightly probed and questioned by Wes Williams in other recent essays (Williams, “Salad Days” 153 and n. 3, and *Pilgrimage* 29-37). Notably, Williams takes issue with modernist-oriented interpretations that posit either “self-fulfilment and individual, heroic self-expression” (*Pilgrimage* 32), or conversely, an emblematic “failure,” representing “the crisis that Renaissance humanism had to face to come into being while it was scarcely more than nascent in one man’s mind” (Greene 111).

In the light of such questioning, it is perhaps appropriate that we should introduce (and so frame) this present volume’s contribution to our understanding of a “nascent,” adolescent or indeed senescent humanism (in parallel, in fact, with an ever renascent scholasticism) with a brief, re-exploration of the “ironic” “self-conscious textuality” (Williams, “Salad Days” loc. cit. and *Pilgrimage* 34, resuming Zacher) of Petrarch’s narrative of ascent of Mt. Ventoux. Not least because—as an initial reader of this exploratory volume of essays, George Hoffmann, has astutely observed—this complex Petrarchan text seems at once to embody and turn upon many of the issues raised and *ostensible* oppositions explored in the course of this collective multi-disciplinary volume: “medieval” vs “renaissance”; imitation or repetition vs innovation and self-authentication; textual authority vs interpretative subjectivity; the religious or spiritual vs the secular or external; pilgrimage vs curiosity; the relative fixity of the “book” as codex (let alone the eternity of the Word) vs the falling away of texts and words; scholastic aspirations to metaphysical certainty vs the provisional and persuasive shadow-world of humanistic rhetoric (to name but a few). Not only that, but Petrarch’s letter also furnishes a key example of a famous text that has been subjected to differing modern interpretations in function of differing intellectual agendas (positivistic or sceptical) and of varying critical perspectives (anticipatory or retrospective) upon the interplay between (and the co-existence of) so-called “medieval” and “renaissance” cultural elements.

Our purpose here is not to rehearse in detail the various critical positions surrounding Petrarch’s letter (for that, cf. Williams *Pilgrimage* loc. cit.). We wish rather to draw attention, in conjunction with the letter’s recent editors, Maura Formica and Michael Jakob, to a number of textual and intertextual considerations often ignored or sidelined, which point not so much to the text’s pivotal status between two cultural

eras (detectable, only *in retrospect*, from its purportedly happy or problematic hybridity), as to a complex integrity, appropriate to its time(s), to its subject matter and to its author. Indeed, this becomes all the more apparent when we abandon the cherished “medieval”-“renaissance” duality and the retrospective fallacy of historical hindsight by which it is often justified, and come, as moderns, to read the letter *at most* as a “pré-histoire.” That is, to use Terence Cave’s terminology and definition, merely “le stade d’avant la continuité d’une histoire,” in relation to (and back towards) which “le mouvement en amont n’est permis que si l’on renonce à chaque moment à la tentation analeptique, même si la question (du moi, du scepticisme, du suspens, etc.) n’aurait pu être posée sans qu’il y eût un récit que nous avons l’habitude de nous raconter” (Cave 17). In this sense alone, and from this perspective alone, might Petrarch’s intriguing and perhaps disorientating text be conceived as being situated, like Cave’s “textes troublés,” “au seuil de la modernité.”

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The “lettera del Ventoso” takes the form of a first-person narrative written in a double (external) narratorial retrospect: that of the overt backward gaze of the fictitious narrator (Petrarch at the age of thirty-two) at the ascribed (fictional) moment of composition of the letter (the evening of the very day of Petrarch’s supposed ascent and descent of Mt. Ventoux on 26 April 1336); then that of the covert, much longer retrospective view of the author-narrator (Petrarch aged 49), at the moment of actual composition, datable to 1353 (“*La lettera del Ventoso*” 38-40). As such, it is addressed to a *doubly* absent “father” figure, Petrarch’s confessor Dionigi da Borgo S. Sepolcro (d. 1342); this Augustinian monk and theologian (“professor of Holy Scripture,” ed. cit. 2-3) is not only (slightly) removed geographically, in nearby Avignon, at the time of the *fictitious* writing of the letter, but is also *infinitely* absent in death (by the year of its actual composition) (*ibid.* 39-40; cf. Williams, *Pilgrimage* 30). In addition, the double-layered (actual and virtual) external narratorial framework of this late “rhetorical exercise” (Billanovich 390) itself encloses the narrated protagonist’s retrospective mental gaze (from the mountain’s peak) back over the “tempests” of the previous ten years of his life (his early manhood since leaving his studies in Bologna in 1326 until the narrated moment of 1336).

Moreover, this further, *internal* retrospect (ed. cit. 12-13), orchestrated at the very centre of the letter, is accompanied by the first-person protagonist’s expression of an intention of recording *at some future date* this recent private history of his, in the fashion of the author of the *Confessions*, St. Augustine, whose “model” text, supplied by the Augustinian Dionigi (as we are about to learn), is then explicitly quoted by this Petrarch’s narrated, thirty-two-year-old *persona*. Not only is this “intention” already in part being fulfilled (virtually) in the fictional composition-narration ascribed to the very day of the “ascent” itself, but its articulation by the narrated character that is “Petrarch” also foreshadows implicitly its own *real* fulfilment in the actual act of composition and narration seventeen years later in 1353.

This central internal retrospective meditation is then counterbalanced in addi-

tion (ed. cit. 14-15) by the narrated persona's *prospective* hope of being accorded ten further years of life —albeit a life “declining” from that moment onwards “into old age” (in fact, stretching to an even greater “old age” in the subsequent “future” of the letter's actual composition)— in order for him to “draw closer to virtue” (an ambition whose outcome “will be”/is being scrutinised in hindsight by the author of 1353).

Significantly, this Dante-like situating of self in the past at the apex of human physical life —as in *Inferno* 1.1— is located also (by the narrated self-reflexive *persona* of Petrarch) at the critical moment of resolution of a “conflict” of two “wills” (the one sinfully wayward, the other virtuously purposeful); this echoes unmistakably the similar conflict evoked by Augustine himself in the very same *Confessions* in the chapters (VIII.8-11) immediately preceding the turning point of his conversion (VIII.12). More broadly, in the immediate descriptive context of Petrarch's fictional self-narration, this (internal) retrospective-prospective testimony to a Janus-faced mental vision at the peak-point of adulthood, whose appropriate metaphoric locus is Mt. Ventoux's very summit, is itself framed symbolically (as a further measure of the inner transformation that is taking place within the fictional/allegorical character “Petrarch”) by two very different perceptions on his part of the “literal,” geographic vistas that the mountain offers. Initially, there is (unsurprisingly) the humanist's confident reading (and cultural appropriation) of the physical spectacle of the frozen Alps and the beckoning landscape of Italy —the sight of which both informs, and is informed by, his awareness of the mythological-geographical landscape of Greece (its legendary-real mountains) and the formative events of Rome's history (Hannibal's crossing of the Alps), respectively (ed. cit. 10-13). Subsequently, at the symbolic moment of “sunset” (to an awareness of which this middle-aged self “awakens,” like Augustine and his mother had done (*Confessions* IX.10), from his contemplative introspection),<sup>1</sup> there comes also the acknowledgement by Petrarch (inspired by the changed perspective of his now *westward* gaze) of the “weakness” and physical limitations “of human sight” (unable to penetrate as far as the Pyrenees). This literal, visual failure recalls in fact that of Philip of Macedon on Mt. Haemus unable to see both the Adriatic and the Black Sea, recounted in Livy, and paraphrased in the opening of Petrarch's letter. Indeed, this is despite (or even because of) a new, competing awareness of the pleasurable sight and terrestrial distractions of the closer, visible spectacle of France (Lyons, the Rhone, Marseilles etc.) (ed. cit. 14-17). It is at this point that it will occur to Petrarch (the narrated character) to consult the text of Augustine, in the hope of a “higher,” more penetrating and more abstract vision than that afforded by the earthly panorama that stretches before and beneath him. Indeed he is poised to discover what the actual author-narrator of 1353 must know from the very act of narrating his story: the realisation that that profounder vision is in fact the internal vision of memory (cf. O'Connell 512; Robbins 543).

Most importantly of all, the year of actual composition of the letter, 1353, will coincide with Petrarch's visit to his brother Gherardo in the Carthusian monastery of Montrieux (a *spiritual* summit) ten years after Gherardo's sudden conversion and entry there as a monk (Billanovich 397) and just over ten years since the death of his letter's Augustinian addressee. The example of the monastic path pursued over a de-

cade by that other protagonist of Petrarch's letter-narrative will furnish an immediate (and ironic) counterpoint to the author's own existential and intellectual journey up to that year (1353) of his final abandonment of Provence (ed. cit. loc. cit.; Billanovich 390, 399). In particular (in relation to his text's internal, fictional retrospect), it will function as the antithesis of Petrarch's own previous *decade* (1326-1336) of spiritual struggle and turmoil between his departure from Bologna and his ascension of Mt. Ventoux. Where Petrarch's troubled "ten-year" journey (1326-1336) is presented as beginning with "straying" and culminating in a conversion of sorts at the summit of Mt. Ventoux, Gherardo's more tranquil, *anachronistically* juxtaposed itinerary (1343-1353) may be understood, conversely, to stem immediately from his actual conversion (1343), proceeding vertically and unproblematically (as a result) to a greater spiritual height (the first of many). Petrarch's letter is thus, most fundamentally, an autobiographical narrative ostensibly espousing the geographical landscape and factual circumstances of his childhood, youth and manhood, but also cast in the traditional form of an allegory of the Pilgrimage of Life, illustrated by events affecting Petrarch and his brother in that landscape at two distinct times (superimposed upon each other).<sup>2</sup>

According to the "events" and testimony of this "pilgrim" allegory, Petrarch and his brother Gherardo may be understood not only to have taken very different paths (those of "humanism" and "monastic spirituality," respectively; cf. Mazzotta 147-66), but also to have *both* forsaken, albeit with differing degrees (or speeds) of success, the snares of the secular world and youthful vanity (cf. *Familiari* X.3 (addressed to Gherardo), ed. Fracassetti II, 461-70). Indeed, *Familiari* IV.1 is a text which takes up from the very outset the Pauline theme (cf. Robbins 538-39), already applied by Petrarch to himself and to Gherardo in *Familiari* X.3 (datable to circa 1548), of the relinquishing of childish perceptions and modes of thought:

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:11)

—the climbing of Mt. Ventoux being presented in its opening lines as (at first) an unthinking ambition conceived by Petrarch "from infancy" (ed. cit. 2-3). In addition, the letter elaborates upon this theme in the fashion of St. Paul himself, who immediately glossed allegorically this avowal of a changed, adult perception with the further reflection:

For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then I shall know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Likewise, in his letter of 1353, Petrarch will add the dimension of a progression (cf. O'Connell 513-15) from a merely childish "desire of [physical] seeing" ("*La lettera del Ventoso*", ed. cit. 2) to the dawn (or rather, "sunset," as we have noted) of

a radically changed mode of (spiritual) seeing —a progression which marks “now” (or rather, just now) as merely the first step towards the future, indefinitely located moment of transformation, “then,” evoked by St. Paul.

As such, the letter of Mt. Ventoux self-consciously shares, and *successfully* assimilates (*pace* Greene 110-11) many of the narrative elements that characterise its most obvious intertext, the rhetorical-autobiographical testimony of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, dating from Late Antiquity. The reading (or rather, quasi-oracular consultation “by chance” [ed. cit. 16]) by Petrarch at the mountain's summit of a few lines from *Confessions* X.8<sup>3</sup> and the Italian humanist's immediate commentary upon this, through spontaneous recollection of *Confessions* VIII.12,<sup>4</sup> constitute together the focal centre, indeed the apex, of this Petrarchan letter-narrative. As in Augustine's *confessional testimony* also, the major turning point of this narrative will be a moment of *solitary* crisis and a consequent new mode of seeing and understanding.

In Augustine's text, paraded in Petrarch's letter as the overt key to many of its imitative gestures, we find likewise a parallel, highly structured autobiographical narrative of earthly and spiritual pilgrimage.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, in this Augustine's archetypal narrative of “peregrinatio” (as he calls it in *Confessions* V.13) —just as in Petrarch's later, (consciously) more modest adaptation of it— the literal and the metaphorical, the autobiographical and the paradigmatic, the historically factual and the allegorical, the spatial and the symbolic likewise perfectly coincide (cf. Williams, *Pilgrimage* 35), rather than conflict with, or displace each other (Greene 106; cf. Williams, op. cit. 33).<sup>6</sup>

Petrarch's text also shares with its Augustinian “model” a number of writerly, rhetorical strategies. The doubling of the author's *persona* as both wiser narrator and flawed, narrated character (the stumbling or straying pilgrim) through the device of (multi-layered) retrospection functions at the same time as a textual window upon the differing introspections of these various *personae* of the self. Or again, in the *ironic* presentation of a previous “self,” that narrated self (operating, it would seem, as part of an extended modesty topos) is cast as inferior to the fellow pilgrim (the friend Alypius in the case of Augustine, the brother Gherardo in the case of Petrarch), whose qualities (the ability to ascend more directly and speedily to the spiritual “summit” in question) serve as a foil to the (narrated) author's own relative imperfection and tardiness. Indeed, the use of self above all as a moral *exemplum* is in both cases married to a confessional address of a personal history to a physically absent, yet spiritually very present wise Father (in Augustine's case, however, the Fountain of Wisdom Himself). Just as in Augustine's text too, where it is often explicitly flagged (e.g., at the close of *Confessions* IX.10) as an ideally arranged later encapsulation of the actual words once uttered by the author, narratorial self-quotation (cf. Williams, *Pilgrimage* 34) merges with the paraphrase or rehearsal of other texts —in Petrarch's case, *syncretically* (Livy, Pomponius Mela, St. Paul, Virgil, Ovid, the Psalmist David, Augustine, Ovid again, Augustine and St. Paul, St. Matthew and St. Athanasius, and then Virgil once more)— in a composite, yet paradoxically unified, voice.

Even the sense of “the whole experience” (of Petrarch's) being just “*one more example* in an indefinite series,” which for Greene (110) indicated a failure of “unique-

ness” because of “failed assimilation,” is itself embedded (as a *positive* factor) in the Augustinian text, and is recognised/imitated as such by Petrarch (cf. Robbins 540).<sup>7</sup> If Augustine’s famous interpretation of a child’s cry heard in the garden (“Take up, and read”) as a providential command to himself from God (*Confessions* VIII.12), and his very ability to act upon it, are predicated in fact upon his knowledge of a similar instance in the life of the earlier, solitary saint, St. Antony of Egypt, it should be recognised also that the episode of Augustine’s conversion is shortly preceded in the *Confessions* by the testimony of his fellow countryman Ponticianus about the role of a chance reading of that very same Life of Saint Antony (as yet unknown to Augustine) in the conversion of two friends (VIII.6). Moreover, this crucial testimony, uttered in Augustine’s hearing at a crucial moment, is itself inspired by Ponticianus’s own chance glimpse in Augustine’s house of a copy of St. Paul’s *Epistles*. It is this recognition by Ponticianus of a text of Christian scripture, which he and Augustine *apparently* possess in common but *do not yet spiritually share* (just as Petrarch and his brother cannot yet share St. Augustine’s own text on Mt. Ventoux)—combined with Ponticianus’s accompanying observations upon the spiritual value of the solitary monastic life—that will precipitate Augustine’s crisis (*Confessions* VIII.7-11) and lead to his oracular consultation of that very same text of St. Paul’s. Finally, Augustine in turn will immediately cede this role to the faithful companion Alypius, who, inspired by Augustine’s example, will read on and apply further lines of the Pauline epistle (Romans 13-14) to himself, unlike Augustine himself, or St. Antony before him, or indeed Petrarch after him (“*La lettera del Ventoso*” 18-19). Not only that, but the whole exemplary episode will then be recounted by both men to Augustine’s mother as fulfilling her earlier, prophetic dream-vision of Augustine “standing ... on the rule of Faith” (*Confessions* VIII.12; cf. III.11). The validity of St. Augustine’s otherwise potentially *subjective* oracular reading and application to himself of the words of St. Paul is thus confirmed in (and through) his narrative of it by the (narrated) preceding, anticipatory oracle of the mother’s dream, by the authoritative, similar experience of a previous Christian saint, and by the conversational impact of the record of that experience upon Ponticianus’s two friends, as well as by Alypius’s immediate re-enactment of Augustine’s consultation of the text of St. Paul’s epistle.

Significantly, if Petrarch’s narrative of a *re-enactment* of conversion, picks up, as it were, the relay baton in this marathon of textual transmission and oracular mediation of the divine Word, it operates, nonetheless, at a much greater remove (and quite patently so). The authoritative, read or remembered “oracular” text becomes, in Petrarch’s case, that of a Church Father, Augustine himself (cf. Robbins 538) instead of Holy Scripture—indeed, in a manner more in keeping with Scholastic theological commentary (worthy of Dionigi da Borgo S. Sepolcro). The whole narrative is formally addressed not to God, whose command was heard by Augustine in the very voices of playing children, but to an earthly spiritual father, who literally supplied the physical text of the *Confessions* to him (just as Petrarch himself was to recommend / had recommended St Augustine’s “lachrymose” work to Gherardo at Montrieux in 1348 (*Familiari* X.3, ed. cit. II, 474), and so did actually share it with him). Indeed, in Petrarch’s letter of ascent and descent, the occasion(s) and stimuli leading to the mo-

ment of a critical turning point are not the divinely inspired promptings of a saintly mother, nor the moving (and for Augustine, shaming) spectacle of recent pagan conversions to Christianity, but rather, two monuments (one geographic, and the other textual) to vanity, and two immediate examples to avoid or emulate — a fictional, carnal one of failure, and a private, factual one of spiritual success. The first of these is the constant physical spectacle of what, on the face of it, appeared to childish eyes to be (like Mt. Haemus) the highest of mountains. The second is the humanistic catalyst of a “chance” (yet providential) reading (in a pagan author, Livy) of the account of Philip of Macedon’s disappointing, futile climb of just such a high mountain. The third is the equally futile, physically punishing experience of ascent and descent fifty years previously (a lapse of time equivalent to the whole span of Petrarch’s life in 1353) recounted by the fictional old man encountered by Petrarch and Gherardo at the foot of the Mt. Ventoux itself (cf. O’Connell 514). The last is, as we have noted, the more immediate, more successful and more edifying example of the monastic path taken by Petrarch’s own brother.

In Petrarch’s text, the effect of a marked distance from the privileged spirituality of Augustine and his time is even rendered by the detail of the narrator’s scholarly attribution to St. Athanasius (a historical detail of patristic, textual scholarship absent in Augustine) of the account of St. Antony’s reading of St. Matthew. Petrarch takes over Augustine’s recollection of the example of St. Antony (recently brought to Augustine’s attention *for the first time* by Ponticianus [*Confessions* VIII.6]) as if it were *his own* spontaneous recollection of a prior reading (or knowledge) of the story’s written source (“*La lettera del Ventoso*,” ed. cit. 18). Far from supplying a restorative bridge to the past, this early humanist, philological gesture of restitution of a missing link in the textual tradition can be read, alternatively, as an ironic marker (appropriate to Petrarch’s critical comparative appraisal, in his allegorical text, of the divergent humanistic and monastic paths) of its own redundancy, its reductively textual basis, and its fruitlessly tangential (yet relatively “easy” and inviting) digressivity. Likewise, the initial humanistic evocation and jesting evaluation of the reliability of Livy’s testimony about the mountaineering feats of Philip of Macedon and his troops, far from pitting in “anachronistic conflict” one (self-ironic, futile) historico-geographical imitative gesture of Petrarch’s (failing out of an early humanist “weakness of the historical imagination,” judged to be such in modern hindsight) against a would-be imitation by Petrarch of St. Augustine (which will be deemed to “fail,” conversely, out of “spiritual instability”) (Greene 111) — and far from constituting just a chance, humanistic trigger (or expedient narrative device) for setting in motion an otherwise inexplicable “actual” ascent — will primarily function as a *retorical* device for Petrarch to relativise, and thus belittle (modestly, and self-ironically) the scale of the physical and moral challenge presented by the Mt. Ventoux — as much as, or more than it will serve to ironize and destabilize the objective status of Petrarch’s physical ascent of the mountain (cf. “*La lettera del Ventoso*,” ed. cit. 51). The claims of Livy’s text would, according to Petrarch, no longer be a matter of doubt “if the climb up that mountain [mentioned in Livy] were as *easy* as the ascent of Mt. Ventoux” (ed. cit. 3). This ironic reduction by the narrator (in retrospect) of the scale of difficulty *experienced* and the

effort expended in the ascent of the mountain is orchestrated, in fact, as a self-mocking, *anticipatory* device, pointing forward to the subsequent “lazy” choice by Petrarch the character of an “easier,” slower route around (if not up) the mountain and his crucial realisation (as he pauses to rest and reflect contemplatively, in a lowly, undemanding “valley,” upon the experience of his climb) that far dizzier spiritual heights still remain to be scaled, even after this one, in a potentially infinite series of ascents (ed. cit. 8; discussed in Williams, *Pilgrimage* 34):

Indeed, that life, which we called blessed, is situated on a high peak, and, as they say, “Narrow is the path that leads to it.” Many hills rise in between [us and it], and [to reach it], we must proceed from virtue to virtue, step by honourable step. At the highest point is the end of all, and the boundary of life towards which our pilgrimage is directed.

To find Petrarch’s narrated “impulse” to climb Mt. Ventoux unusual or “extraordinary,” and so to take Petrarch’s rhetorical text at face value by anchoring (unsatisfactorily, *of course*) this apparently literal, physical impulse in his (narrated) reading of the uncertain testimony of Livy (Greene 104), would in short be itself as “extraordinary” as to question or problematise the self-evidence of Dante’s (allegorically narrated) aspiration, in the first canto of the *Inferno*, to find the path back to the majestic, strangely reassuring, yet achingly inaccessible mountain (“source of all joy,” v. 77) that dominates the allegorical “wood” in which he is lost, after his “abandonment” of “the true path” (v. 13-21). Indeed, Dante’s future guide, Virgil, cannot conceive of his *not* wanting, or *not* being able, to do so, and can only marvel at the fact that he is not already climbing up the mountain (“Why do you not ascend...?” [*Inferno* v. 77])—as Petrarch will do later (in an Augustinian vein) before the spectacle of his own defective will power, “laziness” and futile “straying” (“What then holds you back?” [ed. cit. 8-9]). In Petrarch’s particular case, where the *physical* ascent of Mt. Ventoux was initially presented as the mere result, and outward sign, of a lingering, reprehensibly childish ambition, the providential spiritual journey that is mapped upon that arbitrary ascent—which will itself become the instrument for *remedying* such childish vanity—requires no such external justification. Rather, for Petrarch, as for us, the onus of explanation and “justification” lies firmly on the side of a failure to undertake, or to want to undertake, this *other*, penitential journey of salvation.

Much has been made too by critics of the exclusion of Gherardo from a shared experience of reading, recognition and renewal at the summit’s peak in contradistinction from the participation of Augustine’s Alypius in the garden. For some, this bespeaks the solitary, exclusively solipsistic (proto-modern) nature of Petrarch’s (narrated) self-referential reading of Augustine on that summit (“*La lettera del Ventoso*,” ed. cit. 51, following O’Connell 516-17). If this exclusion of Gherardo, and this exclusivity of Petrarch’s, are all the more unexpected and marked given the narrator’s prior choice of his brother as sole suitable companion, in preference to a whole range of human character types (ed. cit. 4), this is because Petrarch’s roundabout, Dantesque

journey of “straying” (“three times” [ed. cit. 8-9]), and his typically *Augustinian* propensity for deferral and deviation (ed. cit. 18-19), as well as the gradual, increasingly contemplative self-awareness that that *longer* journey and *indirect* ascent bring with them (along *deceptively* “easier,” “flatter” or even “downward” paths), are precisely *not* the journey of the brother, whose own (post-conversion) itinerary is, as we have already observed, distinct from Petrarch’s in both time and nature. If Gherardo the Carthusian reaches the mountain’s peak directly and effortlessly by taking the “narrow,” more arduous, ever ascending, linear path of an austere monastic spirituality, he has no time (on this single-minded upward journey) for unnecessary, circular digressions, and also no need correspondingly (once at the “summit”) for reassuring textual “signs” or oracles, let alone humanistic restoration and imitative self-conscious reappropriation of them. (Irrespective of the unfulfilled expectation *created in Gherardo by Petrarch himself* of an imminent recitation by Petrarch of Augustine’s text.)

The allegory of the mountain’s ascent may thus be understood not so much as a figure of idle, reprehensible *curiosity* motivated at first by a secular *videndi cupiditas* (ed. cit. 2) —by a “desire of seeing” in the most basic, literal sense— and then transformed subjectively (even solipsistically) by one of the protagonists (Petrarch’s narrated, middle-aged “self”) into a problematically self-referential reading experience (cf. Robbins 543-44). Rather it can be seen to function as a (Herculean) allegory of a *moral* choice at the traditional (Hesiodic and Pythagorean) division of the ways. This *solitary* choice of the young Hercules, as evoked in Prodicus’s famous fable (Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.21-34) and its various derivations (including, notably, Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.32.118) —between the broad, “easy” path of “pleasure” and the contrasting “narrow” “steep” path leading to the high rock of “virtue” (which is difficult of access, like Petrarch’s “steep and almost inaccessible” Mountain [ed. cit. 4-5])— had already been (was to be) exploited by Petrarch in his *De vita solitaria* of 1346 (1.4., 2.13; ed. Maréchaux, 63, 262) as a figure for the choice between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* (Tucker, “Beyond Beauty” 93-6 and nn. 54-5, 61-3; Id., “*Les Regrets*” 83-4). It would also be employed similarly by Petrarch’s immediate humanist successor, Coluccio Salutati, as an apologia for Hercules’ “philosophical,” wilful preference for “virtue” over the attractions of earthly “pleasure” (*De laboribus Herculis* 3.7.2, ed. Ullmann I, 182; Witt 216-17; Tucker “Beyond Beauty” 95 and n. 62). If, according to the terms of this traditional allegory, the more successful Gherardo consistently chooses the correct path, leading him arduously, but safely and swiftly to the desired peak, Petrarch’s misguided (and self-ironic) tortuous path, which threatens repeatedly to take him away from the mountain top, into the “valleys,” eventually will lead him to the desired summit, *notwithstanding*, by virtue of a compensatory, accompanying process of inner contemplation upon the moral, allegorical significance of such “straying” along the “flatter, and at first sight, more expeditious path that leads through base earthly pleasures” to an “eternal night” of damnation (ed. cit. 8-11). Paradoxically, it is this very act of “reflection”—the direct *result* of such dangerous “straying”—that will “uplift” Petrarch both in “body and soul” to his goal, and enable him successfully to reach the summit with relative speed, in a manner closer to that of his brother (ed. cit. 10-11).

Ultimately, then, Petrarch's letter-narrative of his "ascent" of Mt. Ventoux stands as an *apologia* (like Coluccio Salutati's) for the *alternative* path of a *humanist* "contemplative" sensibility, distinct from Carthusian monasticism. (Distinct, because partly engaged in the activity of the secular world and steeped in a nascent culture of humanist (largely secular) textuality, which aspires *nonetheless* to the same goals and lofty summits of a contemplative spirituality, albeit through an indirect route, and at a slower pace.) Indeed, on this painfully erratic trajectory up the mountainside and down back into the "valleys" of this curiously *altered* (or rather, *changing*) Mountain of Virtue, Petrarch's apparently "easier," more tempting path, proves in the end to be, paradoxically, more toilsome than his brother's "shortcut" ("the path only growing longer, and my pointless labour only increasing" [ed. cit. 6-7]). As in Xenophon's original account of Prodicus's fable and as in other similar (Pythagorean) readings (associated with it) of the symbolic significance of the twin-branched Greek letter "Y," this paradox potentially reverses (or at least destabilizes) the polarities of the moral equation of "toil" with "virtue"'s salvificatory path, on the one hand, and of relative "ease" with the destructive path of self-indulgent "pleasure," on the other hand (Tucker, "Beyond Beauty" 95).

This autobiographical-allegorical narrative of Petrarch's *may* constitute, therefore, the external, textual sign of a "crisis" of sorts on the part of its author and chief protagonist, poised on the brink of a new, as yet uncharted, humanist-pilgrim writerly-spiritual journey that is already worryingly diverging, at the time of the purported date of the letter and at the later time of its actual composition, from the possibility of a shared spiritual flight, such as that of Augustine's and Monica's, beyond an awareness of "the vocal expressions of our mouths, where a word has both beginning and ending" "unto a touch of that external Wisdom, which is over all" (*Confessions* IX.10). Nonetheless, it constitutes also the narration of a gesture of conscious renunciation rather than impotent failure. The journey it suggests is above all one that is affirmed *positively* by Petrarch —though self-ironically and modestly (in the manner of Augustine)— as an admittedly inferior, more worldly, and more dangerous choice, and yet, for all that, as a potentially viable, important *alternative*, continuing in fact beyond and "after" Mt. Ventoux. Indeed, this is a journey which demands above all to be *written down*, and defines itself as such (Williams 30-31), as Petrarch makes clear, in what is ultimately a retrospective, *self-reflexive* narrative (Robbins 546) at the *remembered* (and so "seen") privileged "site" of the physical-allegorical Mountain (ed. cit. 20-21), present in the "spacious palaces" of the author's memory (*Confessions* X.8; cf. O'Connell 517-18 and Robbins 543) of 1353, and ever moving across the words on a page.

It may thus also constitute, *incidentally*, a "pilgrim" "pre-history" of the complex articulation of a composite, humanist, first-person authorial voice (cf. Williams, *Pilgrimage* 34) out of the fragmentary legacy of a shattered, yet unbroken Latinity, stretching back to Augustine and beyond him. One which will ultimately find expression, for example, in Montaigne's similarly infinite, but now avowedly *vain*, pilgrim journey of an ever elusive articulation of self (defined not objectively or externally as "mes actions," but subjectively as "une continuelle agitation et mutation de mes

pensées”), likewise *in and through words*, “autant qu’il y aura d’ancre et de papier au monde” (*Essais* III.9, ed. Thibaudet & Rat 922). A *textual* path, then, whose goal, if any, will be the apprehension both of the essential “emptiness” of that remembered/recounted “self,” and of the potentially infinite “vanity” of that inner, delimited self’s “needy,” problematically open-ended relation to the infinite vistas of the external world:

Sauf toy, ô homme, disoit ce Dieu [à Delphes], chaque chose s’estudie la première et a, selon son besoin, des limites à ses travaux et desirs. Il n’en est une seule si vuide et nécessaire que toy, qui embrasses l’univers; tu es le scrutateur sans connoissance, le magistrat sans jurisdiction et, après tout, le badin de la farce.  
(*Essais* III.9, ed. cit. 980)

But that will be *another* story.

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The essays of this volume—and the various stories they tell of differing, yet related and mutually defining, cultural, intellectual and spiritual trajectories—fall into three distinct sections, whose contents reflect a range of disciplinary perspectives (Dante Studies, scholastic and humanistic intellectual history, poetics, theological and economic thought, the rhetorical tradition, the evolution of the physical book, grammatical pedagogy, the history of Classical scholarship and the problems of textual transmission, the cultural history of pilgrimage and travel), illustrated by a variety of in depth case studies. This grouping of subject areas is not intended to be exhaustive. Other important topics of legal and political thought, of medical and scientific writing, of art history, of Jewish or Marrano cultural history, or of broader social history could equally have been included. However, in compensation, the volume’s tripartite arrangement is intended to illustrate, broadly, three possible critical approaches to discussion, resolution or transcendence of the “medieval”-“renaissance” duality. In turn, this multiplicity of perspectives, of approaches, and of illustrative examples will serve to reveal the different possible *forms* that the “medieval”-“renaissance” juncture may take (not just continuity or discontinuity, but more interestingly, harmony or counterpoint, antagonism or conflation, eclecticism or synthesis, anachronism or synchrony, rejection or revision, absorption, repetition or renewal) as well as the different types of *form* (abstract or concrete, linguistic or textual, grammatical or rhetorical, poetical or mythological, allegorical or geographical, geometric or botanical) that may *inform* these larger “forms.”

Our first section is concerned with the overlapping and parallel histories of Scholasticism and Humanism in two modes: firstly, the meeting and touching, but not the deeper interrelation or integration of two apparently distinct traditions and methods—in short, their “interface”; and secondly, the dialogue and profounder “interplay” of the new humanist “method” with a modified, renewed, and no less pervasive

“Second” Scholastic. Our second section will then examine in order, three particular types of “Figures and Forms”: 1. allegorical figures of rhetorical and poetic form; 2. the constant yet subtly changing (macro- and micro-) form of the book in the shift from manuscript to printed volume; 3. the enduring presentational form of a nonetheless changing understanding of Latin grammar. These will be seen to function, respectively, as testimonies to the parallel possibilities of formal similarity *and* historical distinctness, of fixity *and* transformation, of the perennality of pedagogical method *and* the obsolescence or renewal of the knowledge of which it is the vehicle. In short these figural, literal, and schematic forms serve as ambivalent “markers” of a paradoxical “continuum.” Finally, in the light of this paradox, our third section will be concerned with the “mapping” of both “recurrence” *and* “change” along the labyrinthine twists and turns of two exemplary stories —of two juxtaposed, evolving narratives: the one, a history of chance, error, and misunderstanding, traced along the guiding “thread” of the textual peripeteia of the fortunes of a Classical myth; the other, the history of an evolving Christian, secular, and Euro-centric consciousness, traced eastward and westward, across an archipelago of testimonies to *homo viator*’s cultural appropriations of the book of Nature.

Elizabeth Mozzillo-Howell’s study of “Dante between Scholasticism and Humanism” appropriately opens this collection of essays with an examination of a major Italian pre-humanist figure who defies periodization. Her focus on the *De Monarchia* (c. 1314-1318) allows her to examine its heavy debt, at the level of its style and form, to scholastic procedures —in particular, the semantic and inferential theories of the *logica moderna*— whilst also pointing to the quasi-humanistic character of Dante’s expression (book II) of admiration for the culture of ancient Rome (an ideological stance by which he legitimates the autonomy of temporal, imperial rule). This is, of course, *in conjunction with* his recourse to the supporting techniques of logical discourse. This focus upon the scholastic-(proto)humanist duality of the *De Monarchia*, in respect of form and content, viewed within the work’s immediate cultural and political context, is then complemented by the contrast that Mozzillo-Howell makes between the corresponding (similarly discrete) modes of its subsequent reception: on the one hand, Guido Vernani’s scholastic critique (c. 1340) of Dante’s dialectical ability and pro-Roman line of argumentation; on the other hand Cola di Rienzo’s early humanist, political endorsement (c. 1360) of Dante’s pro-Roman, pro-Imperial stance, in the form of a commentary which, either wittingly or unwittingly, attenuates or even censors scholastic elements in the work. By the time of Marsilio Ficino, critical response or enthusiastic endorsement has become patent transformation and outright intellectual appropriation; in Ficino’s vernacular translation (1467) of the *De Monarchia*, Dante’s scholastic “quaestio” becomes a markedly Neo-Platonic, humanist dissertation.

Luc Deitz’s radical re-evaluation of Julius Caesar Scaliger’s famous treatise on poetics (1561), takes us towards the opposite end of our chronological spectrum, and addresses from that later perspective the similar issue of the co-existence of scholastic and humanist elements at the level of form and content (the logical and structural methods employed and the texts cited). Yet what may seem relatively unsurprising in

Dante's writing and its later reception, comes as a revelation in Scaliger's work, not least because of its reputation in our own time as a quintessentially Aristotelian study of poetics, which further defines "renaissance" poetics for us. For Deitz, Scaliger's patent debt to Aristotle's *Categories* (rather than the *Poetics*) in conjunction with Porphyry's *Quinque voces* (trans. Boethius), marks him out as a scholastic thinker, irrespective of his use of *some* Latin and Greek texts resurrected by humanist scholarly endeavour. Indeed, according to Deitz, in the very terminology of "subtlety" that Scaliger uses of his own arguments, he is implicitly associating himself with, and modelling himself upon, the scholastic "doctor subtilis" Duns Scotus. Such an examination of a flourishing, consciously assumed and readily paraded scholasticism, at the very heart of a canonical "Renaissance" text, whose humanist elements are by comparison only incidental to it, is by itself evidence of the need to test and re-think our inherited critical assumptions even about later (so-called) "renaissance" works (and not just "proto-," "pre-" or "early" humanist ones).

Annabel Brett's paper about the interrelated issues of "Authority, Reason and . . . Self-definition" on the part of theologians (c. 1570) in what has been termed the Spanish "Second Scholastic," keeps us in this later, Counter-Reformation period. She draws our attention, across a broader cultural and intellectual canvas, not so much to the uneasy juxtaposition of "humanist" and "scholastic" values, as to the dialogic interplay between these competing tendencies over the central issue of textual and above all, *Scriptural* reading and interpretation. The twin scholastic poles of "authority" and "reason," upon which (from a scholastic perspective) such readings and interpretations should be based, themselves become the markers of a fundamental change that is indebted, as much as it is responding to, the challenges of humanist and reformation intellectual-spiritual culture and hermeneutics. For Brett, Scholasticism's "come back" —via its redefinition of theology's relationship to the written letter— centres in particular upon the triple opposition letter/spirit, text/author's mind, *verbal/res* and results in a new scholastic emphasis upon the "spirit" rather than the "letter," upon the author's essential meaning, rather than upon the external carapace of his words. In occupying this new ground, Counter-Reformation scholasticism is thus seen to abandon traditional literal and historical interpretations of Scripture, in order to counter a Lutheran and humanist-philological emphasis upon the "hollow" letter —upon the signifier rather than the signified. Yet at the same time it is not abandoning "authority" for the free-for-all of subjectivism. Rather it is creating, *in practice*, quite radically, a new *persona* of modesty by which the scholastic theologian, self-effacing but not slavishly following the words of a predecessor, might approach the interpretation of Scripture respecting authority but also using his own reason. Indeed, the broader impact of this new self-representation and paradoxical *self*-authorisation on the part of Counter-Reformation theologians is not only to throw into relief the contrasting rash, intellectual *immodesty* of Reformers and the suspect rhetorical ironies and duplicities of humanists, mere grammarians, masquerading vaingloriously, untrustworthily and ineptly as theologians; this respectful, yet judicious, reasoning and *useful* modesty, is also to become, in the wake of the divisions of the Reformation, the public voice *par excellence* of scholastic theology and indeed the *persona* also of the good citizen of

the Spanish Christian commonwealth, at the centre of Counter-Reformation Christendom.

Toon Van Houdt's intricate examination of the ideas of the Jesuit theologian of Louvain Leonardus Lessius upon "Taxation and Justice" concludes our first section on Humanism and Scholasticism, by complementing and broadening further Annabel Brett's suggestive portrait of the vigorous centrality of the Spanish Second Scholastic and its wider religious-political impact. Picking up from this larger concluding suggestion, and dwelling upon the inevitable cross-fertilisation of scholasticism with humanism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Van Houdt takes us beyond the Scriptural concerns of theologians to the "applied" domains of politics and economics. Indeed, in so doing, he not only traces the debt of Lessius's fiscal ethics to Thomistic principles of justice, derived from the *Summa Theologiae* and the *De regimine Iudaeorum*, but he also tracks the dissemination of Lessius's ideas through humanist political handbooks and didactic encyclopaedias in the Southern Low Countries, such as those of the Louvain professor Nicolaus Vernulaeus and the Antwerp polygraph Laurentius Beyerlinck, respectively. For Van Houdt this interplay of scholastic thought with humanistic channels of dissemination had a major and immediate socio-politico-economic effect, for it helped to shape the fiscal policy of the government of the Spanish Low Countries. More broadly, it also characterised intellectual life there well into the seventeenth century.

The opening study of our second section, devoted to "figures and forms" of various particular types, takes us back again to the earlier part of our chronological spectrum, but this time to the geographical and cultural context of French / Burgundian literary life and writing in the fifteenth century. David Cowling's evaluation of an important and eloquent textual and visual testimony to that context and to the elaboration within it of a *rhétoriqueur* poetics — *Les Douze Dames de Rhétorique* (1463) — not only tells the story of the literary exchanges and opposing viewpoints of the major poetic figures of the Bourbon and Burgundian courts, Jean Robertet and Georges Chastelain, it also sketches a striking "pré-histoire" (analysed in its own right, and in relation to its own immediate context) of the self-conscious apologetics, self-promotional strategies and writerly anxieties of the later Pléiade poets of the sixteenth century. Cowling deftly invites us to consider the fascinating parallel to be drawn between these two cultural moments without falling into the trap of trying to understand the metatextual self-reflexivity or cultural politics of the writing of the later one in terms of the earlier one, or indeed vice versa, let alone trace patterns of "influence" or systematic "anticipation." Rather, Cowling rightly concentrates on the striking interplay of visual and textual forms in the object of his study, by showing how the metaphorical "language" of both text and accompanying iconographic illustrations is exploited in order to define the craft of poetry and the privileged status of the poet. At the same time, Cowling highlights the unresolved tensions underlying Robertet's eulogising of Chastelain (and the former's concomitant enthusiastic subscription to the ideal/ambition of poetic pre-eminence), on the one hand, and on the other hand, Chastelain's own, corresponding reservations and anxieties about the rhetoric of praise.

This marriage of historical contextualisation and multifaceted exploration of

the functioning of a particular, culturally specific, fifteenth-century book, in manuscript, prepares the way for Margaret Smith's illuminating and rightly admonitory exposition of the history, in the same period, of the stable yet shifting form and function of *the* book in general, in its technical and concrete aspects. Whilst reminding us of the persistency of ancient elements such as the codex form itself and the presentation of text in columns or pages, and whilst touching upon the lingering presence (and eventual transformation) in the early printed book of vestiges of earlier features of manuscripts such as the use of red, Smith focuses above all on elements of gradual change and radical innovation attributable to, or associated with, the advent of printing from moveable metal type in the fifteenth century. In particular, the book's evolving "design history" from manuscript to incunabule and later printed book, is traced and illustrated by the examination of three areas: the introduction and use of italic type (to serve and perpetuate an older "medieval" system of the "hierarchy of scripts"); the addition of a new feature, the title-page; and the change from rare and then occasional printed foliation in roman numerals in the incunabular period to subsequent more common printed pagination using arabic numerals. Smith rightly ties these concrete, formal elements not to an abstract causality of the impact of cultural, intellectual, or ideological forces, loosely and vaguely labelled and interpreted as "medieval" or "renaissance," but to a precise economic and typographic history of production methods and functionality. The codex format of the book is thus seen to be a key example of an age-old, cultural "form" that is paradoxically, at one and the same time, the vehicle both of radical, technical innovation, in the fifteenth century, and of gradual, incidental, or even accidental, change in its physical make-up and textual/economic/social functionality.

Philip Ford's study of the lingering "fortune" in the sixteenth century (and beyond) of a famous Latin grammar dating from the twelfth century, Alexandre de Villedieu's *Doctrinale puerorum*, concludes our examination, in this second section, of various particular literary, visual or concrete "forms," by adding the further dimensions of grammatical form, educational method and the accompanying formal-textual-structural elements that underpin that method. With Ford's contribution, we progress from Cowling's "pre-history" of a book (and of the poetics that it bespeaks), and from Smith's slowly evolving history of the book (which of itself suffices to blur clear-cut demarcations of periodization and to dissolve the grandiose, abstract causality in which such periodizing distinctions are often loosely and spuriously grounded), to the story of the paradoxical survival, parallel existence, and enduring impact of an obsolete, yet *popular*, "medieval" grammatical manual. Widely disseminated in manuscript and incunabular form, and frequently re-printed even in the early and late sixteenth century, Alexandre de Villedieu's grammar book was nonetheless superseded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the influential Latin manual of Johannes Despauterius, first printed in 1511. Although Villedieu's grammar was derided by Rabelais in 1534 (*Gargantua* ch. XIV) as an example of an outdated manual, humanist grammatical textbooks derived many key features from it: notably, the use of mnemonic verses as a learning aid; the order and treatment of various areas of Latin grammar and prosody; even the illustrative examples that are cited. In short, not only

did Alexandre de Villedieu's work *not* suddenly disappear overnight with the advent of humanist new learning, it even survived in its own right, despite the importance, new grammatical understanding, and success of Despauterius's manual. Moreover, its very form and methods, and even some of its contents, permeated humanist and post-humanist grammars right up to our own time.

Our final section is intended to serve, like Ariadne's thread, as a means of guiding us out of the "Medieval"-Renaissance" impasse, by mapping the linked, complementary processes of recurrence and change in two particular case histories along two important cultural axes: the vagaries, across the centuries, of textual transmission (the history of culture and book as shifting text); and the chequered history, across geographic space and across time, of pilgrimage and exploration (the history of our reading of the world as text, at the conjunction of nature and culture).

Gilbert Tournoy's optic, as he traces the story of the changing understanding, or rather *mis*understanding, of the myth of Apollo and Admetus, through its recurrence in editions, commentaries and literary texts up to the sixteenth century and beyond, is the history of a mistake that not only repeats itself but also evolves. Tournoy recounts and illustrates textually the narrative of the accumulation and accretion of *error* stemming from the testimony of readers and commentators of the myth from Late Antiquity onwards. These not only corrupted it, but also in so doing refashioned it, generating new forms of variant ("mistaken") interpretation of it by later readers, for centuries to come. This particular mythological case history is illustrative of the vagaries and chance mechanisms of textual transmission in general, as well as of the broader transmission of culture in all its aspects. It also demonstrates how the tortuous and blind course of such misunderstanding and "error" constitutes the very matter of cultural history, much more than any lost, idealised (perhaps non-existent), or irrelevant path of historical "truth." Or, to use the metaphor of Petrarch's ascent of Mt. Ventoux, the negotiating of the mountainside, and the making of mistakes in the process, is what counts (and ultimately all that there is), rather than the direct, "correct" ascent to an intellectual vantage point, by which the circuitous path of "straying" may be defined and judged as such. If Tournoy (like Petrarch *the author*; cf. Robbins) does exploit such a correctional, defining overview (for the purpose, similarly, of the exposition of his argument), from the relatively privileged (but not totally error-free) vantage point of modern Classical scholarship, he is careful nonetheless to set the apparent (to some, surprising) philological and textual incompetence or ignorance of humanist scholars and readers in the broader framework of a fertile tradition of such scholarly, and ultimately creative "straying," which wends its way forward through editions, translations and commentaries of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This brings us to our concluding essay, and in a sense, to our starting point: the conjunction of narrative and journeying, of culture and nature, of authority and individual experience, of writing, reading and place. Wes Williams's account of a changing yet surviving "culture of pilgrimage" —clearly exemplified in Petrarch's ascent of Mt. Ventoux and discernible even later in the critical judgements of Montaigne upon André Thevet— sets the narratives of "pilgrim"-travellers to the Holy Land

alongside the competing narratives of explorers and scientific “observers” (such as the botanist Pierre Belon) in the East, and their Counter-reformation counterparts across the Atlantic in the West, the proselytising Jesuit “missionaries” of the New World. For Williams, pilgrims’ accounts of their journeys, geographic and textual, testify ultimately to recurring attempts to negotiate change. In particular, he maps the progress of their itineraries, and so of the processes of cultural change itself, onto the story of the fortune of the topos of the “apple of paradise,” from the *Voyages* of Mandeville onwards. The protean nature of this “fruit,” which is repeatedly seen to bear the emblem(s) of Christ’s cross, in a variety of botanical forms (paradise apple, banana, pineapple, or passion flower), and whose miraculous markings and status disappear without trace (and significantly so) in scientific accounts such as those of Belon, is seen by Williams to emblemize the struggle of the “culture of pilgrimage” to locate a place for the sacred in the face of the censoring or appropriating strategies of other (interrelated) travel discourses of exploration, commerce, and colonisation.

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In imitation of Petrarch’s own exploration of the various contours and dips of the terrain that makes up the very mountainside itself, we have thus ourselves, in drawing together this collection of essays, deliberately refrained from a simpler (and *perhaps* “easier”) direct, speedy ascent to the vantage point of a peak that will afford us immediately an antithetical, retrospective-prospective view of “Medieval” and “Renaissance” culture. The “longer” path that we have chosen, and are still in the process of following, is one fraught, admittedly, with danger and strewn with pitfalls. Its disorientating windings, challenges and dead ends will cause us repeatedly to pause and reflect. However, it will also equip us, in the very process, with a deeper understanding, and with a more penetrating vision, with which *eventually* to view the historical landscape from the mountain’s summit, *whatever that view may turn out to be*.

With Walter Ullmann, we may hope that it will be a truer vision, as “seen from a” (*perhaps* now *more* accurate, *less* prejudiced, *more* faithful) “historical perspective.” But with Pierre Belon, if not with Petrarch also, in our eagerness to by-pass the historiographical legacy of a “Medieval”/“Renaissance” divide and resolve the competing contentions surrounding it, we should now, as moderns, allow for (and not be threatened by) the further possibility that this alternative “vision” may itself be neither more nor less than a product and a reflection of our own various inner concerns, hidden desires, and emerging, changing selves:

Ceux qui entreprennent un voyage loingtain en estrange pays pour leur affaire particuliere, sont communement plus curieux de chercher les choses necessaires pour mettre fin à leur delibération, que d’employer leur temps à quelques autres observations, dont ils n’ont cognoissance: ... L’excuse y est ... que les esprits & affections humaines sont tellement differentes, que si plusieurs mesmement d’une compagnie cheminent ensemble par quelque pays estrange,

à grand peine en trouvera l'on deux qui s'adonnent à observer une mesme chose: car l'un sera inclin à noter cecy, & l'autre celà: joint qu'il n'est homme, tant soit diligent, qui puisse suffisamment examiner toutes choses par le menu: & toutesfois les choses memorables doivent estre fort bien considerées avant que d'en faire un certain jugement. (Belon, *Les Observations* (1555), f. 1<sup>v</sup>)

This collection of essays and in-depth “observations” of the “foreign country” of the historical past likewise juxtaposes the perspectives of a variety of individual scholars coming from different academic and disciplinary backgrounds. It will therefore fall short, inevitably, of the impossible ideal of a unified, totalising vision. However, this multifaceted exploration, for all its limitations and fragmentary provisional status, is no less also the necessary pre-condition for arriving at a “certain” judgement (one of many) that is at the same time, as Belon put it, *certain*.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> At the climax of the *Confessions* (the culminating point of Augustine’s conversion, just prior to the death of his mother [IX.10]) Augustine and Monica “ascend” spiritually together in a shared, supra-verbal contemplation of the “eternal life of the saints,” from which they awaken similarly and “descend” back down to an awareness (once more) of the physical sound of their own voices and to the mother’s vocal expression of “contempt for this life” and readiness for the “benefit of death” (IX.10).

<sup>2</sup> *Pace* Robbins (541–42), for whom Petrarch thus “flattens out” defensively Gherardo’s equally “dramatic” (prior) “story” of conversion, which “could usurp Petrarch’s.” Yet this partly ignores (and flattens out) the alternative possibility —afforded by the letter-narrative’s (a-historical) allegorical functioning in conjunction with its double historical retrospect (of 1336 and 1353)— of Petrarch’s drawing a direct parallel between two *chronologically distinct* existential moments (that of Petrarch 1326–1336, and that of Gherardo 1343–1353), in order, as Robbins astutely observes (536), for Petrarch to define his “circuitousness” against Gherardo’s “straight line.” However, this is not so much to “exclude” or eliminate Gherardo’s “more dramatic” experience of spiritual conversion, but to contrast its salutary *consequences* for Gherardo (which have an exemplary status), with Petrarch’s (no less exemplary, prior) *experience* of “straying” and “toiling” towards spiritual conversion. As Gherardo’s (monastic) story is one of “after” and Petrarch’s (humanistic) story is one of “before” (and so patently not comparable), they cannot be deemed to be in competition with each other; rather, Gherardo’s monastic “after” of 1343–1353 begs the question of the nature of Petrarch’s own (similar, but *different*) “after” of 1336–1353, just as Petrarch’s *humanistic* “before” suggests the existence of the parallel (similar, but different) “before” of Gherardo’s youthful road to spiritual conversion in 1343.

<sup>3</sup> A passage which only too appropriately belittles the *external* vision of landscape (*pace* Robbins 543) in comparison with the inner scrutiny of self and —in the original Augustinian context— with the inner vision of *memory*.

<sup>4</sup> A passage describing the mode and moment of Augustine’s conversion on similarly opening at random the book of St. Paul’s *Epistles*, in imitation of St. Antony of Egypt’s application to himself of a command, similarly chanced upon, from St. Matthew’s Gospel.

<sup>5</sup> From Africa to Italy and back; from birth in the flesh to re-birth in Christ; from an earthly, yet saintly mother, through her, and beyond her, to the Mother that is the Christian Church; from a narrated protagonist characterised by blindness and error to the present narrative moment of a seeing and understanding narratorial *persona*, illuminated by faith; from a terrestrial, transient secular word towards the omnipresent, transcendent Eternal Word.

<sup>6</sup> Notable examples of such “coincidence” in Augustine are the repeated upward and downward gazing, spiritual *and* carnal, of the author-narrator. Or the two sea journeys, both factual *and* allegorical, to Italy and then back to Africa, by the narrated first-person character “Augustine.” Or, indeed, the two “gardens” that feature in this spiritual odyssey of his as symbolic (because enclosed) settings for inward reflection —the one (belonging, significantly, to the house of an absent “master” [a figure for the absent “Lord”]) serving as the locus of Augustine’s conversion (*Confessions* VIII.8, 12), and the other affording Augustine and his mother (from the viewpoint of an inward looking balcony of a house at the Roman sea-port of Ostia) a visual focal point for their final privileged dialogue and shared metaphysical, upward flight towards the Eternity of the Word (*ibid.* IX.10), just prior to Monica’s death.

<sup>7</sup> This “sense” of repetition is strikingly manifested in the crucial intertextual parallel between Augustine’s moment of crisis (his ashamed and agitated response to the saintly example of two friends of a fellow countryman, Ponticianus, who convert on reading the story of St. Antony’s similar *scripture*-inspired conversion to Christian monasticism) and that of Petrarch, presented anachronistically in the allegory as being triggered, likewise, by the counter-example of his brother’s Carthusian monastic spiritual practice.

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