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Petrarch in English

Political, Cultural and Religious Filters in the
Translation of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*
and *Triumphs* from Geoffrey Chaucer to J. M.
Synge

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Short Abstract

Petrarch in English: Political, Cultural and Religious Filters in the Translation of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and *Triumphs* from Geoffrey Chaucer to J. M. Synge

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This thesis is concerned with one key aspect of the reception of the vernacular poetry of Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), namely translations and imitations of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf*) and *Triumphs* in English. It aims to provide a more comprehensive survey of the vernacular Petrarch's legacy to English literature than is currently available, with a particular focus on some hitherto critically neglected texts and authors. It also seeks to ascertain to what degree the socio-historical phenomena of religion, politics, and culture have influenced the translations and imitations in question. The approach has been both chronological and comparative. This strategy will demonstrate with greater clarity the monumental effect of the Elizabethan Reformation on the English reception of Petrarch. It proposes a solution to the problem of the long gap between Geoffrey Chaucer's re-writing of *Rvf* 132 and the imitations of Wyatt and Surrey framed in the context of Chaucer's sophisticated imitative strategy (Chapter I). A fresh reading of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* is offered which highlights the author's misgivings about the dangers of textual misinterpretation, a concern he shared with Petrarch (Chapter II). The analysis of Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti and Epithalamion* in the same chapter reveals a hitherto undetected Ovidian subtext to Petrarch's *Rvf* 190. Chapter III deals with two English versions of the *Triumphs*: I propose a date for Lord Morley's translation which suggests it may be the first post-Chaucerian English engagement with Petrarch; new evidence is brought to light which identifies the edition of Petrarch used by William Fowler as the source text for his *Triumphs of Petrarcke*. The fourth chapter constitutes the most extensive investigation to date of J. M. Synge's engagement with the *Rvf*, and deals with the question of translation as subversion. On the theoretical front, it demonstrates how Synge's use of "folk-speech" challenges Venuti's binary foreignising/domesticating system of translation categorisation.

Long Abstract:

Petrarch in English: Political, Cultural and Religious Filters in the Translation of the *Rerum
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This dissertation deals with a significant aspect of Petrarch's critical fortune, seeking to analyse the ways in which cultural, political, and religious filters have affected the English reception of Petrarch's vernacular poetry. The abundance of critical and scholarly interventions into this debate is testament to Petrarch's status as one of the most significant and fundamental formative influences on English letters. This extensive body of secondary literature has dictated the manner in which this thesis addresses the topic: it simultaneously attempts to re-evaluate prevailing critical opinions whilst also addressing some lesser studied texts and authors. The approach is both chronological and comparative to better facilitate the demonstration of the monumental effect of the Elizabethan Reformation on the English reception of Petrarch. Beginning with the earliest known rendering of one of Petrarch's sonnets into English, Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canticus Troili" (based on *Rvf* 132), it will go on to examine Petrarch's fortunes in Henrician England, with particular reference to lesser studied texts such as Sir Thomas Wyatt's "Love, Fortune and my mind" (*Rvf* 124), and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey's "I never saw you, madam" (*Rvf* 11). Two major Elizabethan sonnet sequences are then examined: *Astrophil and Stella* by Sir Philip Sidney, and *Amoretti and Epithalamion* by Edmund Spenser. The English reception of Petrarch's *Triumph* constitutes a particularly neglected area of Petrarch reception studies, so two versions of the text are analysed in the third chapter: one by the Tudor translator Henry Parker, Lord Morley, the other by a courtier and poet in James VI's Scotland, William Fowler. The final chapter addresses the work of one modern translator of Petrarch, J. M. Synge. The Anglo-Irish literary movement's best known dramatist, Synge's poetical works have been largely ignored by critics, and his Petrarchan translations have suffered particular neglect.

In Chapter I, I show how Chaucer's "Canticus Troili" represents a false start for the English reception of Petrarch. Viewed collectively, Chaucer's additions and omissions point to a deliberate imitative strategy intended to conceal the source text by assimilating it to the native medieval tradition. However, this does not necessarily imply a hostility to Petrarch's poetics. Indeed, the manner in which Chaucer adapted *Rvf* 132 to the context of his own poem finds sanction in Petrarch's famous letter to Boccaccio (*Familiars* 23.19) in which he describes his theory of how a good imitator should operate, and is, in many ways, evidence of Chaucer's sensitivity to what would become a key concept for Petrarch's literary inheritors in the Renaissance. Chaucer's *imitatio* of Petrarch in the "Canticus" actually underlines the English poet's precocity in singling out an archetypal Petrarchan poem for imitation and re-writing long before Petrarchism proper began to affect European vernacular poetry. Nevertheless, the obfuscation of Petrarch's original text helps to explain why the "Canticus" never served as a point of departure for poets in the century and a half following the appearance of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that Wyatt or Surrey were even aware of, much less inspired by, Chaucer's borrowing from an author and text in whom they shared an interest. Instead, a combination of factors which had more to do with the intellectual and cultural climate of Europe as a whole combined to spark the Henrician interest in Petrarch: the growing prestige of vernacular poetry, the Italianate fashion at courts around Europe, but particularly Henry's court, and the foothold gained by the Humanist literary values shaped by Petrarch's writings, which encouraged the type of imitation practised by Wyatt and Surrey.

Although the Petrarchan imitations of Wyatt and Surrey are undertaken against the backdrop of Henry's split with Rome, they do not exhibit any hostility to Petrarch's "Catholicism" in the manner of a Spenser or a Fowler. Indeed, both appear entirely unconcerned with exploring the spiritual dimension to Petrarch's work. Nevertheless, their Petrarchism provided a platform from which their contemporaries, if not they themselves, could make a case for the entry of the English language into the pantheon of great European literary languages. Petrarchan imitation had already become a staging ground upon which the respective vernaculars of burgeoning European nation-states vied for supremacy. Initially, the proof of this supremacy was assessed in a purely

literary context. This situation changed radically in the years to come, however, as English cultural superiority came to be expressed more and more in terms of the spiritual enlightenment which Reformists believed precipitated and accompanied the Elizabethan Reformation.

In the second chapter, I will describe how the political and doctrinal reforms of Elizabeth's reign caused a seismic shift in the English perception of Petrarch as a literary model. On one side of the cultural chasm stand Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey and Morley, on the other, Sidney, Spenser and Fowler. The former group needed no justification for their engagement with Petrarch. They operated within the same cultural milieu as the Italian. In Chaucer's case, this is to be expected, given that he was a contemporary of Petrarch's inhabiting a Christendom which adhered to the same spiritual code as interpreted and dictated by the one Church. In the case of the Henrician poets, though the secular authority of the Church was beginning to unravel, doctrinal orthodoxy held firm. For the Elizabethan writers, however, the situation was markedly different. An element of national pride had always been a factor in vernacular literary production – however, where previously poets had been content to vie for supremacy with their French and Italian counterparts on a purely literary level (that is in terms of linguistic harmony and refinement), now they were obliged to express cultural superiority over Catholic models on a macro-poetic level as expressions of English self-definition became inextricably linked to programmes for religious reform. The early English engagement with Petrarch displays no concern with the spiritual conflict which defines the *Rvf*, yet by the close of the sixteenth-century, Sidney had composed *Astrophil and Stella*, a sonnet sequence which exhibits a marked concern over the potential of the love lyric to distract both the reader and the practitioner from their social and/or political responsibilities, with particular reference to the *Rvf* specifically and the Petrarchan mode in general. Spenser went further in his *Amoretti and Epithalamion* and produced a text with the specific goal of demonstrating how the classic Petrarchan spiritual conflict might be resolved with reference to the new ideas of the Reformation. The concerted attempt at English cultural self-definition which took place under Elizabeth I forced English Petrarchans to engage with a key element of Petrarch which had previously been ignored. By addressing the spiritual implications of Petrarchan love, Reformed English writers were able to signal their superiority over their models on a level which

transcended the purely literary sphere and showcased the advantageous position afforded them by their religious enlightenment, offering a point of access to salvation which, in their eyes, remained closed off to their Catholic counterparts.

Chapter III highlights the contrast between the thematic concerns of Morley and Fowler. This re-affirms the effect of the Elizabethan Reformation, but also demonstrates how much more aware writers had become of the vernacular European lyric tradition in the years between Morley's translation in the late 1520's and Fowler's *Triumphs* of 1587. My dating of Morley's text shows that a case may be made for the *Tryumphes* being the earliest post-Chaucerian engagement with Petrarch, and therefore it is no surprise that Morley's translation is politically and doctrinally neutral. The tone of his translation is remarkable when compared with Fowler's later version of the same poem, and the contrast between the two works demonstrates the cultural distance which the Reformation established between Catholic Italy and Protestant England and Scotland. The copious mistranslations and misunderstanding which litter Morley's "Triumphe of Love IV" show how little impact the Provençal and Italian schools had had on literature in English up to that point and, again, the contrast with the analogous section in Fowler's *Triumphs* shows how much had changed in the space of a little over fifty years.

Fowler, like Spenser, felt compelled to express his nationalism by incorporating modes of worship particular to his own nation into his translation strategy. He also juxtaposed this element with his sovereign's guidelines on literary aesthetics, set out in the King's *Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis poesie* (1584). Criticism of Petrarch's poetics is more subtle in Fowler than in Spenser, taking place only implicitly on a fundamental linguistic level. Nevertheless, this attempt to "correct" Petrarch's mode of expression may be regarded as a polemical engagement inspired by the same sense of cultural superiority which inspired Spenser's reform of the sonnet sequence. Fowler, like his sovereign James, considered Scots to be a language in its own right rather than a dialect of English, and therefore his dedicatory epistle's criticism of the "barbar grosnes" of previous English and French translations of the *Triumph* implies a nationalistic element to his endeavour which answers the requirements of his young king's programme for literary reform. Given that Morley's *Tryumphes* is the only English version

of Petrarch's poem to which Fowler can be referring, his criticism of its style may be taken as an attempt to signal the superiority of Reformed Scottish literature over pre-Reformation English literature in addition to the more obvious contrast drawn with his continental Catholic predecessors.

The fourth chapter constitutes the most extensive investigation to date of Synge's engagement with the *Rvf*, and deals with the question of translation as subversion. Synge's importance as a dramatist has resulted in the neglect of his poetry in general, and his Petrarchan imitations in particular. Even when they have inspired commentary, it has usually been framed within the context of the continued development of the idiosyncratic "folk-speech" which characterises his dramatic diction in the plays. Yet, when Synge began translating Petrarch in 1906, he had already completed *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Well of the Saints* (1905), and had begun work on *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and *The Tinker's Wedding* (1908). If, by 1903, Synge had felt sufficiently confident in the emotive power of this new mode of expression to allow actors to give voice to his characters' words on stage, it would seem unlikely that, three years and three plays later, he would have felt the need to engage in the type of linguistic experimentation which Leonard Forster calls "Petrarchism as training in poetic diction".¹ My research reveals a more complex process underlying Synge's Petrarchism. At its heart is the desire to tear down the foundations of the European lyric tradition, to make poetry "brutal".² In this context, his use of folk-speech takes on an added significance which goes to the heart of Synge's poetics. Only in his poetic translations, whether of Petrarch or of Villon, does Synge employ his folk-speech. It is difficult to imagine two more different medieval poets: the sublime Petrarch and the grotesque Villon. By translating them with the same idiom, Synge erases this difference and makes them sound as if they were part of a single, unified tradition. By dismantling the sonnet form, he strikes at the heart of the English lyric tradition initiated by the Italianate sequences of Sidney and Spenser. By choosing sonnets from the *In morte* section of the *Rvf*, he highlights the difference between his approach and that of Wyatt

¹ Forster, L., *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 61.

² Synge, J. M., *Poems and Translations* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1908), pp. 1-2.

and Surrey. In short, Synge attempts to create a parallel universe of Petrarchan poetry, departing from the same point as the founding fathers of English verse but taking a radically different direction. The works studied in this thesis end with Synge, as the last example of a creative poet and imitator engaging with the Petrarchan tradition, before the modern age of new translations began in earnest with Durling's 1976 translation of all 366 poems.

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List of Abbreviations:

<i>Am.</i>	Edmund Spenser, <i>Amoretti</i>
<i>AS</i>	Philip Sidney, <i>Astrophil and Stella</i>
<i>Inf.</i>	<i>Inferno</i> , from Dante's <i>Commedia</i>
<i>Met.</i>	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>Rvf</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Rerum vulgarium fragmenta</i>
<i>TC</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Cupidinis</i>
<i>TE</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Eternitatis</i>
<i>TF</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Fame</i>
<i>TM</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Mortis</i>
<i>TP</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Pudicitie</i>
<i>TT</i>	Francesco Petrarca, <i>Triumphus Temporis</i>

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Introduction

Aims and Methodology

This thesis is concerned with one key aspect of the reception of the vernacular poetry of Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374; hereafter, Petrarch), namely translations and imitations of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (hereafter, *Rvf*) and *Triumphs* in English. Specifically, it aims to provide a more comprehensive survey of the vernacular Petrarch's legacy to English literature than is currently available, with a particular focus on some hitherto critically neglected texts and authors. In addition, it seeks to ascertain to what degree the socio-historical phenomena of religion, politics, and culture have influenced the translations and imitations in question. The line between translation and imitation is often blurred, particularly in a medieval and Renaissance context in which authors were influenced by the Humanistic concept of *imitatio* (shared, and famously articulated, by Petrarch in one of his letters to Boccaccio (*Familiars* 23.19)) which sanctioned translation and imitation as useful means by which authors could perfect their styles by taking what was best from older (usually classical) models and developing this in a new and original way.¹

For this reason, there is little to be gained from an attempt to differentiate translation and imitation in the context of this study. Indeed, in the modern day, such attempts often seem devoid of any logic. A recent example can be found in the 1999 edition of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, where four of Wyatt's poems ("The longe love" (*Rvf* 140); "Whoso list to hunt" (*Rvf* 190); "My galy charged with forgetfulness" (*Rvf* 189); and "The pillar pearisht is" (*Rvf* 269)) carry the subtitle "after the Italian of Petrarch", while Surrey's "The soote season" and "Alas, so all things nowe do hold their peace" bear no such epithet, though it has long been universally acknowledged

¹ On imitation in the Renaissance, see Greene, T. M., *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); McLaughlin, M. L., *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Gardini, N., *Le umane parole: l'imitazione nella lirica europea del Rinascimento da Bembo a Ben Jonson* (Milan: B. Mondadori, 1997).

that they are based on *Rvf* 310 and 164 respectively.² In the interests of clarity, and because the terms themselves are already so well established within the field, I will use “translation” and “imitation” interchangeably in chapters I-III. It should be noted, however, that the perception of translation as a discipline in its own right is largely a modern phenomenon. The Humanistic concept of *imitatio* underlies the Petrarchan refashioning practised by the early English and Scottish Petrarchans, whereby an authoritative model (in the context of this study, either the *Rvf* or *Triumph*) serves as the point of departure for poets wishing to make their own original literary contribution to posterity. Far from attempting to provide unfiltered access to Petrarch’s original text in the manner of a modern translator, Chaucer and the Renaissance Petrarchans were engaged in a process of appropriation of their model for their own artistic and political ends, a process sanctioned and encouraged by the literary world in which they operated.³

For this reason, it may be useful for the reader to think of the English renderings of Petrarch discussed below as “creative interpretations”. This term has the advantage of emphasising the originality of the engagement with Petrarch demonstrated by the poets in question, while avoiding the derivative connotations which still attach themselves to terms like “translation” and “imitation”, the best efforts of Ezra Pound and Lawrence Venuti notwithstanding.⁴ At the same time, it acknowledges the debt owed by these poets to their source texts, which were indispensable to the creative process, providing a linguistic and/or poetic foundation which could either be built upon or dismantled according to the interpreter’s sympathy with the values (whether literary or moral) espoused therein.

A number of questions are raised within this study of equal relevance to all authors covered. The first and most fundamental of these being: “why Petrarch?”. What was it in particular that attracted poets to the *Rvf* as a source of inspiration? What made it different from,

² Ricks, C. (ed.), *The Oxford Book of English Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 28-29, 32-34.

³ For a discussion of *imitatio* in the European lyric poetry during the Renaissance, see Gardini, N., *Le umane parole: L’imitazione nella lirica europea del Rinascimento da Bembo a Ben Jonson* (Milan: Edizioni Scolastiche Bruno Mondadori, 1997), esp. pp. 3-19.

⁴ See Pound, E., “Guido’s Relations”, in Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 26-33; also Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008, [2nd ed.]).

say, Dante's *Commedia*, which has overtaken it in popularity in recent times? The next question to be posed is, having selected Petrarch as a model, how did the authors in question "use" his text? Were they attempting to grant the reader ignorant of Italian an unmediated access to Petrarch's work? Did they intend to use Petrarch as a departure point for their own creative endeavour? Were they sympathetic to Petrarch's world view? In other words, did they employ Petrarch's text because of an aspiration to replicate his achievements in the context of their own time, or did they rather wish to highlight some perceived flaw in Petrarch's values, be they political, social, religious, moral, cultural, or literary?

It is perhaps this concept of sympathy with the source text which is most crucial to this study. It is my belief that the degree of sympathy with Petrarch's text is directly proportionate to the creative interpreter's cultural proximity to the values expressed by the source text. Religion and politics are useful reference points on the scale of cultural proximity, with the result that one would expect to see in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), Henry Parker, Lord Morley (c. 1486-1556), Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516/1517-1547), writing at a time in which England had not yet undergone the doctrinal reforms of the Elizabethan Reformation, a greater degree of sympathy with Petrarch's text than would appear later. Whereas, in the cases of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599), and William Fowler (c. 1560-1612), one should observe a discernible hostility to Petrarch's ideals. John Millington Synge (1871-1909), as an atheist, may also be expected to be hostile to Petrarch's religiosity, while his left-leaning politics, as we shall see, would seem to call for a demoticisation of Petrarchan forms and language.

In the majority of cases, I have employed close textual analysis which highlights the divergences between source and target text. I have then proposed an explanation for these divergences with references to indicators of cultural proximity. This has been possible in the cases of Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey, Morley, Fowler, and Synge, where the lexical relationship between source and target text is indisputable. Sidney and Spenser, however, are engaged in a more subtle form of creative interpretation which is also influenced by models other than Petrarch. In these cases, I have attempted to examine the values of the text and demonstrate their sometimes

polemical engagement with Petrarch in terms of the overall poetics underlying their respective sequences.

Petrarch and Petrarchism

While Dante's *Commedia* is now almost universally recognised as the greatest work of Italian literature, the influence of Petrarch's vernacular poetry on the development of the European literary canon is undoubtedly more fundamental and more profound, at least until around 1900. Its penetration into the emergent national literatures of almost all European nations is summarised neatly by Nicola Gardini:

Difficile pensare a libro più influente del *Canzoniere* petrarchesco. La sua fortuna si è estesa ben oltre i confini linguistici e territoriali dello stivale e, in virtù del prestigio transalpino di cui la letteratura italiana ha goduto prima dell'Ottocento, è penetrata quasi ovunque in Europa.⁵

That the *Rvf* exercised a hitherto unprecedented influence over European letters from very early on is clear. Petrarch's diction, themes and images became "patrimonio di tutti, stile nazionale e internazionale, moneta corrente nel mercato comune della scrittura poetica".⁶ But the question remains: why Petrarch? Or more to the point, why the *Rvf*? Dante, since at least the nineteenth-century, has been seen as the greater of the two poets, after all. Gardini again offers a convincing explanation, foregrounding the sheer linguistic novelty of Petrarch's lyrical masterpiece:

Il segreto della sua riuscita ... sta prima di tutto in Petrarca stesso, o meglio nell'"attualità" di Petrarca. Dove per Petrarca non intendo la lingua petrarchesca come grammatica (l'interpretazione di Bembo appunto), bensì ciò che tale lingua, per la cultura rinascimentale, ha saputo rappresentare come verità, come "racconto di vita". Rispetto ai suoi predecessori lirici – il Dante in particolare della *Vita nova* – Petrarca scrive una poesia che parla di esperienza *vivente* e null'altro: un io che muta senza un piano e non sa arrestare l'instabilità, non sa mettere insieme i frammenti in un tutto (il vero titolo del libro è appunto *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*).⁷

⁵ Gardini, N., *Per una biblioteca indispensabile* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), p. 37.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 38. Other notable contributions to the debate on the originality of Petrarch's language include Alonso, D., *La poesia del Petrarca e il Petrarchismo* (Florence: Olschki, 1959); Contini, G., "Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca", in *Varianti e altra linguistica: una raccolta di saggi (1938-1968)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 169-92; Orelli, G., *Il suono dei sospiri: sul Petrarca volgare* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990); Agosti, S.,

The pervasiveness of Petrarch's influence on European lyric poetry makes it difficult, from a twenty-first century perspective, to appreciate just how revolutionary a work the *Rvf* was at the time of its composition and early dissemination. Composed of 366 poems, the vast majority sonnets, but also incorporating *canzoni*, *ballate*, *sestine*, and madrigals, the construction of a linear, coherent narrative out of autonomous, free-standing lyric *nugae* was an ambitious enterprise, the like of which had never been attempted, let alone achieved with such success, in the history of European literature. This novelty, while eventually striking a chord with poets across Renaissance Europe as Gardini suggests, may also account for the delayed reception of the *Rvf* in England.

Petrarch's amenability to imitation is largely a product of his sensitivity to the relationship between language, form and meaning: the three elements which form the foundation of all poetry. Gianfranco Contini, in his landmark essay "Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca", contrasted Dante's "plurilinguismo" – the variety of tone and register which characterises the *Commedia* – with Petrarchan "unilinguismo", a system of diction that operates within narrow lexical and thematic parameters.⁸ This forms the backbone of the *Rvf*'s unique mode of expression, which moves away from the allegorical representation typical of the Middle Ages and towards the emblematic. Building on this analysis, Stefano Agosti describes the effect of Petrarch's linguistic *volte-face* on the semantic unit as "la separazione del Soggetto dall'oggetto del desiderio, o, in altri termini, la struttura del desiderio in quanto relazione a una mancanza fondamentale".⁹ Petrarch's poetics of loss are thus reflected on the most basic semantic level. The rejection of the allegorical mode shifts the focus to the subjective experience of the poet, frequently cited as the basis of Petrarch's perceived modernity.¹⁰

Gli occhi, le chiome: per una lettura psicoanalitica del "Canzoniere" del Petrarca (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993); Suiñer, F., *Dante, Petrarca e altra poesia antica* (Florence: Cadmo, 2005), pp. 137-154.

⁸ Contini, "Preliminari", pp. 171-74.

⁹ Agosti, S., *Gli occhi, le chiome*, p. 7.

¹⁰ The debate on Petrarch's modernity continues and the bibliography on the subject is extensive. In particular, see Tripet, A., *Pétrarque, ou le connaissance de soi* (Geneva: Droz, 1967); Baron, H., "Petrarch: His Inner Struggles and the Humanistic Discovery of Man's Nature", in Rowe, J. G., and Stockdale, W. H. (eds.) *Florilegium historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in Association with the University of Western Ontario, 1971), pp. 18-51; Freccero, J., "The Fig Tree

Both these factors (“unilinguismo” and the shift from the allegorical to the emblematic) contributed significantly to the adoption of the *Rvf* as the poetic model *par excellence* as the Middle Ages gave way to that new consciousness we now refer to as the Renaissance. Petrarch’s “unilinguismo”, with its limited, and thus eminently imitable, range of diction, tropes and forms, meant that Petrarchism, as Forster has pointed out, became a kind of a shorthand for aspiring poets in royal courts across Europe.¹¹ Even more significantly in terms of this study, the move away from the allegorical mode as described by Contini and Agosti, foregrounding the poet’s subjective experience of reality, allowed Petrarch’s more capable imitators to adapt the language of the *Rvf* to their own personal situations. The manner in which they did so, and the degree to which the cultural, political and religious milieus in which they operated influenced their interpretive choices, form the subject of the following chapters. The thesis goes over some familiar ground in its analysis of some of the bigger names in English literature (Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey, Spenser, and Sidney) but also brings into the picture other less studied figures (Morley, Fowler, and Synge). It also attempts to provide a more comprehensive account of Petrarch in English than the recent volume of conference proceedings was able to do.¹²

Chapter I deals with the first known rendering of one of Petrarch’s vernacular verses into English, which may have taken place as little as ten years after his death. It appears after 400 lines of the first book of *Troilus and Criseyde* (mid-1380s) by Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) and consists of twenty one lines of rhyme royal collectively known as the “Canticus Troili”, adapted from Petrarch’s *Rvf* 132. Influential studies by Ernest Hatch Wilkins and Patricia Thomson in the middle of the last century tended to isolate the twenty one lines of the “Canticus” from its broader context in Chaucer’s epic as a whole, and cast the Englishman’s deviations from the source text as

and the Laurel: Petrarch’s Poetics”, *Diacritics*, 5 (1975): 34-40; Dotti, U., *Petrarca e la scoperta della coscienza moderna* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), pp. 15-26; Blumenberg, H., *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (trans. by Robert M. Wallace) (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983); Mazzotta, G., “The ‘Canzoniere’ and the Language of the Self”, in his *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 58-79; Dotti, U., *Petrarca civile: alle origini dell’intellettuale moderno* (Rome: Donzelli, 2001), pp. 52-58, 76-81.

¹¹ See Forster, L., *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 61-83.

¹² See McLaughlin, M. L., and L. Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators and Translators over 700 Years* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2007).

mistakes brought about by Chaucer's poor grasp of Italian grammar and vocabulary.¹³ More recent scholarship, initiated by Noel Harold Kaylor Jr.'s article, "Boethian Resonances in Chaucer's 'Canticus Troili'", has taken greater care to locate Chaucer's Petrarchan episode within the broader narrative and psychological framework of the *Troilus*.¹⁴ Both William Rossiter and Warren Ginsberg have developed their arguments in a similar direction, discerning in Chaucer's imitative strategy a means by which he engages with current philosophical debates on Aristotelian and Platonic approaches to reasoning.¹⁵

My analysis of Chaucer's rendering of *Rvf* 132 highlights the prominent place which Chaucer affords to the concept of wonder, an element not present in Petrarch's original. By doing so, he situates his Petrarchan borrowing within the medieval tradition, which may be traced back to Aquinas, that sees wonder as the gateway to philosophical enquiry. Chaucer's use of an Italian source for his English epic represents the encroachment by the vernacular upon territory which was previously the preserve of the Classical languages, and owes much to the contemporary perception and authority of Petrarch as a moral philosopher above all else. I will also argue that the lacuna, which has long puzzled critics, between the "Canticus Troili" and the Petrarchan imitations of Wyatt and Surrey does not really exist, given Chaucer's seamless integration of *Rvf* 132 to the native, medieval tradition signalled precisely by the concept of wonder.¹⁶ Chaucer's imitative strategy serves to obfuscate his Petrarchan source, and provides no indication to his literary successors of the relationship between the "Canticus" and *Rvf* 132.

The work of Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) remains something of an enigma for modern critics, many of whom assert that the sonnets form part of a secretive courtly code, the key to which has been lost over time.¹⁷ Almost universally disparaged for centuries owing to a perceived

¹³ Wilkins, E. H., "The 'Canticus Troili'", *English Literary History*, 16 (1949): 167-73; Thomson, P., "The 'Canticus Troili': Chaucer and Petrarch", *Comparative Literature*, 11, 4 (1959): 313-18.

¹⁴ Kaylor, N. H. Jr., "Boethian Resonances in Chaucer's 'Canticus Troili'", *The Chaucer Review*, 27, 3 (1993): 219-27.

¹⁵ Rossiter, W., *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2010); Ginsberg, W., "Chaucer and Petrarch: 'S'amor non è' and the 'Canticus Troili'", *Humanist Studies and the Digital Age*, 1, 1 (2011): 121-27.

¹⁶ On the concept of wonder in some key Italian texts, see Magnabosco, F., "Unfading Wonder: 'Meraviglia' as a Path to Poetic Knowledge in Dante's *Commedia* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*", DPhil Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2011.

¹⁷ For the genesis of this notion, see Fowler, A., *Conceitful Thought* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1974), pp. 1-20. A similar line is taken by Wyatt's latest biographer, though she is somewhat more

technical crudeness which appeared all the more inexcusable when compared with Surrey's smooth and regular iambic pentameter, it was not until the modern enthusiasm for raw emotion over technical skill began to gain a foothold that Wyatt once again found favour among some critics.¹⁸ I examine Wyatt's "Love, Fortune and my mind", a sonnet which has hitherto been neglected by scholarship, yet is wholly representative of the manner in which Wyatt manipulates Petrarch to his own ends. I propose a date for the composition of the sonnet which reveals the extent to which Wyatt's personal circumstances dictate the nature of his engagement with the themes of Petrarch's original. It will also become apparent that, despite Wyatt's evangelical politics and the fact that his sonnet dates from the period after Henry's split with Rome, the literature of the Italian peninsula had not yet become tainted with the perceived stain of Papism which was to complicate the later Elizabethan engagement with Petrarch.

The initial critical judgement that the Petrarchan imitations of Sir Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516/17-1547), were largely technical exercises in versification seems to retain considerable merit. In order to demonstrate the nature of Surrey's engagement with Petrarch, I will analyse "I never saw you, madam", a sonnetisation of one of Petrarch's *ballate*, *Rvf* 11. This poem is unique in the context of English Petrarchism, in that it is the only rendering of a *ballata* from the *Rvf* until the first complete translation of the collection appears in the mid-nineteenth century. Nonetheless, it has been overlooked by critics until now. The same may be said of Petrarch's original, despite the fact that it contains the first reference to Laura's *velo*, a device which has been the subject of much debate among Petrarch scholars. My analysis will show how Surrey's concern with the technical and structural nuances of the newly invented English sonnet form outweighs his interest in the subtextual metalinguistic and metapoetic debate that informs the

optimistic than Fowler regarding our ability to "de-code" the poems: see Schulman, N., *Graven with Diamonds: The Many Lives of Thomas Wyatt* (London: Short Books, 2011), pp. 66-88.

¹⁸ For examples of how the perception of Wyatt's poetry altered over time see Johnson, S., *The Lives of the English Poets*, vol. 1 (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1925), pp. 11-12; Warton, T., *The History of English Poetry*, vol. III (London: Reeves & Turner, 1781), p. 32; Berdan, J. H., *Early Tudor Poetry* (New York: MacMillan, 1920), p. 484; Rollins, H. E. (ed.), *Tottel's Miscellany*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1929), p. 77; Lewis, C.S., *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 230; Muir, K. and P. Thomson (eds.), *The Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969), pp. xviii-xix. The modern enthusiasm for Wyatt is typified by Ted Hughes in his "Myths, Metres, Rhythms", in *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), pp. 310-72.

original. While Petrarch appears in a more courtly and conventional guise in Surrey's hands than in Wyatt's, it is nevertheless Surrey's technical innovations, not yet fully perfected in this poem, that lay the foundations for the Elizabethan Petrarchism of Sidney and Spenser.

Chapter II deals with two major Elizabethan poets: Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). Though Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* was not published until 1591, its composition, sometime in the early 1580's, easily predates the vogue for the sonnet sequence that swept England in the last decade of the sixteenth century. I offer a fresh reading of *Astrophil and Stella* which brings to the fore a concern which Sidney shares with Petrarch: the danger of textual misinterpretation. However, while Petrarch's reservations are grounded in Augustinian thought, Sidney's are informed by Elizabethan Reformist paranoia, as exemplified by the new breed of Humanist educators such as Roger Ascham (1515-1568), who singled out Italian texts as instruments through which their spiritually unenlightened authors might "beguile simple and innocent wits".¹⁹ However, Sidney is not entirely hostile to Petrarch *per se*. Syrithe Pugh has recently suggested that Sidney's engagement with Petrarch is "less personal, more serious, and in fact more political" than traditional readings, tending to see Sidney's imitation as parodic, have implied.²⁰ While acknowledging the comic touches which inform Sidney's hyperbolic portrayal of the Petrarchan lover, my reading of *Astrophil and Stella* also reveals a more serious level of engagement with the genre of the sonnet sequence as a whole, and one which sees Sidney in greater sympathy with the specific concerns expressed in the *Rvf* than has been previously suggested. Sidney's parody masks a process of systematic self-flagellation which takes its cue from the frustrated penitential narrative established by Petrarch in the *Rvf*. The sequence as a whole can be viewed, like the *Rvf*, as a literary autobiography, in which the distinction between the poetic persona and the historical author is frequently blurred, and, although the conclusion at which *Astrophil* arrives is framed in the context of the public duty of the courtier rather than the

¹⁹ Ryan, L. V. (ed.) *The Schoolmaster by Roger Ascham* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press for the Folger Shakespeare Library, 1974), p. 4.

²⁰ Pugh, S., "Sidney, Spenser, and Political Petrarchism", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 243-47 (p. 244).

private universe of the Christian's personal relationship with God, Sidney's sequence finally amounts to a cautionary tale regarding the danger of vanity and ambition, of which, in Petrarch's words, "vergogna è 'l frutto / e 'l pentersi" (*Rvf* 1, ll.10-11).

Spenser is even more ambitious than Sidney, in that he attempts, in his *Amoretti and Epithalamion* (1595), to provide a resolution to the spiritual conflict which plagued the poet of the *Rvf*. Spenser is the first English writer who engages with this dominant theme of Petrarch's lyric poetry, and his response to the Italian's moral dilemma is deliberately and explicitly Protestant in character. As R. Helgerson explains, Spenser, having confidently proclaimed himself the "New Poete", viewed himself as the standard bearer for a new generation of English, Protestant poets whose creative faculties had been illuminated by the Reformed thought which granted them freedom from the corrupt and complacent world-view of their predecessors and orthodox contemporaries.²¹ My analysis will show how the *Amoretti* makes use of several strategies familiar to the reader of the *Rvf*: the mirroring of subject and object, poet and beloved; the reshaping and reinterpretation of the Narcissus myth; the attempt to find a heavenly justification for earthly love. I will pay particular attention to Spenser's *Amoretti* 67 (*Rvf* 190) in order to demonstrate the crucial difference between the classicising intertextual strategy of Petrarch and Spenser's Biblical referentiality, which serves to link his sequence to specifically Anglo-Protestant modes of worship, as detailed by Kenneth Larsen in his edition of the *Amoretti and Epithalamion*.²² In doing so, I propose an additional source for Petrarch's sonnet which has not previously been suggested: the story of Aesacus and Hesperia in Book XI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

In this chapter, I also demonstrate that the addition of the *Epithalamion* is crucial to Spenser's polemical response to Petrarch, as without this, the sequence, like its predecessor *Astrophil and Stella*, would have ended in despair. By rescuing his poet-protagonist from the usual fate of the Petrarchan lover through the addition of a marriage hymn, Spenser is espousing a

²¹ Helgerson, R., "The New Poet Presents Himself: Spenser and the Idea of a Literary Career", *PMLA*, 93, 5 (Oct., 1978): 893-911.

²² Larsen, K. J. (ed.), *Edmund Spenser's "Amoretti" and "Epithalamion": A Critical Edition* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), pp. 1-66.

Reformist view of marriage which sanctions earthly desire within the bonds of marriage, an institution ordained by God and authorised by Scripture. This introduces a key element of contemporary Reformist thought, familiar to Spenser owing to the debate on clerical marriage which took place during his lifetime, into the work.

In Chapter III, I show that the recent critical re-evaluation of the *Triumphs* allows us to place the work in its correct context in terms both of Petrarch's body of work as a whole and of his unique position on the cusp of the birth of the literary Renaissance which his ideas helped to shape.²³ It is perhaps due to the fundamental influence of the *Rvf* on the development of European lyric poetry as we know it that the *Triumphs*, a very different work aesthetically, may seem somewhat obscure and more emotionally distant to the modern reader than the lyric collection. During the first two centuries after Petrarch's death, however, the *Triumphs* rivalled, and arguably surpassed, the *Rvf* in popularity.²⁴ I will examine two of the earliest complete translations of the work into English, both of which have, until quite recently, been overlooked by critics.

The first version under scrutiny is *The Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarch* by Henry Parker, Lord Morley. Though published in 1555, the work was written at least eight years earlier, during the reign of Henry VIII. Controversy still surrounds the date of Morley's composition, and I address this issue to begin my analysis. By examining Morley's translation strategy, I am able to place the work in a similar timeframe to that proposed by James P. Carley, i.e. the late 1520s or early 1530s, shortly before Henry's break with Rome in 1532, and much earlier than the date of c.

²³ See, in particular, Gardini, *Per una biblioteca*, pp. 286-93; also Eisenbichler, K., and A. A. Iannucci, (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs": Allegory and Spectacle* (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1988), which contains the following particularly pertinent contributions: Baranski, Z., "A Provisional Definition of Petrarch's 'Triumphs'", pp. 63-83; Piehler, P., "Image and Structure in Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", pp. 97-112; Verdicchio, M., "The Rhetoric of Enumeration in Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", pp. 135-46; Erasmi, G., "Petrarch's 'Trionfi': The Poetics of Humanism", pp. 161-74; Guardiani, F., "The Literary Impact of the 'Trionfi'", pp. 259-68; see also M. Santagata's introduction to Pacca, V., and L. Paolino (eds.), *Francesco Petrarca: Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), pp. xiii-lii; see also Tateo, F., "Sulla ricezione umanistica dei 'Trionfi'", in Berra, C. (ed.), *I "Triumphs" di Francesco Petrarca* (Bologna: Cisalpino, 1999), pp. 375-401.

²⁴ See Wilkins, E. H., "The Fifteenth-Century Editions of the Italian Poems of Petrarch", *Modern Philology*, 40, 3 (Feb., 1943): 225-239; Mann, N., *Petrarch Manuscripts in the British Isles* (Padua: Antenore, 1975).

1545 proposed by Morley's modern editor D. D. Carnicelli.²⁵ In doing so, I will also refute Coogan's claim that Morley translated from Alessandro Vellutello's 1541 edition of Petrarch.²⁶ This early dating would mean that Morley may not have been simply following the Petrarchan vogue initiated by his younger contemporary Wyatt, but rather allows that his *Tryumphes* may have been the first post-Chaucerian English engagement with Petrarch.

The second version of the *Triumph* to be examined is *The Triumphs of Petrarke* (1587) by the Scottish poet William Fowler (c. 1560-1612). The text is characterised by a rhetorical preference for alliterative amplification, which can partly be explained by Scottish literary convention and the application to literary texts of ancient rhetorical techniques traceable to Cicero and Isocrates,²⁷ but which also serves as a ready means of evangelising Petrarch's remarkably understated diction, substituting dignified gravitas with the rapturous zeal of a Reformist preacher.²⁸ Fowler's transformation of the "Triumphus Eternitatis", in particular, betrays the influence of John Knox's *Scottish Confession of Faith* (1560) in terms of its language and imagery. By alloying Knox's religious manifesto with James VI's programme for Scottish literary reform, as set out in the King's *Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and escheat in Scottis poesie* (1585), Fowler demonstrates a keen awareness of the close relationship between politics and literature that existed in James' court. My research has uncovered a link between Fowler's translation and a little-known edition of Petrarch by the Venetian publisher Domenico Niccolini. This shows the degree to which Fowler's re-shaping of the original is a product of his own interpretation. The sparse glossary and minimal exegesis available to Fowler reveals not only a high level of proficiency in Italian, but also that it was possible to read Petrarch in a Reformist light independent

²⁵ For Carnicelli's dating see Carnicelli, D. D. (ed.), *Lord Morley's "Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 31; for Carley's counter-argument, see Carley, J. P., "The Writings of Henry Parker, Lord Morley: A Bibliographical Survey", in Axton, M. and J. P. Carley (eds.), *"Triumphs of English": Henry Parker, Lord Morley, Translator to the Tudor Court* (London: British Library, 2000), pp. 27-68 (p. 41).

²⁶ See Coogan, R., "Petrarch's 'Trionfi' and the English Renaissance", *Studies in Philology*, 67, 3 (Jul., 1970): 306-27 (pp. 316-17).

²⁷ See Calboli Montefusco, L., "Stylistic and Argumentative Function of Rhetorical 'Amplificatio'", *Hermes*, 132. Jarg., H1 (2004): 69-81.

²⁸ Fowler's "sermonising" tone in the *Triumphs* was first remarked upon by R. D. S. Jack in "William Fowler and Italian Literature", *MLR*, 65, 3 (Jul., 1970): 481-92 (p. 485).

of well-known Protestantising commentators identified by William Kennedy, such as Antonio Brucioli.²⁹

The fourth chapter begins with a survey of the period between 1600 and c. 1775 in which Petrarch's critical fortunes were at their lowest ebb, before their revival in the late eighteenth century. It also offers a brief account of Petrarch's fortunes in the nineteenth century. However, the main focus of the chapter is John Millington Synge, best known as the dramatist whose *Playboy of the Western World* caused riots among more conservative Irish cultural nationalists on its opening night at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in 1907. More importantly in the context of the present study, he is also the author of *Some Sonnets from Laura in Death* (1909), a collection, as the title suggests, of seventeen translations of sonnets from the *In morte* section of the *Rvf*. Because of his fame as a dramatist, scant attention has been paid to Synge's poetry in general, and his translations have been particularly neglected. Only a single article by Reed Way Dasenbrock, along with Robin Skelton's introduction to the 1971 edition of Synge's sonnets, have seriously engaged with the poems as pieces of literature in their own right.³⁰ Both have focused on Synge's affinity with Petrarch in terms of his views on death and absence from the beloved, but I will argue that, while a certain sympathy exists, a counter-current of hostility runs through the Irishman's interpretation which can be explained both by his atheism, and his radical cultural-nationalist politics.

The prevailing notion has been that Synge wished to elevate his "folk-speech", the controversial idiosyncratic dialect of Hiberno-English in which the plays and translations are composed, to the level of a literary language, proving that the sublime could be expressed in the accents of the peasant farmers, fishermen and washerwomen he encountered during his sojourns in the remote Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland.³¹ However, I will argue that his translations

²⁹ Kennedy, W. J., *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 68

³⁰ Dasenbrock, R. W., "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism", *Modern Philology*, 83, 1 (Aug., 1985): 33-44; see also Skelton, R. (ed.), *J. M. Synge: Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death" After the Italian of Francesco Petrarch* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1971), pp. 1-11.

³¹ See Dasenbrock, "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism", p. 37; see also Price, A., *Synge and Anglo-Irish Drama* (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 107.

of Petrarch were undertaken with quite a different goal in mind. Synge's politics were radically anti-establishment. Despite being a scion of the Protestant ascendancy in Dublin, he was politically a nationalist, whose sympathy lay with the predominantly Catholic and Gaelic independence movement. He was also an atheist, which marked him out as something of an oddity among both the Protestant and Catholic sections of Irish society, and, on more than one occasion, proved a stumbling block to his desire to marry. His poetics, at least as evidenced in his translations of Petrarch, were similarly radical. Synge was much more oriented towards continental literature than many of his peers in the Anglo-Irish literary movement, and, as such, was well aware of Petrarch's fundamental importance to the development of the Western European lyric. When he translated Petrarch, he dismantled the sonnet form in what can only be described as an all-out demoticising assault upon the exalted foundations of European lyric poetry. Dispensing with rhyme and conventional metre, Synge's rhythmical prose translations make use of an idiosyncratic form of Hiberno-English. The syntactical and lexical influence of the Irish language on Synge's "folk-speech" introduce a third language into the conventional source language-target language relationship within the confines of which most translators operate. Synge's use of this marginal discourse draws attention to some of the inconsistencies of Lawrence Venuti's foreignising-domesticating translation model and calls for a new system of categorisation, which I will explore in the course of this final chapter.³²

The thesis ends with a brief survey of Petrarch's critical fortunes in the rest of the twentieth century, a period which sees the appearance of the first complete translations of the *Rvf* in modern times by a single author writing in English, versions which are strictly faithful to the original and involve much less creative interpretation than those studied in the rest of the thesis.

³² See Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, pp. 15-20.

Chapter I – Petrarchism's False Start: Chaucer, Wyatt, and Surrey

1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the earliest translations and imitations of Petrarch in English, from Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400) in the 1380's to Sir Thomas Wyatt (c. 1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1515/17-1547) in the early- and mid-sixteenth century. The chronological distance alone (to say nothing of the attendant linguistic and cultural shifts that took place in the meantime) between Chaucer and the Henrician courtiers is too great for this period to be considered a coherent first wave of English Petrarchism. Indeed, it is unclear whether Wyatt and Surrey were even aware of Chaucer's adaptation of Petrarch's *Rvf* 132 as the "Canticus Troili" in *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1380-1387). It is my contention that they were not, primarily because of the domesticating tendencies of Chaucer's translation strategy which served to deliberately obfuscate the source text. This occurs for the sake, firstly, of narrative integrity, which prohibited the anachronistic intrusion of a medieval name such as Petrarch's upon the classical world in which Chaucer located his poem, and, secondly, formal cohesion, which required the sonnet, that Petrarchan form *par excellence*, to be reshaped into Chaucer's rhyme royal. Nevertheless, the work of all three poets is characterised by a spirit of technical and linguistic experimentation, along with a general amenity towards the Petrarchan model: rhetorically in the case of Chaucer, formally and thematically in the cases of Wyatt and Surrey. This is in contrast with the later Elizabethan interest in Petrarch, by which time questions of politics and religion became at least as important as those of aesthetics and language. For this reason, poets such as Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser will be discussed in the next chapter.

Much has been written about these early English engagements with Petrarch, and with this in mind, the present study attempts to steer clear of ground already covered by scholars of English Petrarchism such as E. H. Wilkins and Patricia Thomson.¹ One of the mysteries of English

¹ See Wilkins, E. H., *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1951), pp. 306-10; Thomson, P., "The First English Petrarchans", *Huntington Library*

Petrarchism is why it took so long for the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (henceforth *Rvf*) to be re-examined by writers of English in the wake of Chaucer's initial rendering of *Rvf* 132. I will attempt to address the question of the one hundred and fifty year lacuna between the "Canticus Troili" and Wyatt with reference to recent studies by Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr., William Rossiter, and Warren Ginsberg, all of whom have shown the way by treating Chaucer's Petrarchan episode not as a twenty-one line excerpt to be considered in isolation from the thousands of lines of poetry which surround it, but rather by situating it within its proper context relative to *Troilus and Criseyde* as a whole.² It is only by doing this that one can begin to appreciate the sophistication of Chaucer's imitative strategy, and, from there, begin to draw some conclusions regarding its potential impact on subsequent generations of poets.

Similarly, with regard to Wyatt and Surrey, I have avoided as much as possible dealing with the well-known and much-studied anthology pieces, such as "Whoso list to hunt", "Love, that liveth and reigneth", "The soote season" and "Alas, so all things nowe do hold their peace", selecting instead poems which have been largely neglected by critics. In Wyatt's case, I will analyse "Love, Fortune and my mind" (*Rvf* 124), while Surrey's "I never saw you madam" (*Rvf* 11) will be the focus of discussion in the last part of the chapter. The very selection of these texts by the poets themselves challenges the notion that the Henrician sonneteers were primarily interested in the technical and linguistic aspects of Petrarchism. Neither poem is particularly Petrarchan in its rhetorical construction, and indeed *Rvf* 11 is not even a sonnet, although Surrey's version transposes the fourteen lines of Petrarch's *ballata* into the Shakespearean form.

Quarterly, 22, 2 (Feb., 1959): 85-105; Thomson, P., "The 'Canticus Troili': Chaucer and Petrarch", *Comparative Literature*, 11, 4 (Autumn, 1959): 313-28; Thomson, P., "Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators", *The Review of English Studies*, 10, 39 (Aug., 1959): 225-33.

² The studies to which I refer are: Ginsberg, "Chaucer and Petrarch"; Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*; Kaylor, Jr., "Boethian Resonances".

2. Geoffrey Chaucer, “Grant Translateur”, and *Rvf* 132: Imitation as Assimilation³

The earliest known rendering of one of Petrarch’s Italian lyrics in English is Chaucer’s translation of *Rvf* 132 (“S’amor non è”), which appears as the “Canticus Troili” in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Much painstaking scholarship has been undertaken to determine the exact degree of Chaucer’s familiarity with Petrarch and other Italian sources. Definitive conclusions, however, appear to be impossible due to the lack of any clear documentary evidence. The close lexical similarity of the “Canticus Troili” to *Rvf* 132 makes it unlikely that Chaucer based his translation on anything other than the Italian text. Although he was certainly influenced by French literature and sources during his early years as a writer, no French translation of *Rvf* 132 is known to have been extant when Chaucer wrote *Troilus and Criseyde*. The widely accepted grouping of Chaucer’s work into an early French phase, a middle Italian phase, and a later English phase also leads one to expect that a middle period work such as *Troilus and Criseyde* would be heavily influenced by Italian sources. Indeed, the work as a whole is based primarily on Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* (c. 1338). We know that Chaucer certainly travelled to Italy on diplomatic business in 1372, helping to establish an English trading port in Genoa, and negotiating a loan for the English King in Florence. Romantic notions that Chaucer and Petrarch may have met during this visit were thoroughly investigated, and more or less dismissed, by Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., in his 1897 article “On the Asserted Meeting of Chaucer and Petrarch”.⁴ Furthermore, it is surely telling that such a fastidious chronicler of events as Petrarch leaves no record of having been visited by his northern counterpart in letters and diplomacy, whereas his encounter with Richard de Bury, Edward III’s Chancellor and ambassador to the Papal Court in Avignon, is mentioned in a letter to Tommaso Caloiro da Messina (*Familiars* 3.1). Piero Boitani highlights Richard as “the only man

³ Chaucer was addressed as “Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier” in a letter from his French contemporary, the poet Eustace Deschamps (1346-1407). Cited in Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, p. 5, note 20.

⁴ Mather Jr., F. J., “On the Asserted Meeting of Chaucer and Petrarch”, *Modern Language Notes*, 12, 1 (Jan., 1897): 1-11.

of culture from contemporary England mentioned by Petrarch”.⁵ Most recently, William T. Rossiter has added his voice to those of the sceptics of an actual rendezvous between the two poets, preferring instead to cast Chaucer’s “meeting” with Petrarch in terms of a wider literary engagement between the Englishman and the other two *corone* of Italian literature – Dante and Boccaccio.⁶ E. H. Wilkins cuts to the nub of matters neatly when he states that Chaucer could have come across *Rvf* 132 “almost anywhere and at almost any time”, owing to Petrarch’s widespread fame throughout Europe.⁷ In fact, Nicholas Mann’s studies show that copies of Petrarch’s Latin works were being produced in manuscript form in Britain even during Chaucer’s lifetime.⁸

Opinion is still divided about the question of Chaucer’s proficiency in Italian. More conservative commentators point out that, while we know with certainty that Chaucer spoke French, there is no clear evidence that he was similarly schooled in Italian, and that consequently we should avoid making definite claims on the subject.⁹ Some assert that as the son of a wine merchant who dealt frequently with Italian traders, the bright young Geoffrey could not help but pick up some of the *volgare* spoken by the sailors with whom his father traded.¹⁰ Others claim that the very fact that he was sent to Italy on diplomatic missions in 1372, and again in 1378, suggests that he could speak Italian fluently.¹¹ Thus, the means of transmission of *Rvf* 132 to Chaucer is shrouded in a fog of uncertainty which, barring the discovery of new, definitive evidence, is unlikely ever to be lifted. However, as we shall see, a comparative analysis of Petrarch’s source text and Chaucer’s “Canticus Troili” reveals a sensitivity to the subtleties and nuances of the Italian which is difficult to imagine in one who is unable to speak, or at least read, the language.

⁵ Boitani, P., “Petrarch and the ‘barbari Britanni’”, in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 9-25 (p. 18).

⁶ See Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, in particular Chapter I, “Father of English Poetry, Father of Humanism: When Chaucer ‘met’ Petrarch”, pp. 35-68.

⁷ Wilkins, *The Making of the “Canzoniere”*, p. 308.

⁸ Mann, *Petrarch Manuscripts*, pp. 139-40.

⁹ Tatlock, J. S. P., *The Development and Chronology of Chaucer’s Works* (London: Paul, Trench, Truebner & Co., 1907), p. 41.

¹⁰ Larner, J., *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch: 1216-1380* (London: Longman, 1980), p. 23.

¹¹ Rudd, G., *The Complete Critical Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 9.

3. Contextualising the “Canticus Troili”: Wonder, Philosophy and the Medieval Tradition

It is difficult to imagine a more stereotypically Petrarchan point of departure for the first English rendering of a poem from the *Rvf*. The full text of *Rvf* 132 reads as follows:

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
ma se egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa et quale?
se bona, ond'è l'effetto aspro mortale?
se ria, ond'è sì dolce ogni tormento?
S'a mia voglia ardo, ond'è 'l pianto e lamento? 5
S'a mal mio grado, il lamentar che vale?
O viva morte, o diletto male,
come puoi tanto in me, s'io no 'l consento?
Et s'io 'l consento, a gran torto mi doglio. 10
Fra sì contrari venti in frale barca
mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
sì lieve di saver, d'error sì carica,
ch'i' medesimo non so quel ch'io mi voglio,
e tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno.¹²

Piero Boitani sees Petrarch's poem as the first in a triadic unit consisting of *Rvf* 132-4, afforded a prominent position at the very centre of the *In vita* section of the sequence, which runs from *Rvf* 1-263.¹³ These three poems are built around antithesis, paradox, oxymora and chiasmus, which Rossiter identifies as “the formal and tropic manifestations of the poet-speaker's internal *psychomachia*”.¹⁴ As Rossiter points out, the use of these devices to indicate emotional and spiritual distress can be traced to one of Petrarch's most revered classical authors, Cicero, via another of the poet's literary idols, St. Augustine.¹⁵ Marco Santagata, in his commentary on the *Rvf*, discerns the influence of Dante's sonnet from the *Vita nova*, “Tutti li miei pensier parlan d'Amore”, which is based upon the notion of an internal discourse where the poet's thoughts are at odds with one another and leave him in a state of speechlessness, as well as the presence of Provençal poetics. Thus, the intertextual nature of Petrarch's imitative poetics is manifested in this

¹² The text is taken from Petrarca, F., *Canzoniere*, ed. M. Santagata (Milan: Mondadori, 2004), p. 648. All subsequent references to poems from the *Rvf* refer to this edition.

¹³ Boitani, P., *The Tragic and the Sublime in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 56-74.

¹⁴ Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, p. 110.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

poem, which draws freely on authoritative classical and Medieval texts and weaves them together into something new.

Other formal qualities of the text which typify the Petrarchan aesthetic are identified by Rossiter, namely “the familiar movement between physical extremes, such as ‘tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno’ [...] (l. 14), [...] or, ‘ardo, et son un ghiaccio’ [...], (l. 2)”, while Boitani’s triadic unit as a whole is characterised by “the turn inwards, which stands in relief against, and develops out of, the series of preceding *canzoni*”, which are concerned with external rather than internal landscapes.¹⁶ This sonnet, then, fulfils a number of requirements for Chaucer, simultaneously providing a subject apposite to his own poem (i.e. the emotional distress of the love-sick Troilus), along with familiar tropic features which would not appear out of place within the poetic landscape of the *Troilus*. Moreover, its very existence, predicated on the digestion and regurgitation of classical and near-contemporary sources, authorises Chaucer’s own imitative strategy, which is founded upon the Humanistic credo of *similitudo non identitas* outlined by Petrarch himself in *Familiars* 23, 19:

curandum imitatori ut quod scribet simile non idem sit, eamque similitudinem talem esse oportere, non qualis est imaginis ad eum cuius imago est, que quo similior eo maior laus artificis, sed qualis filii ad patrem. In quibus cum magna sepe diversitas sit membrorum, umbra quedam et quem pictores nostri aerem vocant, qui in vultu inque oculis maxime cernitur, similitudinem illam facit, que statim viso filio, patris in memoriam nos reducat, cum tamen si res ad mensuram redeat, omnia sint diversa; sed est ibi nescio quid occultum quod hanc habeat vim.¹⁷

[A proper imitator should take care that what he writes resembles the original without reproducing it. The resemblance should not be that of a portrait to a sitter – in that case the closer the likeness the better – but it should be the resemblance of a son to his father. Therein is often a great divergence in particular features, but there is a certain suggestion, what our painters call an “air”, most noticeable in the face and eyes, which makes the resemblance. As soon as we see the son, he recalls the father to us, although if we should measure every feature we should find them all different. But there is a mysterious something that has this power.]

¹⁶ Boitani citid in Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, p. 111.

¹⁷ The Latin text is that which appears in Dotti, U. (ed.), *Epistole di Francesco Petrarca* (Turin: UTET, 1978), p. 516. The English translation is taken from Bishop, M. (ed. and trans.), *Letters from Petrarch* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 190.

Chaucer's adaptation must be considered in the context of this particular theory of *imitatio* which, largely due to Petrarch's influence, would become one of the cornerstones of Renaissance literary culture.¹⁸ Although Chaucer stopped short of making any similar theoretical pronouncement, the fact that the "Grant Translateur" was sympathetic to these notions may be inferred from a study of the wide variety of sources upon which he himself drew, encompassing not only the *Filostrato* and *Rvf*, but also French and Latin texts, such as the *Roman de la Rose* and Boethius' *Consolatio Philosophiae*.¹⁹ While it has long been acknowledged that the "Canticus Troili" is the first instance of direct borrowing from Petrarch into English, scholars have struggled to place Chaucer's rendering in its proper context. Criticism was long dominated by Wilkins' 1949 study, reprinted as a chapter in *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* in 1951. Wilkins' analysis is unrelentingly semantic, listing five instances in which, he asserts, Chaucer "misunderstood" his Italian source text.²⁰ A subsequent article by Patricia Thomson (1959) builds on Wilkins' study. Thomson is more generous to Chaucer, showing him to be sensitive to both the content and form of *Rvf* 132. Her article demonstrates Chaucer's recognition of the division between octave and sestet in Petrarch's original, and how he preserved this division as far as possible within the structure of the "Canticus Troili": Chaucer's first stanza is equivalent to Petrarch's first quatrain, the second stanza to the second quatrain, and the third stanza closely follows the sestet of the Italian source text.²¹ She is also more cautious than Wilkins in condemning Chaucer's grasp of Italian, although she suggests no alternative explanation for the discrepancies between the two texts and continues to refer to the deviations as

¹⁸ See Greene, *The Light in Troy*; McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation*.

¹⁹ For a detailed comparison of the convergence of Chaucer's view of imitation with Petrarch's see the introduction to Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, pp. 1-33. See also Boitani, P., *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Finlayson, J., "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale'", *Studies in Philology*, 97, 3 (2000): 255-275; Ginsberg, W., *Chaucer's Italian Tradition* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001); Farrell, T. J. "Source or Hard Analogue? 'Decameron X, 10' and 'The Clerk's Tale'", *The Chaucer Review*, 37, 4 (2003): 346-364; Sonjae, A., "Echoes of Boethius and Dante in Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale'", *Medieval and Early Modern English Studies*, 22, 2 (Dec., 2004): 393-418.

²⁰ Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere*, pp. 307-8.

²¹ Thomson, "The 'Canticus Troili'", pp. 319-20.

“misunderstandings” (albeit in inverted commas).²² The authority of these two studies was such that Piero Boitani, in his introduction to *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, writes:

We have ... avoided another problem that might well have fitted in with our research – the presence of a sonnet by Petrarch in the *Troilus*. E. H. Wilkins and in particular Patricia Thomson have studied this in articles to which we felt we could add nothing substantial. Furthermore, this is an isolated problem, which does not recur in Chaucer’s works. Interesting and fascinating as a singular accident in the history of literature, it could be seen as a simple case of missed opportunity for Chaucer as well as for fourteenth-century English literature. As a literary form, the Petrarchan sonnet does not seem to have [had] any effect on Chaucer, and the *Canzoniere* as a whole – which alone could have given him a full idea of the beauty of Petrarch’s lyric as well as fascinated him with its themes of love, death and poetry – seems to have been unknown to him.²³

Fortunately, Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. did much to correct these assumptions with his article “Boethian Resonance in Chaucer’s *Canticus Troili*” (1993). Kaylor examines the “misunderstandings” highlighted by Wilkins and Thomson and demonstrates their similarity to a number of passages from Chaucer’s translation of the *Consolatio*.²⁴ In doing so, Kaylor confirms that Chaucer was not attempting a fluent or transparent translation of Petrarch’s sonnet, as implied in the previous studies by Wilkins and Thomson, but was rather adapting Petrarch’s sonnet to the context of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a whole in accordance with the general philosophy of literary *imitatio*.

As has been noted in all three studies mentioned, *Troilus* is written in rhyme royal, and, for the sake of structural integrity, Chaucer could not afford to attempt a transposition of the structure, rhyme scheme or metre of the Petrarchan sonnet. Thus, Petrarch’s fourteen lines, comprising two quatrains and two tercets, become twenty one lines divided into three stanzas of seven lines each in the “*Canticus Troili*”. Naturally, under these conditions a certain amount of amplification takes place which sees Chaucer not only deviate from strict literal transposition of certain words and phrases present in the source text, but also make significant additions to the text, and to include material of his own invention not found in Petrarch’s original. Such amplification emphasises the sophistication of Chaucer’s imitative strategy, as this technique would go on to

²² *ibid.*, p. 317.

²³ Cited in Kaylor, Jr., “Boethian Resonances”, p. 220.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 222.

form the cornerstone of the Renaissance practice of *imitatio*, authorised as it was by Cicero's soon-to-be axiomatic theoretical statement on translation in his *De optimo genere oratorum* 5.14:²⁵

Converti enim ex Atticis duorum eloquentissimorum nobilissimas orationes inter seque contrarias, Aeschinis et Demosthenis; nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sentiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis ad nostram consuetudinem aptis. *In quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi* [emphasis added].

[That is to say I translated the most famous orations of two of the most eloquent Attic orators, Aeschines and Demosthenes, orations which they delivered against each other. And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the "figures" of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. *And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language.*]

Seven distinct additions may be noted in the "Canticus Troili":

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
If it be wikke, *a wonder thinketh me,*
When every torment *and adversite*
That cometh of hym, may to me savory thinke,
For ay thirst I, the more that ich it drynke.

And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
If harm agree me, whereto pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in me swich quantite,
But if that I consente that it be?

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. *Thus possed to and fro,*
Al stereless withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, betwixen wyndes two.
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
Allas! what is this wondre maladie?
For hete of cold, for cold of hete, *I dye.*²⁶
(ll. 400-420; emphasis added)

²⁵ Cicero, *De inventione; De optimo genere oratorum; Topica*, trans. by H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp. 364-65.

²⁶ The text is taken from Robinson, F. N. (ed.) *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 457.

The italicized text signifies Chaucer's major additions to the source text, the first, second and third of which occur in stanza one, the fourth in stanza two and the fifth, sixth and seventh in stanza three. The second addition ("and adversite / That cometh of him", ll. 404-05) is a straight-forward amplification which splits Petrarch's "tormento" into two synonymous English nouns. The third, fourth and fifth additions ("For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke"; "I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte"; and "Thus possed to and fro") may be classed as minor deviations as they are essentially Petrarchan devices, in that they serve to reinforce the antithetical structure present in the original. Moreover, Rossiter has already pointed out the emphasis which these changes place on the physical nature of Troilus' desire. Chaucer represents him as suffering literally from *aegritudo amoris*, or lovesickness, acknowledged as a real medical condition in the age of Chaucer and Petrarch.²⁷ This is highlighted in particular by the dramatic seventh and final addition ("I dye"). Troilus' "death" differs substantially from the death-wish *topos* frequently employed by Petrarch. In the immediate context of the "Canticus", it represents the terminal nature of the *aegritudo amoris* provoked by the sight of Criseyde. On a metaphorical level, it both enacts the emotional coming of age of the young warrior as he reassesses his earlier scepticism with regard to love, and foreshadows his eventual death in battle, consumed by the desire for revenge after Criseyde has been taken from him.

However, the "death" of the "Canticus" has none of the Christian significance which informs Petrarch's treatment of "morte". Chaucer portrays Troilus's death, like his desire, as grounded purely in the physical: the consequences for the lover's soul, the spectre that haunts Petrarch throughout the *Rvf*, are not at all relevant. Chaucer's sixth addition ("Allas! what is this wondre maladie?") subtly reinforces this point, given that it comes at the expense of the key twelfth line in *Rvf* 132 ("si lieve di saver, d'error si carica"). Error is a crucial concept in Petrarch, and is introduced at a very early point in the sequence (*Rvf* 1, l. 3: "in sul mio primo giovenile errore"). For Petrarch, the noun "errore" is intimately associated with the verb "errare", connoting his tendency to stray from the path to God. The twelfth line of *Rvf* 132 therefore situates Petrarch

²⁷ Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, pp. 125-26. See also Ciavolella, M., *La malattia d'amore dall'antichità al Medioevo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1976).

in a spiritual wilderness not unlike Dante's "selva oscura" (*Inf.* 1.2), but lacking a Virgil who might guide him "per loco eterno" (*Inf.* 1.114). Consequently, Chaucer's erasure of this line not only serves to illuminate Troilus' arrogant nature, which makes him loathe to admit any error or lack of wisdom, but also, by implication, locates the "Canticus" in a pagan rather than a Christian universe.

This sixth alteration, along with the first, are the most significant changes which Chaucer effects, as they introduce a concept which is, firstly, not present in the source, and secondly, of great importance to Chaucer and the tradition of English literature in general – namely, the concept of "wonder". In her essay "Wonder and Boethian justice in the *Knight's Tale*", Helen Cooney examines the concept of wonder in the context not only of Chaucer's work, but also that of his contemporaries William Langland and the so-called *Pearl*-poet, showing it to be a literary device deeply embedded in the consciousness of fourteenth-century English poets.²⁸ Cooney goes on to trace classical references to wonder in Aristotle and Plato, who agree that wonder is "the point of origin of philosophy", while St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, states that: "The reason why the philosopher is compared to a poet is this, that each is concerned with things that excite wonder".²⁹ Viewed in this context, it is surely significant that Chaucer's two main additions to Petrarch's sonnet refer to wonder – "...a wonder thinketh me / that every torment and adversite / That cometh of him may to me savory thinke", and "Allas! what is this wondre maladie?".

Furthermore, in view of the connection between philosophy and poetry as expressed by Aquinas and so deeply embedded in the medieval consciousness, it is likely that the division between Petrarch the poet and Petrarch the philosopher was far less rigid for his English contemporaries than for the modern reader. Studies by Wilkins and Nicholas Mann regarding the proliferation of Petrarch manuscripts in Britain show that he was initially more highly regarded as

²⁸ Cooney, H., "Wonder and Boethian Justice in the *Knight's Tale*", in Ní Chuilleanáin, E., and J. D. Pfeiffer (eds.), *Noble and Joyous Histories: English Romances 1375-1650* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 27-58 (p. 27).

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

a moral philosopher writing in Latin than as a lyric poet writing in the *volgare*.³⁰ Based on this evidence, we may say with a large degree of certainty that Chaucer was probably more familiar with the Latin Petrarch of the *Secretum* and the *De Remediis* than the love-struck *troubadour* of the *Rvf*. As such, it is safe to propose that, when he first saw *Rvf* 132, he was possessed of certain assumptions regarding Petrarch's status as moral philosopher and that his reading of the poem was consequently influenced by them, as well as by the propensity, common to his time, to automatically associate poetry with philosophical enquiry.

Many critics have pointed to Chaucer's generalisation of that which, for the poet of the *Rvf*, was a wholly subjective experience.³¹ This is certainly an accurate assessment. However, one should guard against explaining this process as an accident brought about by Chaucer's supposed poor grasp of the Italian language. It is far more likely that, given the medieval view of the poet as philosopher to which Chaucer and his English contemporaries subscribed, a more objective approach to the question of the general nature of love was a better fit within the framework of *Troilus* than Petrarch's isolated and subjective contemplation. The rhetorical questions around which *Rvf* 132 is built lead the reader, almost by means of a logical process of deduction, to the conclusion that that which the poet experiences can be nothing else but love. By this point in the sequence, the poet's *innamoramento* has been well established and the poem constitutes an examination of the contrasting emotions which love engenders specifically in the poet. Troilus, on the other hand, having never been in love before, is forced to re-evaluate the assumptions he had made about love up to that point. Supposing it previously to be a form of weakness of spirit, he is caught off-guard by its assault and cannot believe that it is, in fact, love which causes him to behave in such an uncharacteristic fashion.

Petrarch's poem constitutes an examination of the poet's subjective experience of a phenomenon with which he is familiar, both emotionally and poetically; Chaucer's rendering, however, sees Troilus attempting to define the very nature of this same phenomenon, whose very

³⁰ Mann, *Petrarch Manuscripts*; Wilkins, E. H., "On the Manuscripts of the 'Canzoniere' of Petrarch", in *Speculum*, 23, 3 (Jul., 1948): 433-51.

³¹ Wilkins, *The Making of the Canzoniere*, p. 307; Thomson, "The 'Canticus Troili'", p. 317; Kaylor, Jr., "Boethian Resonances", p. 223.

existence is totally at odds with his previously unshakeable position of scepticism and cynical dismissal in respect of love. The difference in approach between the two poets can be seen most clearly by comparing the penultimate lines of their respective texts. Whereas l. 13 in *Rvf* 132 focuses specifically on the poet's emotional state, as emphasised by the almost excessive use of first person pronouns (“ch’*i’ medesmo* non so quel ch’*io mi* voglio” [emphasis added]), the corresponding line in the “Canticus Troili” (l. 419) – “Allas! what is this wondre maladie?” – is a more abstract and general enquiry consistent with the Aristotelian philosophical model which seeks to establish the nature of the universal from analysis of the particular. Chaucer, it would appear, simply had no interest in transposing the exact literal meaning of his source. Moreover, doing so would even have been counter-productive, as such a speech would have been completely out of character for Troilus. Thomson makes this point well when she says that “Laura’s lover, a devotee of love, can assume its reality, whereas Troilus, an all-too-recent scoffer, has first to re-adjust his ideas”.³²

Indeed, a number of other deviations which Chaucer makes from his source are better understood in light of this statement. The omission of l. 12 of *Rvf* 132 (“*si lieve di saver, d’error si carca*”) is to be expected if we consider the arrogance of the young warrior Troilus, who would have been unable, at this point, even to recognise such moral weakness in himself, much less be willing to denounce it in such stark terms. Similarly, the third addition listed above (“For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke”), occurring in l. 426 of the “Canticus Troili”, points to the overwhelmingly physical nature of Troilus’ desire. Chaucer’s foregrounding of the physical appetite precisely at the moment of the *innamoramento* serves to set the scene for the overtly moralistic representation of the destructive potential of a sinful, physical desire which becomes one of the main themes of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a whole. The poet of the *Rvf*, however, consistently seeks to downplay the physical nature of his desire in an effort to convince himself of the ennobling potential of his love for Laura. The overt expression of a physical desire is rare in the *Rvf*, and its emergence is always more subtle and fleeting than in Chaucer’s rendering of *Rvf* 132.

³² Thomson, “The ‘Canticus Troili’”, p. 317.

Perhaps this is what is at the heart of Vittorio Sereni's pronouncement that not one line of Petrarch's *Rvf* can be said to describe love as feelingly as the words that Dante gives to Francesca in *Inferno* V, 136 ("La bocca mi basciò tutto tremante").³³ It may be worth remembering that, despite Dante's sympathetic treatment of Paolo and Francesca, their position in the first circle of Hell is a reminder that their (mutual) love has been tainted by adulterous lust. Dante's line is informed by the excitement of an illicit sexual encounter rather than the unrequited love which Petrarch explores in the *Rvf*, and the wistful lines in *Rvf* 22 "Con lei foss'io da che si parte il sole, / et non ci vedess'altri che le stelle, / sol una nocte, et mai non fosse l'alba!" are as close as Petrarch gets to allowing himself to openly admit a physical dimension to his desire. Even this apparent moment of weakness comes in a *sestina*, which conventionally permits the sounding of erotic overtones. Chaucer's foregrounding of the physical desire which Petrarch is so careful to keep buried under the surface of his text is therefore a radical departure from the conventional Petrarchan mode.

Chaucer's transformation of *Rvf* 132 is grounded in the Aristotelian, philosophical tradition of Middle-English literature – his subtle additions to Petrarch's source place his translation in the sphere of medieval literary imitation, while his tendency towards a generalisation of the source's subjective experience highlights Petrarch's modernity. This modernity is naturally unsuited to Chaucer's world-view, literary tradition and poetics, and is therefore erased as part of the process of imitation. All that is frequently called "modern" in Petrarch is rejected by Chaucer – in particular the emphasis on the subjective psychological state of the poet. As Southall and Mason have demonstrated, the so-called "Petrarchan" antitheses are not actually Petrarchan at all, but are part of Chaucer's native tradition.³⁴ The translation itself is couched in what L.A. Hibbard has called "the paraphernalia of wonder",³⁵ which Cooney has shown to be both well-established and highly relevant within the English medieval poetic tradition. Neither is the Italian rhyme scheme or sonnet structure transposed as Chaucer continues to favour the English rhyme royal. The

³³ Sereni, V., "Petrarca, nella sua finzione, nella sua verità", in his *Sentieri di gloria: Note e ragionamenti sulla letteratura*, ed. by G. Strazzeri (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), pp. 127-46 (p. 138).

³⁴ Southall, R., *The Courtly Maker* (Oxford: Blackwell 1964), p. 31-2; Mason, H. A., *Humanism and Poetry in the Early Tudor Period* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959) p. 163.

³⁵ Cited in Cooney, "Wonder and Boethian Justice", p. 27.

subjective experience of *Rvf* 132 is rejected in favour of a more general philosophical phrasing consistent with more established philosophical modes of enquiry. In short, Chaucer wholly domesticates all foreign elements found in the original, and leaves practically no trace of Petrarch's modern take on the divided self in the "Canticus Troili". The reader is given no indication that Chaucer has borrowed from a foreign source, unlike in the "Clerk's Tale", where the narrator explicitly indicates that he learned his tale from "Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete, / ... whose rethorike sweete / Enlumyned all Ytaille of poetrie" (*Canterbury Tales*, Clerk's Prologue, ll. 31-33).³⁶ In fact, it would be impossible to recognise that the text was a translation without prior knowledge of *Rvf* 132. Only a reader in the privileged position of familiarity with both the Italian and English texts could make a connection between the two.

This is not to say, of course, that Chaucer plagiarised or misappropriated Petrarch in any way, for he was writing within a tradition which not only allowed such adaptations, but actively encouraged them. This explains the "missed opportunity" for fourteenth-century English literature to which Boitani refers, and to which we may add a missed opportunity for English literature until Wyatt's time. The perceived *lacuna* of a century and a half between the "Canticus Troili" and Wyatt's Petrarch translations, which has for so long puzzled scholars of Petrarch's reception in England, does not, in fact, exist, as, to all intents and purposes, Chaucer never quite translated Petrarch, such was the near-totality of the assimilation of his foreign source. English literature would not have any meaningful contact with Petrarch's vernacular poetry until the Italianate vogue of the early sixteenth century, coupled with the influence of Humanist thinking in Britain, drew Sir Thomas Wyatt's attention to the *Rvf* nearly a century and a half after the appearance of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

³⁶ Robinson (ed.), *Works*, p. 121. The tale to which the Clerk refers is in fact a Latin translation by Petrarch of Boccaccio's Griselda Tale in *Decameron* X, 10. For a full analysis of the relationship between the three texts, see Thompson, N., *Chaucer, Boccaccio and the Debate of Love: A Comparative Study of the Decameron and The Canterbury Tales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

4. Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Birth of Political Petrarchism

Many early critics tended to disparage Wyatt's translations, particularly in comparison with the more polished versification typical of his younger contemporary, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.³⁷ Over time, however, critical opinion has shifted to such a degree that the current consensus represents an inversion of the initial evaluation of these two Henrician poets. From the Elizabethans to the modernists, Wyatt's inconsistent metrical patterns and often convoluted syntax confounded critics, and his talents paled in comparison to the more technically sophisticated earl of Surrey. Subsequently, the modernist rejection of traditional metre and what has come to be viewed as the stifling tyranny of formal structures made Wyatt's roughly hewn verses more palatable to the modern critic, while Surrey's meticulous observance of technical conventions was concomitantly characterised as stiff and emotionally reserved. Ted Hughes' perceptive analysis of Wyatt's poetics provides a third way between these extremes, demonstrating Wyatt's greater affinity with the Chaucerian tradition than his younger contemporary, who anticipates Sidney and Shakespeare. In Hughes' literary *Weltanschauung*, Wyatt constitutes the last significant practitioner of native stress-based verse typified by the *Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman*, while Surrey's iambic pentameter and blank verse translation of Virgil represents the beginning of the ornate Italianate phase of English poetry which would come to be associated with the Elizabethan Renaissance.³⁸

Forster's observation that "the creation of a new poetic diction goes hand in hand with the influence of Petrarch and his followers" is borne out by the wealth of Petrarchan imitation which took place right across Europe during the sixteenth century.³⁹ Moreover, it cannot be denied that Wyatt was writing at a time in which, firstly, vernacular speech was undergoing a radical shift towards the early-modern form of English as distinct from Chaucer's late Middle English dialect, and secondly, literature in the vernacular was growing in importance as a vehicle for the

³⁷ See Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, p. 32; Berdan, *Early Tudor Poetry*, p. 484; Johnson, *Lives*, pp. 11-12; Rollins (ed.), *Tottel's Miscellany*, p.77; Lewis, *English Literature*, p. 230; Muir and Thomson (eds.), *The Collected Poems*, pp. xviii-xix.

³⁸ See Hughes, "Myths, Metres, Rhythms", pp. 310-72.

³⁹ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 71.

expression of religious, philosophical and political ideas which had previously been transmitted through Latin.⁴⁰ However, to cast Wyatt's Petrarchan translations as mere exercises in poetic diction is to bring the modern predilection for original composition over translation to bear upon a literary culture in which translation and imitation were viewed as both admirable and necessary, not only in terms of technical experimentation and fine-tuning, but also for the dissemination of influential political and religious ideas which would influence society during the Renaissance and Reformation, and indeed thereafter.⁴¹ This is a dimension which must not be ignored if the imitations of the Tudor poets from Wyatt to Spenser and Sidney are to be fully appreciated.

The reasons for Wyatt's attraction to Petrarch as a model are threefold: firstly, there was the linguistic element, or "Petrarchism as training in poetic diction" as described by Forster.⁴² It was natural for poets who wished to express themselves in their vernacular to look to Petrarch as a model, since he, and his fellow Tuscan Dante before him, had played a significant part in the elevation of their own vernacular dialect to the status of a truly literary language. This is demonstrated by the popularity of Petrarchan imitation and translation during the first bloom of the respective national Renaissances which took place across Europe, from Croatia, Germany, France and the Netherlands to Spain and Portugal throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A great many of the finest poets to write in their respective vernaculars during this time, such as De Camoes in Portugal, and Ronsard and du Bellay in France, are all identified by Forster as *petrarchisti*.⁴³ In this respect, Wyatt was very much of his time, and given the vogue for Italianate music, art and fashion at Henry VIII's court, it was no surprise that Italian literature also held a certain attraction for the English courtier. This dimension, however, has been overstated in importance by critics who have found little of interest in the translations of Wyatt and Surrey, and have used this to reduce the early sonnets to, at worst, trifling matters of Tudor entertainment of little relevance to today's serious literary criticism, or, at best, mechanical exercises in technique designed to refine alien literary devices which could then be applied to more serious English

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴¹ See Wyatt, M., *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴² Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 61.

⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 32-50.

literary oeuvres.⁴⁴ Having said this, however, it is likely that the vogue for Italianate imitation did facilitate the public expression of sentiments within the poetry which could easily have proven deadly had they been expressed in another arena. In the words of Fox, the stance of the Petrarchan lover could be adopted as a “socially convenient persona”, which would allow the poet to offer a social and political critique of court life, whilst simultaneously maintaining through his status as translator/imitator a crucial element of distance from any sentiments in the poetry which could be perceived as subversive.⁴⁵ This echoes Mason, who says that “Wyatt turned to creative translation when he had some urgent personal matter to ‘distance’”.⁴⁶

Secondly, as a study by Coogan has outlined, Petrarch’s reception in England, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was greatly influenced by his Latin works of moral philosophy.⁴⁷ Most manuscripts from this period contain works such as *De remediis utriusque fortune*, the *Secretum*, the *Bucolicum carmen*, and collections of his letters – the *Familiares*, *Seniles*, and *Epistole sine nomine*. One manuscript (British Library, Arundel MS. 334) contains a great many of Petrarch’s *sententiae*, and places him in such esteemed company as Boethius and St. Bernard.⁴⁸ His reputation was that of the Father of Humanism who had given impetus to the revival of classical learning and had railed against the now outmoded Medieval Aristotelian scholasticism, whose decline contributed to the emergence of that new culture we refer to as the Renaissance. Influential continental thinkers like Erasmus embraced the Neo-Platonist Stoicism outlined in the *De remediis*, as did men like John Colet, Thomas Linacre, William Grocyn and Thomas More, all pioneers of English Humanism in the generation preceding that of Wyatt and Surrey. Thus Petrarch was endowed with an authority which placed him both at the forefront of modern thought, as well as in the company of Boethius and the Church Fathers of old. It is not unreasonable to assume that this dual authority was carried over into his vernacular poems, and

⁴⁴ Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*; Rollins (ed.), *Tottel’s Miscellany*; Nott, G. F. (ed.), *The Works of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey and of Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Browne, 1815).

⁴⁵ Fox, A., *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 48.

⁴⁶ Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 185.

⁴⁷ Coogan, R., “Petrarch’s Latin Prose and the English Renaissance”, *Studies in Philology*, 68, 3 (Jun., 1971): 270-291.

⁴⁸ See Coogan, “Petrarch’s Latin Prose”, p. 271.

made him a suitable model for the more radically-aligned Wyatt, as well as the conservative Surrey. It has been noted by both Mason and Guss that Wyatt's translations are essentially Humanistic, although they hesitate to apply this term to his sonnets, preferring to look to his psalms and satires to provide evidence for their claims.⁴⁹ The emergence of Humanism as an important school of thought in these years has been identified by Fox as the element which proved most decisive in Wyatt's attraction to Petrarch's sonnets, and this emergence accounts for the closing of the gap between Chaucer's translation of *Rvf* 132 and the tidal wave of Petrarchan imitation and translation initiated by Wyatt.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is significant that the Hill MS, an anthology of poetry transcribed c. 1553-62, contains a large number of translations of Petrarch (including Wyatt's), and more so that translations of what Norbrook calls "moral and religious" sonnets outnumber love poems.⁵¹ Thus it is evident that the sixteenth-century English interest in Petrarch was at least as philosophical and oriented towards a wider world as it was conventional and courtly, if not more so.

Thirdly, and most importantly for the way in which he transformed his Italian source, Wyatt identified personally with the situation described in the *Rvf*, and specifically expressed in the balanced antitheses which Forster has identified as the hallmark of Petrarchism.⁵² In the *Rvf*, the nature of the poet's desire for an earthly being threatens the salvation of his soul. His reason is in perpetual conflict with his heart, his passion is pitted not only against the lady's chastity, but also his own sense of shame and reverence for God. This continuous conflict is frequently expressed by the use of antithesis and paradox which would come to characterise the verses of his subsequent imitators, for better or for worse. Wyatt, and indeed Surrey, as members of the court of Henry VIII, faced a more immediate threat which was similarly inextricably bound up with love: namely the threat of execution on grounds of treason if they were to fall out of favour with the king. Naturally, one of the easiest ways to incur the wrath of the sovereign was through the courtship of

⁴⁹ Guss, D., "Wyatt's Petrarchism: An Instance of Creative Imitation in the Renaissance", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 29, 1 (Nov., 1965): 1-15; also Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 186.

⁵⁰ Fox, *The English Renaissance*, p. 25.

⁵¹ Norbrook, D., *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 47.

⁵² Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 4.

any of the court ladies whom the King wished to possess. Yet, such was the backstabbing and treacherous nature of many courtiers, any courtship could prove deadly if one was to tread on a rival's toes, particularly if that rival happened to have the king's ear at the time.

Thus, the courtier's life in Henry VIII's court nearly always hung precariously in the balance, and love, especially, could prove to be a dangerous game if not practised with an unwavering sense of discretion, if not outright secrecy.⁵³ The *psychomachia* characteristic of the poet-lover in the *Rvf* resonated deeply with Wyatt in particular, who adapted the rhetorical tropes by which Petrarch expressed his sense of fragmentation to his own situation at the royal court. The ability and the need to maintain an unwavering outward air of discretion and detachment in public life made Wyatt a brilliant diplomat, while the concomitant suppression of potentially dangerous or subversive expressions of opinion rendered the inward language of his poetry unrelentingly and sometimes violently bitter. This double-life attracted him to Petrarch's antitheses and oxymora. While it may be true that, in Wyatt's versions, these devices carry none of the resonances of the Petrarchan spiritual conflict that pervades the *Rvf*, the English poet clearly finds them appropriate to his own emotional and psychological state as a member of Henry's court, and so his use of them goes beyond mere technical and formal imitation.

5. Wyatt and *Rvf* 124

Poems such as "Whoso list to hunt" and "The long love that in my thought doth harbour" have attracted sustained interest from scholars over the years. The former due to its amenability to a biographical reading which recounts a tale of amorous intrigue involving one of history's most significant monarchs; the latter because of its usefulness in a comparative analysis of the imitative techniques employed by Wyatt and his younger contemporary Surrey, whose "Love, that liveth and reigneth in my thought" is based on the same source text (*Rvf* 140).⁵⁴ Thomson provides a

⁵³ Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ For the most recent example of this type of comparative analysis, see Martinez, R. L., "Francis, Thou Art Translated: Petrarch Metamorphosed in English, 1380-1595", *Humanist Studies and the Digital Age*, 1, 1 (2011): 80-108 (pp. 92-3)

useful digest of comparative studies of Wyatt's and Surrey's translations of *Rvf* 140 by Berdan, Padelford and Smith.⁵⁵ All three critics praise Surrey's technical ability and agree that his verse is more refined, although Smith adds the caveat that Wyatt appears to engage with Petrarch's central conceit on a more profound level.⁵⁶ Thomson's own judgement may be seen to encapsulate the modern critical consensus on the relative strengths and weaknesses of Wyatt and Surrey:

A comparison of these two translations illustrates that Surrey's "advances" were made at considerable cost. The English sonnet form, harmony of numbers, pictorial solidity, and an air of agreeable gallantry are his legacy to his Elizabethan successors. But Wyatt, in this instance, and whatever he does elsewhere, ushers much of both the meaning and quality of Petrarch's sonnets into English.⁵⁷

Critical interpretation of "Whoso list to hunt", in particular, has varied to such a degree that Alastair Fowler was led to comment: "The critics seem at times to be discussing different poems".⁵⁸ Thomson maintains that in this poem "the sentiment is arrogant and cynical", while Southall disagrees entirely, stating that Wyatt "plainly brings to his work the standards and demands of real affection".⁵⁹ Fowler, for his part, offers a radical reading, interpreting Wyatt's abandonment of the chase in deference to the poem's "Caesar" as "complimentary to the hind, reassuring to Caesar, expressive of a hopeless admiration".⁶⁰ Ultimately, however, the critic emphasises a cultural distance between a modern readership and an audience of Wyatt's contemporaries which seems to preclude any further attempt at interpretation.⁶¹ In general, this has been the best received of Wyatt's Petrarchan imitations, if not for its emotional complexity then for the tantalising glimpse into a royal love triangle which the largely persuasive biographical reading delivers.

The critical reception of two more of Wyatt's most famous Petrarchan imitations demonstrates how opinion has changed over time. "I find no peace and all my war is done" (*Rvf*

⁵⁵ Thomson, "The First English Petrarchans", p. 85. The studies to which she refers are: Berdan, *Early Tudor Poetry*; Padelford, F. M. (ed.), *The Poems of Henry Howard Earl of Surrey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1928); Smith, H. D., "The Art of Sir Thomas Wyatt", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 9, 4 (Aug., 1946): 323-55.

⁵⁶ Smith, "The Art of Sir Thomas Wyatt", p. 335.

⁵⁷ Thomson, "The First English Petrarchans", p. 92

⁵⁸ Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Cited in Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*, p. 6.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

134) and “My galy charged with forgetfulness” (*Rvf* 189) were sure to raise the stock objections to Wyatt’s Petrarchism up to the mid-twentieth century, as summed up by H. E. Rollins in his edition of *Tottel’s Miscellany*: “Wyatt seldom failed to admire the worst features of his Italian masters, and by translating their stiff figures and images, he set a bad example that helped to deform English poetry”.⁶² Thanks to the insightful analyses of Wyatt’s body of work by Thomson, Guss,⁶³ Smith,⁶⁴ and Lever, however, critics began to discern a more serious engagement with the source material, coloured by the influence of sexual politics at the Henrician court. Thus, by the time Joe Glaser analysed Wyatt’s Petrarchan imitations in 1984, he was able to state with confidence that Wyatt’s transformation of *Rvf* 134 reflected the “grim political realities” of Henry’s court where “courtiers who guessed wrong about politics or even love affairs...regularly found themselves in prison or on the scaffold”.⁶⁵ Similarly, “My galy charged with forgetfulness” was seen as characteristically awkward in terms of style and versification. E. M. W. Tillyard went so far as to suggest that the poem can barely even be understood without reference to Petrarch’s original, so hamstrung was Wyatt by his desire to translate both Petrarch’s language and structure faithfully.⁶⁶ Dasenbrock, however, writing in 1988, again stresses the close affinity Wyatt appears to have felt for Petrarch in all his imitations. “Wyatt”, he writes, “in short, translates Petrarch much more faithfully because Petrarch’s poem is more like one of Wyatt’s”.⁶⁷

In order to demonstrate the manner in which the culture of the court affects Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch, it is instructive to compare one of Wyatt’s more overlooked poems, “Love and Fortune and my mind, rememb’rer”, with its source, Petrarch’s *Rvf* 124.

⁶² Rollins (ed.), *Tottel’s Miscellany*, vol. 2, p. 101.

⁶³ Guss, “Wyatt’s Petrarchism”.

⁶⁴ Smith, “The Art of Sir Thomas Wyatt”.

⁶⁵ Glaser, J., “Wyatt, Petrarch, and the Uses of Mistranslation”, *College Literature*, 11, 3 (Fall, 1984): 214-22 (p. 221).

⁶⁶ Tillyard, E. M. W., *The Poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt: A Selection and Study* (London: Scholartis, 1929), p. 151.

⁶⁷ Dasenbrock, R. W., “Wyatt’s Transformation of Petrarch”, *Comparative Literature*, 40, 2 (Spring, 1988): 122-33 (p. 130).

The full texts of both poems are as follows:

Amor, Fortuna, et la mia mente, schiva di quel che vede et nel passato volta, m'affliggon sì ch'io porto alcuna volta invidia a quei che son su l'altra riva.	
Amor mi strugge 'l cor, Fortuna il priva d'ogni conforto, onde la mente stolta s'adira et piange: et così in pena molta sempre conven che combattendo viva.	5
Né spero i dolci dì tornino indietro, ma pur di male in peggio quel ch' avanza; et di mio corso ò già passato 'l mezzo.	10
Lasso, non di diamante, ma d'un vetro veggio di man cadermi ogni speranza et tutti miei pensier' romper nel mezzo.	

Love and Fortune and my mind, rememb' rer Of that that is now with that that hath been, Do torment me so that I very often Hate and envy them beyond all measure. Love slayeth mine heart. Fortune is depriver Of all my comfort. The foolish mind then Burneth and plaineth as one that seldom Liveth in rest, still in displeasure.	5
My pleasant days, they fleet away and pass, But daily yet the ill doth change into the worse, And more than the half is run of my course. Alas, not of steel but of brickle glass I see that from mine hand falleth my trust, And all my thoughts are dashed into dust. ⁶⁸	10

If Wyatt's interest in Petrarch had been purely technical and "petrarchistic" in the sense described by Forster, then the decision to translate this poem would be a curious one. In the Italian text, the "Petrarchan" antithesis is almost entirely absent, as is the lady herself, whose presence is merely suggested by love's destruction of the poet's heart, and the "dolci dì" of past times to which the mind turns in preference to that which it sees at present. This is wholly appropriate, however, as it is the absence of the lady and the remembrance of her past presence which torment the lover, who, when parting from his beloved in the previous poem, read in her expression the words "Chi m'allontana il mio fedele amico?" (*Rvf* 123, l.14). The space in this poem is occupied entirely by the poet's psychological state. The delicate balance which Forster noted in the

⁶⁸ Wyatt's text taken from Rebholz, R. A. (ed.), *Sir Thomas Wyatt: The Complete Poems* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 82. All subsequent references to Wyatt's poems are from this edition.

antitheses present in other poems is here echoed by the balance between past, present and future. In the first quatrain, the poet describes a three-pronged attack by love, fortune and his own mind against which he struggles to defend himself, and which leads him at times to wish for death. Past, present and future are all woven into this opening quatrain as the poet describes how the mind avoids that which it sees in the present, turns towards the past, and leads the poet to thoughts of the fate that awaits him as he envies the dead (“*quei che son su l'altra riva*”). Of the three assailants identified by Petrarch in l. 1, his mind seems to be his tormentor-in-chief, the source of the memories of happier times past, presumably spent in the company of Laura, which cause the poet the greatest distress. It seems as if this happens against his own will, implying that he has little control over his own mind, and establishing the crucial division of the self, the implications of which will be discussed further below.

The second quatrain picks up on the theme introduced in the first and describes the manner in which the poet is tormented and the effect it has on him. The word *battendo*, contained within the *combattendo* of l. 8, suggests the beating of the heart, implying that the very act of living in itself has become a struggle for the poet. As often in the *Rvf*, the first tercet renews the main elements of the first quatrain, in this case the past-present-future division of the opening quatrain. Each line maintains the notion of a tripartite division established in l. 1, though this time the division relates to time:

l. 9: the past

l. 10: the future

l. 11: the present

The poet despairs of the return of the “*dolci di*” of the past, sees nothing in the future but the continued deterioration of his current state, and informs us that he is currently past the halfway point in his life, generally taken to be thirty-five years of age. The emotional neutrality of l. 11, which simply states the poet’s age, epitomizes the passive stance which the poet adopts in the face of the psychological assault described in the octave.

Petrarch's final tercet is somewhat difficult to interpret. Laura is associated with "diamante", a symbol of steadfastness in other points in the *Rvf*, and it may be that her current absence has given rise to a sense of vulnerability in the poet, symbolised by the fragile "vetro", while recognition of the brittleness of his "speranza" refers back to a forlorn hope for a return to the "dolci di" mentioned in line 9, spent perhaps in the company of Laura. Similarly, the fractured thoughts of the final line may be a result of the psychological conflict described in the lines 6-8. This explanation is consistent with the technique often employed by Petrarch, whereby the first tercet picks up the first quatrain (the three dimensions of time), while the second tercet echoes the second quatrain (dwelling on an eternal present).

Patricia Thomson, discussing Wyatt's translations, writes that the poems are most interesting when the Englishman deviates from his source.⁶⁹ Wyatt's version of this sonnet departs from the original in a number of significant ways, which are not only relevant in terms of the present study, but also typical of the way in which he regularly transformed Petrarch to reflect the actual realities of court life during the reign of Henry VIII. Before proceeding any further, it should be noted that Wyatt was the poet who introduced the sonnet form to England. However, while Petrarch always began his sonnets with an octave rhyming either ABBAABBA or ABABABAB, followed by an interlocking rhyming scheme in the sestet, such as CDCCDC, CCDCCD, CDECDE, etc., Wyatt, and virtually all subsequent English sonneteers with the notable exceptions of Milton and occasionally Sidney, favoured a final rhyming couplet. A pattern of CDDCDD was permissible in the Italian form, though it was used by Petrarch in only three sonnets (nos. 13, 94 and 326), a fact which demonstrates that the Italian thought such a scheme to be generally unsuitable to the sonnet form.

The English system had the effect of dividing the fourteen line sonnet into three quatrains, which could employ between two and six different rhymes, followed by the separate rhyming couplet. This structure was deemed to be more suited to the English language than the Italian structure, perhaps due to the comparative difficulty of finding different words to fit the same rhyme in English. While purists would argue that this compromised the delicate relationship

⁶⁹ Thomson, "Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators", p. 225.

between structure and content exhibited so masterfully by Petrarch, in England this departure had the effect, for better or worse, of focussing the reader's attention on the dramatic final couplet, in which poets attempted, with varying degrees of success, to give a concise and cathartic summary of the previous three quatrains. Thus we have Wyatt's "Likewise displeaseth me both death and life / And my delight is causer of this strife",⁷⁰ Surrey's "And thus I see among these pleasant things / Each care decays and yet my sorrow springs",⁷¹ and Shakespeare's famous "So long as men can breathe, and eyes can see / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee".⁷² This couplet was particularly effectively employed by later sonneteers such as Shakespeare, whose sonnets were not translations, but rather an original reaction to the worst kind of empty Petrarchan imitation as described by Forster.⁷³

However, when this practical solution to the problem of unearthing sufficient rhymes was applied to relatively faithful translations in terms of lexis, such as Wyatt's, we frequently find that the twelfth line of the sonnet occupies a sort of translator's no-man's land, connected structurally to the third quatrain of the target text, and thematically to its final couplet, owing to its position as the opening line of the closing tercet in the source. It is quite common in Wyatt to find an end-stopped eleventh line, with the twelfth line either syntactically anticipating the final couplet, and thus lessening the couplet's dramatic impact, or else end-stopped itself, often disrupting the flow of the poem at a crucial point, and weakening the third quatrain by creating an imbalance therein. The former problem affects the above poem, and one or other can be observed in "Ever mine hap is slack and slow in coming" (Rvf 44), "If amorous faith, or a heart unfeigned" (Rvf 188), "The long love that in my thought doth harbour" (Rvf 140), "Was I never yet of your love grieved" (Rvf 61), "Because I still kept thee from lies and blame" (Rvf 49), "Such vain thought as wonted to mislead me" (Rvf 169), "Caesar, when that the traitor of Egypt" (Rvf 81), and "My galy charged with forgetfulness" (Rvf 189). Thus, this imbalance was consistently a problem for Wyatt, and it was left to the more technically gifted Surrey to demonstrate how it could be overcome.

⁷⁰ Rebholz (ed.), *Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sonnet XVII*.

⁷¹ Keene, D. (ed.), *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985), p. 42.

⁷² Taken from Craig, W. J. (ed.), *The Oxford Shakespeare* (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 11.

⁷³ Forster, *The Icy Fire*, p. 24.

6. Towards a Biographical Reading

Turning to a more specific analysis of this particular poem, the crucial eleventh line “And more than the half is run of my course”, may be key to answering the questions posed by the manner in which Wyatt has translated this poem. It is already widely accepted that two of Wyatt’s Petrarch translations, “The pillar perisht is whereto I lent”, and “Whoso list to hunt”, refer to traumatic events which took place in Wyatt’s life, namely the execution of his patron and friend Thomas Cromwell, and the end of his courtship of Anne Boleyn respectively.⁷⁴ In view of this, there is no reason to argue that the line quoted above may not also refer to the corresponding period in Wyatt’s life, particularly when such an interpretation helps to explain certain other features of the poem, as well as its relation to Petrarch’s source text. It is certainly no greater a leap than to affirm that the “Caesar” of “Whoso list to hunt” is in fact Henry VIII.

The line is a faithful translation of Petrarch’s “et di mio corso ò già passato ‘l mezzo”, and this interpretation would place us in or shortly after the year 1537. This was a particularly unhappy time for Wyatt. In July of that year, he was sent on ambassadorial duty to Spain, and longed to be recalled to England. By January of 1539, he wrote to Cromwell, “I ame at the wall. I ame not able to endure to March”.⁷⁵ More importantly in the context of this study, we know that he was actively engaged in Petrarchan translation during this period or shortly thereafter, as his canzone “In Spayne” has been identified as a translation of *Rvf* 37. It was also in the year 1538 that his enemies at court brought an accusation against him, which was suppressed by his protector Cromwell for the time being, but would lead to his imprisonment in the tower of London in the aftermath of his patron’s execution in 1540.

Thus, many events took place during this time which could have conceivably attracted Wyatt to *Rvf* 124. It is significant that Mason theorises that the canzone “In Spayne” is addressed

⁷⁴ See Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 87-9; Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, p. 25; Thomson, “Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators”, pp. 230-33; Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*, pp. 3-6; Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, pp. 188-90.

⁷⁵ Burrow, C., “Wyatt, Sir Thomas (c.1503–1542)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2004); online edn, Jan 2008 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30111>> [accessed 2 April 2012].

to a mistress from whom Wyatt is separated during his travels abroad.⁷⁶ In this canzone we also find echoes of some of the lines in Wyatt's translation of *Rvf* 124, as he complains that "Time doth fleet and I perceive th'hours how they bend / So fast", and how "My pleasure past, my present pain that I might well embrace!" He goes on to describe how he waits for the king to recall him to England: "Thus am I driven to hear and hearken after news; / My comfort scant, my large desire in doubtful trust renews".⁷⁷ That these themes are to be found also in "Love, Fortune and my mind", lends credence to the theory that the sonnet was also written during the same Spanish trip. Wyatt had witnessed the execution of Anne Boleyn in 1536, and thus he had been separated from her, too, though in a much more definitive sense.

As Thomson has shown, Wyatt most likely translated from Vellutello's edition of Petrarch, and it may be significant that the commentator himself endorses the notion that Petrarch's absence from the Laura provided the impetus for the composition of this sonnet:

Il presente mesto So[netto] giudichiamo essere stato fatto dal Poe[ta] medesimamente, come 'l precedente, nella città di Parma, nelquale, per trovarsi lunge da quella che era il suo solo conforto, et senza speranza di poterla così presto tornar a vedere, quasi come disperato di non mai più poter haver bene, mostra portare invidia a morti, dole(n)dosi d'amore, di fortuna, et della sua schiva mente.⁷⁸

If this sonnet was indeed written during Wyatt's time in Spain, the theme of absence from the lady would appear apt to his personal circumstances at that time.

Wyatt's translation retains the notion of the three-pronged attack on the poet carried out by Love, Fortune and the mind. However, in l. 2 where Petrarch expressly indicates that the mind avoids that which it sees and turns towards the past, Wyatt merely tells us that the mind compares the past with the present. The significance of this will become clear when illuminated by the translation of l. 9, discussed below. For the moment, however, it is an early indicator that Wyatt's poem is dealing very much with his present state of affairs, which his mind is much more inclined to dwell upon than the mind of the poet in *Rvf* 124. The opening quatrain as a whole is quite

⁷⁶ Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 192.

⁷⁷ Rebholz (ed.), *The Complete Works*, pp. 109-12.

⁷⁸ *Le volgari opere del Petrarca con la espositione di Alessandro Vellutello da Lucca* (Venice: Fratelli da Sabbio, 1525), p. 79^v.

awkward syntactically. The repetition of “that that” in l. 2 and the ambiguous object (“them”) in l. 4 gives the impression of a poet struggling to adequately express his emotions, his eloquence perhaps compromised by the “hate and envy” which his hopeless situation inspires. Wyatt’s fourth line in particular is something of a syntactical puzzle. In the Italian, the poet is so tormented by his visions of happier times now past, that he envies the dead (“quei che son su l’altra riva” (l. 4)). Wyatt, however, appears to suggest that the poet envies his tormentors. It seems more natural to interpret “them” as a reference to “Love, Fortune and my mind”, taking “beyond all measure” as an adverbial qualification of the poet’s “hate and envy”. Rebholz argues (perhaps not convincingly) that Wyatt’s fourth line corresponds exactly with the meaning of Petrarch’s, taking “beyond all measure” as an adjectival qualification of “them”, which is the direct equivalent of Petrarch’s demonstrative “quei”. “Riva”, writes Rebholz, “can mean ‘limit’ as well as ‘bank’ – an alternative that may have led Wyatt to his version”.⁷⁹

However, it is also possible that this interpretation is a product of a misreading of the word “envy”, which, in its modern sense, seems a somewhat unsuitable emotion in the context in which it is invoked by Wyatt. In sixteenth century English, “envy” carried the meaning, now obsolete, of “malignant or hostile feeling; ill-will, malice, enmity”. Thus, Sir Thomas North, in his *Guevara’s Diall of Princes* (1557) gives us: “For speaking the truth: the man which hath enuy to seme old doth delite to live in the lightnes of youth”. In its verbal form, it is defined as “to feel a grudge against (a person); to regard (a person or action) with dislike or disapproval”, and, crucially for this study, it is listed as conveying a sense of “odium, unpopularity, opprobrium” when used as a translation for the Latin *invidia*.⁸⁰ By pairing it with “hate”, Wyatt isolates this particular shade of meaning in the English cognate of Petrarch’s “invidia” and foregrounds his antipathy towards his tormentors. Petrarch’s original thus authorises and provides support for Wyatt’s novel elaboration. Furthermore, the very phrase “beyond all measure” is listed in the OED as an adverbial phrase meaning “beyond all bounds, excessively; without limit”, with further examples from sixteenth-

⁷⁹ Rebholz (ed.), *The Complete Works*, p. 351.

⁸⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition) entry ‘1’ for “envy, *n.*” at: http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50076520?query_type=word&queryword=envy&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&search_id=xPj0-se5Aob-2382&result_place=1 [accessed on 18 May, 2010].

century texts.⁸¹ This interpretation is far more in line with what one would expect from the plain-speaking Wyatt, who tends to shy away from such Petrarchan abstractions as that implied by Rebholz's reading. On the other hand, Petrarch's line is glossed unambiguously by Vellutello as "mostra portare invidia a morti".⁸² Of course, Wyatt is free to disagree with or ignore Vellutello's reading, and the possibility also remains of a misreading (perhaps through haste or a defective text) of "altra" as "oltra" which resulted in the final translation of "*beyond* all measure" [emphasis added]. Regardless, the very fact of the ambiguity of Wyatt's line suggests to the reader an almost blind rage which struggles to find a target which the poet can justify to himself. It springs to life fully-formed and struggles to find expression within the confines of the rules of grammar. Petrarch is able to look forward and offer death as a solution, however unsatisfactory, to his current predicament. For Wyatt, however, the mere expression of his frustration proves arduous enough, and any putative solution is postponed indefinitely. The removal of the death-wish may also be significant in terms of the culture of the royal court. Wyatt had come close to death in 1536, when Cromwell had saved him, and the ever-present possibility of imprisonment and execution was perhaps too real and too immediate for Wyatt to comfortably employ the conventional death-wish rhetoric so regularly found in Petrarch.

The next two and a half lines are more or less faithfully translated from the Italian, as the effects of love, fortune and the mind on the poet are described. Even the strong caesuras of the original are preserved, giving a concise, almost matter-of-fact air to the description. Again, however, some subtle differences are present which continue to emphasise Wyatt's bitterness as opposed to Petrarch's *malinconia*. *Rvf* 124 traces a series of developments which presents the troubled mind of the poet as an effect of the assault on his heart made by "Amor" and "Fortuna". Following Amor's destruction of the heart, the same organ is deprived of all comfort by Fortuna, as the poet makes clear by the use of the relative pronoun "il" (l. 5). "Onde" in l. 6 tells us that the "mente stolta" begins to grow troubled and weep as a direct consequence of the attack on the

⁸¹ *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition) entry '1c' for "measure, *n.*" at: http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00304116?query_type=word&queryword=measure&first=1&max_to_show=10&sort_type=alpha&result_place=2&search_id=gg23-xB5YFC-2816&hlite=00304116 [accessed on 1 June, 2010].

⁸² *Le volgari opere del Petrarca*, p. 79^v.

poet's heart. He then provides us with a description of his general state of being, which has resulted from the circumstances he has just outlined: "et così in pena molta / sempre conven che combattendo viva". Wyatt, however, in l. 6, does not refer back to the heart, instead describing Fortune more generally as "depriver / of all my comfort", which may have nothing at all to do with the heartbreak implied in the source text. The strong and deliberate punctuation which separates the actions of the poet's assailants in Wyatt has the effect of dissociating their respective assaults from one another, so that "Love" and "Fortune" appear to be less intertwined in Wyatt's poem than in Petrarch's. Moreover, the "foolish mind" in Wyatt is not weeping at the destruction that has been wrought upon his heart, but is instead just another factor in the poet's torment.

Wyatt's omission of Petrarch's "combattendo viva" (l. 8) also introduces a significant element into the text which clarifies Wyatt's state of mind. Petrarch's struggle is the only alternative to the death which is presented as an escape from his situation in the first quatrain. It signifies at the very least a willingness to carry on, even if any note of optimism is crushed in the next line by a reminder of the hopelessness of his situation. Wyatt, however, displays none of this determination. His corresponding line conveys merely a sense of disquiet, begrudgingly accepting as his lot a mind that "seldom / Liveth in rest, still in displeasure". If the biographical interpretation of this poem is correct, then it would make sense that Wyatt would dismiss the notion of fighting against the imperative of his King as futile. He had no control over when his unhappy period abroad would come to end, and until such a time as the King recalled him, he would remain there, powerless to effect any change over his circumstances.

"Fortune" and "hap" are recurring themes in Wyatt's original compositions as well as his translations and imitations, and have been identified as synonymous with royal will or favour by Southall.⁸³ Wyatt's hoped-for recall to England could only be granted by the king, and indeed his stay was extended at Henry's behest in January of 1539. In an extremely direct sense then for Wyatt, the king, in the guise of "Fortune", was very much the "depriver / Of all my comfort". Similarly, if we take Petrarch's struggle as referring to the moral conflict engendered by his sinful desire for Laura and for fame, we may conclude that this had no relevance to Wyatt's situation

⁸³ Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 61.

either. Wyatt's desires and intentions are not a source of shame or guilt for him. He is not tormented by the inner conflict so characteristic of Petrarch's *Rvf* regarding the moral nature of his love and its implications for the salvation of the soul. In Wyatt's translation there emerges a picture of a frustrated mind, constrained on the one hand by external forces (e.g. the king's will) to pursue activities which physically estrange him from the object of his desire, and on the other by the *Realpolitik* of early Tudor court life, emphasising the courtier's need for discretion and sometimes deception in the interests of self-preservation. It is interesting to note that many of Wyatt's translations of Petrarch deal with the theme of deception, particularly in the context of hiding one's true amorous feelings for fear of what may happen if they are revealed. In Petrarch, this fear is primarily a fear of rejection by the lady, but for Wyatt, the fear is that the suit will be discovered either incurring the wrath of the king or providing his enemies with an opportunity to level certain accusations at him, leading to charges of treason, imprisonment and eventual execution.

Wyatt's ninth line involves another departure from his source, rendering Petrarch's "Né spero i dolci dì tornino indietro" as "My pleasant days, they fleet away and pass". Again, the wistful nostalgia of the original is replaced by a stronger sense of bitterness and frustration at the poet's current situation. In Petrarch, the "dolci dì" are situated very much in the past. The fact that his mind recalls them so vividly, yet they remain out of his reach, is the source of the poet's anguish. In Wyatt however, the "pleasant days ... fleet away and pass" – they are both present and passing at the same time. This juxtaposition indicates the swiftness of movement between present and past and casts the poet in the role of a frustrated spectator with no control over his life. Rather than providing a contrast between the sweet days of the past and the worse days to come in the future, as Petrarch does in *Rvf* 124, Wyatt's transformation of ll. 9-10 serves to reinforce the sense of hopelessness which is expressed in the tenth line's translation of Petrarch: "But daily yet the ill doth change into the worse", which shifts Petrarch's fear for the future ("quel ch'avanza") into a deteriorating present. The very fleeting away and passing of the "pleasant days" makes them unpleasant, while day by day, the poet's situation grows more desperate. This sense of desperation is thus more immediate than in *Rvf* 124, where the poet seems to be suspended in a moment of

reflection, caught between the “dolci di” of the past, and the worsening situation which he expects to experience in the future. Wyatt’s deviations give the impression of a more immediate displeasure which takes place in the here and now. Rather than avoid the present, Wyatt confronts it and is aware of the deterioration which is actively taking place in spite of him, and is frustrated by his lack of control. Petrarch, however, unwilling or unable to focus his mind on life without his lady, lives in the *expectation* that things will go from bad to worse, and of his present state merely informs us that he has already passed the midpoint of his life.

The twelfth line is noticeable for its transformation of “diamante” to “steel”. In Petrarch, as we have observed, Laura was often associated with diamonds, a symbol of constancy and steadfastness. Wyatt also translated *Rvf* 190, another poem where Petrarch associates diamonds (as well as topazes) with Laura. In Wyatt’s “Whoso list to hunt”, perhaps his most famous Petrarch translation, the reference to diamonds was retained, while “topazi” (a symbol of chastity) was removed. This led many commentators to associate this poem with Anne Boleyn, whose chastity was not a quality for which she was renowned. It would be strange, then, if Wyatt was referring to Anne Boleyn in “Love, Fortune and my mind”, not to preserve the association that he had made in “Whoso list to hunt”. Moreover, steel is associated with coldness and destruction, particularly in the form of the sword. These are hardly characteristics one would invoke when recalling pleasant days spent in the company of one’s beloved. Similarly, it seems unlikely that “brickle glass” should be meant as a disparaging reference to Wyatt’s alleged mistress. Wyatt’s canzone “In Spayne” makes it clear that he held her in genuine affection and desired to return to her as soon as possible.

D’Amico theorises that Wyatt’s use of “steel” was “perhaps suggested by ‘glasse’, since polished steel was often used for mirrors in the sixteenth century”.⁸⁴ While this may possibly be the case, it does not take into account that steel possesses qualities which makes it a particularly appropriate symbol in the context of Wyatt’s poem – namely, hardness, and its capacity to inflict physical pain in the form of a blade of some sort. If Wyatt had wished to emphasise merely the

⁸⁴ D’Amico, J. (ed.), *Petrarch in England: An Anthology of Parallel Texts from Wyatt to Milton* (Ravenna: Longo, 1979), p. 83.

contrast between hardness and fragility, he could have followed his source in using diamonds, as hardness is one of the characteristics both materials share. Indeed, one of the trends that emerges when we analyse Wyatt's translations of Petrarch, is that he follows the source as closely as possible unless he has something specific to convey by means of deviation. Therefore, as the potential of steel to be used in inflicting pain is a quality which the diamond does not possess, it is difficult to ignore this element when considering the motivation behind this particular substitution by Wyatt.

To fully appreciate the images of steel and glass, it is necessary to define that which Wyatt calls his "trust" in the following line. For Petrarch, the "speranza" of which he despaired was the hope of the return of the "dolci di" in l. 9. For Wyatt, it may certainly be the case that he wished to be reunited with his lady, but we must not ignore the element of powerlessness over his situation which so frustrated the poet as evidenced by his previous deviations from his Italian source, and the degree to which his "trust" rested on the whims and wishes of the king. Wyatt could only return from Spain at the behest of the king, and indeed his stay was extended at the king's request in 1539. Once again Wyatt found himself constrained by Henry's will, and it is possible that this is the very event which occasioned the translation of this sonnet. The fragility of the "brickle glass", where Wyatt has introduced a new adjective not in the original, may symbolise the fickle nature of a hope which depended solely on the wishes of one man, whose opinion was likely to change at any given time depending on circumstances beyond the control of even the king's closest allies and the most influential members of court. The "steel" may likewise serve as a reminder of the executioner's axe, which for many was the ultimate expression of the king's will; or, indeed, of the assassin's sword or dagger, wielded by an ambitious and unscrupulous rival at court.

Thus, the "brickle glass" of the courtier's desire is contrasted with the indestructible and deadly "steel" of royal will. On one level, the image of glass/*vetro* is negative in both poems, which may indicate that steel and *diamante* are, by function of contrast, positive images. Indeed, it may well be the case that Wyatt is in some way expressing admiration for the power of the King, in much the same way that Fowler posits a deferential representation of the "Caesar" of "Whoso

list to hunt”.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the overriding tone of bitterness in Wyatt’s translation leaves such a reading unable to escape the fact that even if admiration is being expressed, it is a begrudging admiration at best, which is of scant consolation to the poet, and of little consequence to the King.

Wyatt’s final line contains another telling departure from Petrarch’s sonnet. In *Rvf* 124, the poet describes how his thoughts are broken in half as he sees his hope fall from his hand, continuing the glass metaphor. This is the result of the battle which he describes between the two sides of his mind, rational and emotional – a vital theme which is revisited frequently throughout the *Rvf*. As has been demonstrated, no such conflict takes place in Wyatt’s case. His rendering of the line – “And all my thoughts are dashed into dust” – conveys a certain element of finality which is not in the original and is directly related to the shattering of his “brickle” hope of a return to England in the face of the “steel” will of the king. Bearing in mind the relation of the steel of the executioner’s axe to royal will and favour, it is also possible to allow for a more expansive interpretation of this final line, in which the dashing of the poet’s thoughts into dust reminds the reader of the inevitable outcome of falling out of favour with the king. In Petrarch, dust is nearly always associated with death, whereas in *Rvf* 124, the lasting image is not of dust but of broken glass.

Bearing this in mind, it is quite possible that Wyatt’s translation of *Rvf* 124, as with some of his other Petrarchan imitations, was influenced by his active engagement in political life in the court of Henry VIII. To label the above poem as a technical exercise in poetic form and diction is to ignore the vigorous expression of personal sentiment which characterises Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch. Where Chaucer had ignored the subjective elements of Petrarch’s poetry and assimilated his source to the native tradition, Wyatt has embraced Petrarch’s interest in the poet’s psychological and emotional state and has placed this at the forefront of his poetry.

⁸⁵ Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*, p. 6.

7. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey

For Surrey, the influence of Petrarch was a good deal more incidental than it was for Wyatt. Of the forty poems by Surrey which appeared in *Tottel's Miscellany*, published in 1557, fifteen are sonnets, and of these only five can be directly attributed to sources in the *Rvf*: "The soote season, that bud and blome furth bringes" (*Rvf* 310); "Love, that liueth, and reigneth in my thought" (*Rvf* 140); "Alas, so all thinges nowe doe holde their peace" (*Rvf* 164); "Set me whereas the sunne dothe parche the grene" (*Rvf* 145); and "I neuer sawe you, madam, laye apart" (*Rvf* 11). A further two, namely "The sonne hath twyse brought forthe the tender greene" and "Suche waywarde wais hath love that moste parte in discorde" display certain "debts to and reminiscences of Petrarch",⁸⁶ while it has been suggested that the satirical invective of "London, hast thou accused me" draws upon Petrarch's attack on the Avignon papacy in *Rvf* 136.⁸⁷ Wyatt, by contrast, composed no less than twenty-five sonnets which may be called translations or direct imitations of Petrarch's vernacular lyrics.

It is hard to say precisely what attracted Surrey to Petrarch. Perhaps Wyatt, as his poetic mentor, recommended the Italian master as an example of the heights which could be attained in vernacular verse, or as an example of the sonnet form. From a thematic standpoint, three of the five poems from the *Rvf* which Surrey translated are centred around descriptions of nature (310, 164, 145); *Rvf* 140 (also translated by Wyatt as "The longe love that in my thought doeth harbour") is built upon a military metaphor and ends on a note of fealty to one's lord – elements which, no doubt, would have appealed to the chivalrous young soldier. These, along with "Such wayward ways hath love", an adaptation of an excerpt from the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, have been comprehensively analysed by scholars whose insights have helped to reshape the perception of Surrey as a poet and identified his pioneering metrical and rhythmic innovations (particularly

⁸⁶ Thomson, "The First English Petrarchans", p. 86.

⁸⁷ See in particular Taylor, A. W., "Glass Houses: Surrey, Petrarch, and the Religious Poetics of the 'London' Invective", *The Review of English Studies*, 57, 231 (15 Sept., 2006): 433-55.

blank verse) as a precursor to the technical virtuosity of the Elizabethan Renaissance poets.⁸⁸ As he moved away from the stress-based metre still practised by Wyatt, the concern for Surrey was “getting it right” linguistically and stylistically, and what was said, in the case of his translations at any rate, was, for the time being, not as important as the way he said it.

8. Surrey and Rvf 11

Surrey’s translation of Rvf 11 demonstrates this point well, yet it has been largely overlooked by scholars to this date, and it is partly for these reasons that I have chosen to examine it here. “I never saw you, madam” is something of a curiosity for two reasons. Firstly, the Petrarchan original is a *ballata*, a form rarely translated into English. Secondly, it is transposed into sonnet form by Surrey, an idea which may have suggested itself because of the fourteen lines of which this particular *ballata* is composed, but which necessitated a significant alteration of rhyme scheme and naturally called for the amplification of some of the shorter lines permitted by the *ballata* form. Furthermore, the progression of ideas and its relation to the structure of the poem was completely altered due to the difference in the internal structure between source *ballata* and target sonnet. Petrarch’s original reads as follows:

Lassare il velo o per sole o per ombra,
Donna, non vi vid’io
poi che in me conosceste il gran desio
ch’ogni altra voglia d’entr’ al cor mi sgombra.

Mentr’ io portava i be’ pensier’ celati	5
ch’ ànno la mente desiando morta,	
vidivi di pietate ornare il volto;	
ma poi ch’Amor di me vi fece accorta,	
fuor i biondi capelli allor velati,	
et l’amoroso sguardo in sé raccolto.	10
Quel ch’ i’ più desiava in voi m’è tolto;	
sì mi governa il velo	

⁸⁸ See in particular Lathrop, H. B., “The Sonnet Forms of Wyatt and Surrey”, *Modern Philology*, 2, 4 (Apr., 1905): 463-70; Thomson, “The First English Petrarchans”; Harris, W. O., ““Love That Doth Raine’: Surrey’s Creative Imitation”, *Modern Philology*, 66, 4 (May, 1969): 463-70; Fowler, *Conceitful Thought*; Edwards, A. S. G., “Manuscripts of the Verse of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 67, 2 (Manuscript, Print, and Early Tudor Literature, 2004): 283-93; Haldane, M., ““The Soote Season’: Surrey and the Amatory Elegy”, *English Studies*, 87, 4 (Aug., 2006): 402-14; Taylor, “Glass Houses”.

che per mia morte, et al caldo et al gielo,
de' be' vostr' occhi il dolce lume adombra.

Surrey renders this as:

I never saw you, madam, lay apart
Your cornet black, in cold nor yet in heat,
Sith first you knew of my desire so great
Which other fancies chased clean from my heart.
Whiles to myself I did the thought reserve 5
That so unware did wound my woeful breast,
Pity I saw within your heart did rest;
But since ye knew I did you love and serve,
Your golden tress was clad away in black,
Your smiling looks were hid thus evermore, 10
All that withdrawn that I did crave so sore.
So doth this cornet govern me alack,
In summer sun, in winter breath of frost;
Of your fair eyes whereby the light is lost.

Rvf 11 has received little attention from Petrarch scholars. This is perhaps unsurprising on one level, as it appears at first glance to be a relatively conventional lover's complaint, possessed of a rather predictable charm, and imbued with none of the gravitas of an "Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso" (*Rvf* 333), or an "I' vo pensando" (*Rvf* 264). Nevertheless, it occupies an important structural position in the collection, coming immediately after the first ten poems, which act as a "prologo" to the whole collection according to Santagata.⁸⁹ *Rvf* 11 also introduces a major theme which has been acknowledged as central to the *Rvf* as a whole – the veil. Even short studies by Susanne Sara Thomas and R. L. Poss, dealing explicitly with the implications of the veil for Petrarch's poetics, concentrate exclusively on *Rvf* 52 and *Rvf* 16. Thomas argues from a Freudian perspective which identifies the veil *per se* as the primary object of the poet's fetishistic desire, serving as a means by which to neutralise the menacing "otherness" of the beloved which threatens to expose the Narcissistic nature of the poet's desire.⁹⁰ Poss, on the other hand, offers a more conventional interpretation which situates Laura's veil within the Pauline and Dantean traditions, indicating the representational duality of language in terms of its potential to envelope moral truth

⁸⁹ Santagata (ed.), *Canzoniere*, p. 52.

⁹⁰ Thomas, S. S., "Petrarch, Tournier, Photography, and Fetishism: The Veil in the 'Rime Sparse'", *Romance Quarterly*, 43, 3 (Summer, 1996): 131-41.

within the cloak of allegory.⁹¹ If one considers *Rvf* 11 more closely, however, neither interpretation seems to tell the whole story.

9. The Genesis of Petrarchan Love

It is perhaps unsurprising that, even at this early stage in the collection, Petrarch presents us with a poem which enacts an obfuscation of his subject matter. “Poi che” in l. 3 represents the watershed moment after which both lover and beloved will never be the same. This poem not only presents us with two Petrarchs, but with two Lauras also, circling around an alternating axis of visibility and invisibility. While the poet’s thoughts remain hidden, the object of his desire is clearly visible to him. There even appears to be an element of communion between them, as she seems to take pity on him, not yet knowing the cause of his inner turmoil. However, when it is revealed to her (how or by whom is unclear) that desire motivates the poet’s actions, she withdraws into darkness, covering her blonde hair and favourable glances with her veil. The precise reason for this withdrawal is not clear at this point in the sequence. For the reader who is familiar with the narrative of the *Rvf* in its entirety, it appears that her sympathy for the poet has been replaced with disapproval at his boldness, and that this is the moment of conception of the “fera bella et mansueta” of *Rvf* 126 who would populate countless Petrarchan sonnet sequences in the Renaissance. However, another interpretation also presents itself. Could this perhaps be the more accommodating Laura that is portrayed in the *Triumph*? Recognising the potential spiritual and social consequences of the poet’s sinful desire, has she covered her face and denied him “quella che più desiava” precisely because she shares his love? In other words, is she the Laura of passages such as the following?

[...] Mai diviso
da te non fu ’l mio cor, né già mai fia;
ma *temprai la tua fiamma col mio viso*,

⁹¹ Poss, R. L., “The Veil in the ‘Rime’ 52: Petrarch’s Secular Butterfly”, in *Italian Culture*, 7 (1986-89): 7-16.

*perché a salvar te e me null'altra via
era e la nostra giovenetta fama;*

(“Triumphus Mortis II”, ll. 88-92 [emphasis added])⁹²

If this is the case, then the gesture has been catastrophically misunderstood by the poet. Although the beloved undergoes the process of veiling, it is the poet who is enveloped in darkness. He has not only been denied the “pietate” and the “amoroso sguardo” with which Laura had previously favoured him, but any insight at all into her inner world, which may be the thing he most desired.

The most significant aspect of this double veiling is that it coincides exactly with the revelation of the poet’s true feelings. While the prominent “io” in l. 5 emphasises that the poet actively attempted to conceal his feelings, we are not told exactly by what means Laura discovered the “pensier celati”, simply that Love made her aware of the poet, suggesting that Petrarch’s role in the revelation was passive. This, coupled with the presence of the “amoroso sguardo”, strengthens the possibility of the reading suggested above in which the poet’s love is reciprocated, though never encouraged, let alone actively returned or consummated. The awakening of desire, in both the poet and the beloved, causes a number of deaths. The first death we encounter is that of the mind, which, overcome by desire, is destroyed by its own thoughts. Here, Petrarch is staging the victory of emotion over reason. Once this victory is complete, it is inevitable that he will no longer be able to conceal his desire and this is confirmed by “Amor’s” betrayal. The second is that of the poet (“per mia morte”), both as a man and as a writer, deprived of his lifeblood as he is cut off from the inner emotional world of the beloved. The third is the death of Laura herself, the vitality and humanity of her “pietate” shrouded in darkness as the light of life leaves her eyes, denied to the poet and therefore to the reader from this point on.

In the midst of these deaths, however, a birth takes place. Desire has proved fatal for the poet’s rational mind, and the revelation of this desire kills off all hope of a relationship with Laura. But desire for Petrarch, following the *Confessions* of his favourite Christian author St. Augustine, cannot but occasion a birth, for desire is the genesis of language itself, while the process of

⁹² I cite from Pacca and Paolino (eds.), *Trionfi*.

learning a language is, at its foundation, a process of understanding how best to articulate these desires:

Nonne ab infantia huc pergens veni in pueritiam? [...] non enim eram infans, qui non farer, sed iam puer loquens eram. et memini hoc, et unde loqui didiceram, post adverti. non enim docebant me maiores homines, praebentes mihi verba certo aliquo ordine doctrinae sicut paulo post litteras, sed ego ipse mente, quam dedisti mihi, deus meus, cum gemitibus et vocibus variis et variis membrorum motibus edere vellem sensa cordis mei, *ut voluntati pareretur*, nec valerem quae volebam omnia nec quibus volebam omnibus. pensebam memoria: cum ipsi appellabant rem aliquam et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere. *hoc autem eos velle, ex motu corporis aperiebatur, tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum ceterorumque membrorum actu et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, reiciendis fugiendisve rebus.* ita verba in variis sententiis locis suis posita et crebro audita quarum rerum signa essent paulatim colligebam *measque iam voluntates*, edomito in eis signis ore, per haec enuntiabam. *sic cum his, inter quos eram, voluntatum enuntiandarum signa communicavi*; et vitae humanae procellosam societatem altius ingressus sum, pendens ex parentum auctoritate nutuque maiorum hominum.

[The next stage of my life, as I grew up, was boyhood [...] I ceased to be a baby unable to talk, and was now a boy with the power of speech. I can remember that time, and later on I realised how I had learnt to speak. It was not my elders who showed me the words by some set system of instruction, in the way that they taught me to read not long afterwards; but, instead, I taught myself by using the intelligence which you, my God, gave to me. For when I tried to express my meaning by crying out and making various sounds and movement, *so that my wishes should be obeyed*, I found that I could not convey all that I meant or make myself understood by everyone whom I wished to understand me. So my memory prompted me. I noticed that people would name some object and then turn towards whatever it was they had named. I watched them and understood that the sound they made when they wanted to indicate that particular thing was the name which they gave to it, and their actions clearly showed what they meant, *for there is a kind of universal language, consisting of expressions of the face and eyes, gestures and tones of voice, which can show whether a person means to ask for something and get it, or refuse it and have nothing to do with it.* So, by hearing words arranged in various phrases and constantly repeated, I gradually pieced together what they stood for, and when my tongue had mastered the pronunciation, *I began to express my wishes by means of them. In this way I made my wants known to my family and they made theirs known to me*, and I took a further step into the stormy life of human society, although I was still subject to the authority of my parents and the will of my elders.]

(St. Augustine, *Confessions* I.8 [emphasis added])⁹³

Rvf 11 is the genesis of Petrarchan love, simultaneously establishing and crystallising the dynamic that will exist between the poet and the beloved for the remainder of the sequence. She has

⁹³ See St. Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. by Pine-Coffin, R. S. (Penguin: London, 1961), p. 29.

become unknowable and indescribable, while he cannot rest until he knows and describes her. Even the “universal language” which Augustine mentions in the above passage cannot offer the poet a glimpse into her inner world, her expressions hidden away beneath the veil which now “governs” the poet.

The twelfth line, “*sì mi governa il velo*”, provides a clue as to how the veil should be interpreted within the context of this poem. “Governa” recalls the Latin *gubernator*, the helmsman or pilot of a boat, while “velo” itself is close to *velum*, the ship’s sail. The nautical topos plays an important part in the *Rvf*, which draws on established conventions from the Provençal, stilnovist and classical schools that compare the process of writing poetry to undertaking a sea-voyage. Petrarch, most famously in *Rvf* 189 but also elsewhere (*Rvf* 132 above, for example), frequently finds himself lost at sea, helpless against the forces of love and desire which buffet him endlessly to and fro in a state of emotional turmoil which he struggles to resolve. This oblique nod towards the seafaring convention in *Rvf* 11 constitutes the beginning of Petrarch’s poetic voyage. The lines which follow are a foreshadowing of the more overt instances of potential shipwreck which the poet will face later on in the sequence: elemental language (“*et al caldo et al gielo*”) and the danger of death (“*mia morte*”) are present in l. 13, while the shading of the “*dolce lume*” suggests the clouding over of the stars, the sailor’s most reliable navigational aid, in terms reminiscent of the twelfth line of *Rvf* 189: “*Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni*”.

Of course, Petrarch was well aware of the significance of the veil as a symbol for language, and poetic language in particular. His edition of Virgil contained a title-page painted by his friend, the artist Simone Martini, which showed the fourth-century Virgilian commentator Servius drawing back a veil (that of allegory) to reveal an image of Virgil himself in the act of writing. The image alludes to the fact that Servius’ commentary “re-vealed” the allegorical truth behind Virgil’s texts. It seems then, that in *Rvf* 11, we are dealing also with a poem about writing poetry. The challenge for the poet is to uncover the beloved and to transcribe her beauty, and thus the veiling of Laura becomes necessary for the skill of the poet to be revealed to the reader. The danger for the poet is that the representation of the lady’s beauty may never be achievable, he may never gain access to her beauty to the degree where transcription is possible. The “*pietà*” he seeks

(*Rvf* 1) cannot come from Laura, but it can be obtained through the careful crafting of the poems in the *Rvf*. It is to this endeavour he must turn his attention if he is to salvage anything from his desperate situation. The veiling of the lady in *Rvf* 11 symbolises the transformation which Laura must undergo in order to become the “lauro”. The veil is the cloak of poetic language which turns her into something beyond and other than the real, living “donna” of the first half of *Rvf* 11.

10. Surrey’s Refusal to Die

Turning to Surrey’s “I never saw you, madam”, the reader is immediately struck by the transposition of the *ballata* into sonnet form, and the close lexical fidelity of the translation. As one would expect from Surrey, his versification is characteristically smooth and flowing, composed of the iambic pentameter, the perfection of which in the form of blank verse would prove to be Surrey’s greatest legacy to English poetry. However, his structure is hamstrung slightly by the formal transformation of *ballata* to sonnet. Though the fourteen line format of this particular *ballata* may have prompted Surrey to try his hand at “sonnetising” *Rvf* 11, he makes no attempt to rearrange the exposition of the ideas within the self-contained sub-units of the *ballata* in a manner which would maintain the integrity of the internal divisions of the sonnet form. Petrarch’s *ripresa* (ll. 1-4) essentially provides a summary of the poem’s events; the *fronte* (ll. 5-10) is divided into equal parts – the *primo piede*, which describes the period in which the poet kept his thoughts hidden (lines 5-7), and the *secondo piede*, in which the poet’s feelings become known to the lady and the veiling of her face takes place (lines 8-10); the *concatenazione* (l. 11) stands alone and provides the key turn in the poem, outlining the central crisis which results from the events described in the *fronte*; finally, the *sirima* (ll. 12-14) provides a conclusion that amounts to an elaboration of the *ripresa* in light of the events that have taken place in the intervening space, recalling the opening of the poem in terms of its diction (“per sole o per ombra”, l. 1 / “al caldo et al gielo”, l. 13), metre (seven-syllable line, l.2 and l. 12), and rhyme scheme (ombra...sgombra...adombra).

The “Shakespearean” form of Surrey’s sonnet does not lend itself to a similarly balanced progression, especially given that Surrey departs very little from the letter of his source text. Petrarch’s *ripresa* is easily and adequately transposed into Surrey’s opening quatrain, which manages to preserve even the rhyme scheme of the original without much tweaking. The second quatrain, however, falls victim to the same difficulty which Wyatt encounters when attempting to substitute Petrarch’s tercets for a quatrain and a couplet. The *piedi* of *Rvf* 11 maintain their connection by means of the interlocking rhyme scheme CDE | DCE and further reinforce the structural and thematic integrity of the *fronte* as a whole by the use of two rhyming synonyms in lines 5 and 9 (“celati” and “velati”). Surrey’s line-for-line transposition, however, disrupts this delicate balance, as it necessitates an end-stopped seventh line, as in the original, where Petrarch marks the division between *primo* and *secondo piede*. The eighth line then forms part of the second quatrain in terms of rhyme scheme, but is grammatically and thematically connected to the third quatrain, thus producing a mismatch between the sense of the original *ballata* and the constraints of its translation into the second quatrain of a sonnet. There is a consequent knock-on effect on the remainder of the poem, which causes Petrarch’s *concatenazione* to be swallowed up into the third line of Surrey’s third quatrain (“All that withdrawn that I did crave so sore”), resulting in the lessened impact of the poem’s central event on the reader. Even the couplet, Surrey’s own innovation and the point at which he usually turns the pithy, proverbial strength of English most to his advantage, is compromised by the artificial imposition of the sonnet structure upon a progression of ideas tailored specifically to the *ballata*. The final line is made to refer back to the last line of the third quatrain – a problem which does not exist for Petrarch given that his *sirima* is a self-contained three-line unit.

A number of subtle, but important, alterations from source to target text provide fruitful ground for the analysis of the cultural factors influencing Surrey’s treatment of *Rvf* 11. Most significantly, both references to death in the source text (“morta”, l. 6 and “morte”, l. 13) are absent in “I never saw you, madam”. As observed above, this is also a feature of Wyatt’s translations of Petrarch. In a translation which departs so little from the literal meaning of its source elsewhere, such an omission is surely significant. While Wyatt’s seeming distaste for

Petrarchan rhetoric of death may have been linked to his fear of actual physical death at the hands of the royal executioner, it is unlikely that such concerns motivate Surrey's avoidance of the death *topos* in his rendering of *Rvf* 11. For one thing, the strategy which led Wyatt to adopt the pose of the Petrarchan lover in order to maintain some degree of distance between his own circumstances at court and the potentially treasonous sentiments expressed in such poems as "Whoso list to hunt", would have held no attraction for the proud and headstrong Earl of Surrey. The Petrarchan *psychomachia* is adapted by Wyatt as a means by which to express his double-life as the faithful servant of a master whom he seems to have despised. Surrey practised no such discretion. One would hardly expect the man whose demise came about because of his positioning of himself in the famous portrait of 1546 as a potential rival to the Tudor claim to the throne to be so cautious about the potential interpretations of his poetry. At any rate, "I never saw you, madam" contains nothing which could be construed as even remotely politically or religiously suspect.

As I have tried to show, the different kinds of "morte" which the poet experiences in *Rvf* 11 are central to Petrarch's Augustinian concept of the genesis of language, which, through the meta-literary association with "velo", he extrapolates to poetic language, and beyond to the *Rvf* as a whole and Petrarchan poetics in general. It is difficult to know whether Surrey was aware of this aspect of his source text, although such readings were not common in the sixteenth century. However, he simply shows no interest in tugging on the meta-literary or philosophical threads in the Italian. It is quite telling in the context of the nature of Surrey's engagement with Petrarch that this poem's references to death are jettisoned to make room for a showcase of technical ability. As examples of this ability, we have, firstly, the alliteration of l. 6 ("That so unaware did wound my woeful breast" [emphasis added]), followed by the amplification of the *caldo/gielo* opposition in l. 13, resulting in a more balanced line, the first half of which is also alliterative ("summer sun"), and the second half of which contains an effective visual addition ("in winter breath of frost"). Where Petrarch is at his most serious, Surrey refuses to engage emotionally with the source, and instead turns his hand to technical flourishes of bravado. The result of the veiling of the beloved in "I never saw you, madam" is simply that the "light" of the lady's "fair eyes" "is lost". It is not a

matter of life and death for Surrey as it is for Petrarch. The “alack” of l.12 comes across as a throwaway remark expressing a certain sense of disgruntlement at the situation.

Similarly, we get the sense that the wounding of l. 6 is far from fatal (in contrast with the “morta” of the original) and perhaps suggests a wounded pride brought on by the rejection of the lover’s advances. That no indication is given of any more profound consequence for the poet tells us that Surrey is dealing here with a real, in the sense of a physical, veil which the lady uses to hide her face as punishment for the lover’s boldness in pursuing her. Indeed, even the word “cornet” has nothing of the resonances of “velo”, more readily translated by its English cognate “veil”. Though Jones describes a cornet as “a kind of head-dress with a veil or shade to protect the complexion against the sun”,⁹⁴ the veil itself was not an essential characteristic of the garment and is merely inferred in this case from Surrey’s description of his beloved’s “smiling looks” as “hid [...] evermore”. Indeed, the primary attribute of the cornet in Surrey’s poem is the colour black, which is clearly not the case with Petrarch’s “velo”. Although this allows Surrey to establish a colour contrast, not present in the original, with the lady’s “golden tress”, such touches have the effect of turning the poem into a traditional lover’s complaint, in which the amorous dance of the courtly love tradition is played out within the strict bounds of the traditional *topos*. This sense is reinforced by the courtly language which Surrey employs, substituting “But since ye knew I did you love and serve” for Petrarch’s “ma poi ch’Amor di me vi fece accorta”, and the prosaic “smiling looks” for the more evocative “amoroso sguardo”. Indeed, a reading which emphasises a narrative, biographical nature of the poet’s love for Laura, is very much in keeping with Vellutello’s exegesis, whose commentary accompanied the edition which Wyatt, and we may assume, his fellow courtly-maker and poetic disciple Surrey, used in the translation of the *Rvf*.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Jones, E., *Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey: Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 106.

⁹⁵ See Thomson, “Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators”, pp. 225-233.

11. Conclusion

The earliest imitations and translations of Petrarch's vernacular poetry in English take place over a span of two centuries. Following Chaucer's sole foray into vernacular Petrarchan translation less than a decade after Petrarch's death in 1374, almost 150 years pass before Wyatt and Surrey turn their attention to the Italian master to produce the earliest English experiments in sonneteering in the mid-sixteenth century. Much had changed politically, culturally, and linguistically in England in the intervening years, and the Petrarchism of Wyatt and Surrey owed little, if anything, to the isolated instance of Petrarchan imitation undertaken by Chaucer. This long gap has puzzled generations of scholars who have tended to regard Chaucer's foresight in anticipating a trend which would soon revolutionise English poetry as confirmation of the unique literary genius that is in evidence throughout the works of the Father of English Literature. The general consensus has been that Chaucer was ahead of his time and that his contemporaries, and indeed succeeding generations of poets, were unable to recognise the potential advantages of harnessing the lyrical and psychological power of Petrarch's *Rvf* to the nascent English poetic tradition. Considering the general decline of English poetry during the century following Chaucer's death, this may well offer a partial explanation of this mysterious lacuna in the history of English Petrarchism. However, as this chapter has shown, the manner in which the Chaucerian poetics of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a whole subsumed the typically Petrarchan features of *Rvf* 132 meant that the "Canticus Troili" offered little as a paradigm of what could be achieved through the imitation of Petrarch. In this sense, Chaucer's brief Petrarchan episode constitutes a false-start for English Petrarchism. The fundamental importance given to the concept of wonder to Chaucer's rendering of Petrarch serves to foreground the medieval aspects of Petrarch's poetry and demonstrates how this vernacular poem was read through the filter of Petrarch's moral and philosophical works. Moreover, it allows the "Canticus Troili" to fit perfectly within the native tradition of Chaucer and his contemporaries, minimising the otherness of Petrarch's text.

Wyatt's and Surrey's imitations take place in the context of a pan-European enthusiasm for Petrarch's *Rvf* which signalled the beginning of a re-evaluation of the expressive potential of

vernacular languages across the continent. Scholarship has long been divided over the literary worth of these early experiments in Petrarchism, viewed at one extreme as superficial courtly ornamentation and at the other as the birth of self-conscious, psychologically mature, modern English poetry. This thesis aims to offer a more complete survey of Petrarch in English than is available elsewhere, and so it would seem appropriate, given the large body of scholarship dealing with the Henrician literary engagement with Petrarch, that this chapter should examine two poems which have been neglected by critics of early English Petrarchism. While both Wyatt and Surrey operated under similar circumstances at the court of Henry VIII, the culture of that court influenced their translations in very different ways. In the case of Wyatt, an intense personal affinity with Petrarch's themes of loss and powerlessness led him to adopt the persona of the Petrarchan lover in order to vent a potentially dangerous frustration at his King's perceived mistreatment of him with a plainspoken bitterness which is quite alien to the poet of the *Rvf*. On the other hand, Surrey's position as a powerful earl in one of the most influential families of the old English nobility mitigated the need for him to distance himself from the sentiments expressed in his poetry, an example of the hubris which would eventually lead to his execution. As a consequence, his translations often engage with Petrarch on a more superficial level than those of Wyatt, whereas a more powerful intensity is present in his wholly original compositions which describe an event with which he is emotionally involved, such as the passing of his friends, Wyatt and Thomas Clere.

While Wyatt's translations tend to bring to the surface feelings of bitterness and anger which Petrarch keeps buried beneath a tissue of abstract imagery, Surrey, on the contrary, operates on a more conventional and courtly level, choosing to translate poems whose structure will challenge his technical ability and whose subject matter lends itself primarily to descriptions of external rather than internal landscapes. Nevertheless, as exercises in the sonnet form, his Petrarchan imitations are crucial in the development of the English sonnet. Although the structural imbalances evident in "I never saw you, madam" are of a similar type to those which we have also observed in Wyatt, his sonnet-to-sonnet translations solve many of the structural problems which Wyatt never quite managed to overcome. This early period of Petrarchan translation is, of course,

vital in the development of the sonnet and Petrarchan modes of enquiry in England. It also provides an interesting contrast with the later sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan era, demonstrating that, despite Henry VIII's political and religious separation from Rome, we are still dealing with a country whose cultural distance from Italy is nowhere near as great as it would become following the doctrinal reforms of the Elizabethan era, during which time a marked strain of Italophobia coupled with hostility to Petrarchan poetics among the literary class is evident.

Both Hughes and Mason take the view that Wyatt's poetry constitutes an end rather than a beginning of a poetic era.⁹⁶ This, however, does not tell the whole story. Certainly, the plainspoken, proverbial quality of his verse, coupled with the seemingly stress-based metre of which he was one of the last practitioners, contrasts markedly with the polished, ornate verse of his younger contemporary Surrey, to say nothing of the smooth and refined sonnets of Sidney and Spenser. Nevertheless, over the next century and a half, the sonnet, which Wyatt had introduced to English poetry, would experience an explosion in popularity, and poets would revisit Petrarch's *Rvf* time and again, adapting that which they found therein to their own ends in much the same way as Wyatt had done. This is perhaps most evident in the Petrarchan sonnet sequences of Sidney and Spenser, whose strong Protestant convictions led them to transform Petrarch in a manner which serves to further illuminate the political, cultural and religious filters at play in the translation process.

Southall correctly points out that the division between "Protestant" and "Catholic" meant little in Wyatt's England, and that the designation of Wyatt as a Protestant poet is to a certain extent revisionist and anachronistic.⁹⁷ It is not until the doctrinal reforms of Elizabeth I's reign, which reversed Mary's counter-Reformation, that the division begins to affect literature in a significant way. It is at this point that Petrarchan translation, and Italianate imitation in general, begin to throw up problems of a religious and spiritual nature for poets like Sidney and Spenser. Though Wyatt, as diplomat, and Surrey, as soldier, were both proud of their Englishness and confident in the potential of their language to challenge those of the continental masters, the barrier

⁹⁶ Mason, *Poetry and Humanism*, p. 186; Hughes, "Myths, Metres, Rhythms", pp. 310-72.

⁹⁷ Southall, *The Courtly Maker*, p. 107

which separated them from Petrarch was, broadly speaking, merely linguistic. The same is true of Chaucer, whose total domestication of his source-text required only that Petrarch's very modern monomania be suppressed in line with the more philosophical and universalist tradition of fourteenth-century English literature in which *Troilus and Criseyde* was conceived and executed. Wyatt's more subjective poetics is closer to Petrarch's than Chaucer's, with the result that his suppression of his source, when it does occur, happens for different reasons. His transferral of the Petrarchan lover's persona to Henry's court is both caused and influenced by the harsh realities of the Henrician courtier's daily existence, resulting in a hard-bitten cynicism completely alien to the *Rvf*, and reinforced by the decidedly idiomatic turn of phrase which constitutes one of the more appealing aspects of Wyatt's poetry. Surrey, for his part, locates his translation of *Rvf* 11 within the conventional world of the gallant and chivalrous "courtly maker", whilst also being attracted to themes which he would have encountered during the course of his Humanist education – fealty to one's lord (*Rvf* 140), and the contemplative withdrawal from court life to nature (*Rvf* 145; *Rvf* 164; *Rvf* 310). Despite his more peripheral experience of Petrarch, his sensitivity to the formal aspects of English sonneteering was vital to the development of this verse form in English.

As will become clear in the following chapter, the engagement with Petrarch, for Chaucer, Wyatt, and Surrey, brought with it none of the political and religious baggage that appeared so threatening to those enveloped in the siege mentality of the real-life Gloriana's post-Reformation England. For them, insidious agents of Popery lurked in every shadow, waiting to seize any opportunity to "corrupt honest manners" and "begile simple and innocent wittes",⁹⁸ against whom a bulwark of a uniquely English, and specifically Protestant, literature was required.

⁹⁸ Ryan (ed.), *The Schoolmaster*, p. 4.

Chapter II – “Papists Be Made by your Merry Books of Italy”: Sidney, Spenser and the Reform of the Sonnet Sequence

1. Introduction: Petrarchan Love in Elizabethan England

Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) and Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) were not the only English poets to turn their hands to the sonnet sequence in the late sixteenth century, nor were they even the first. The first known sonnet sequence in English, Anne Lok's (or Lock, or Locke) *Meditation of a Penitent Sinner*, appears in 1560. This was followed over two decades later by Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia* (1582), before the 1590's saw an explosion of popularity for the form. Aside from *Astrophil and Stella*, published in 1591, though written in the early 1580's, other notable sonnet sequences to appear in the final decade of the sixteenth century include Samuel Daniel's *Delia* (1592), Henry Constable's *Diana* (1592), Thomas Lodge's forty sonnets to Phillis (1593), William Percy's *Sonnets to the Fairest Coelia* (1593), Barnabe Barnes' *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), Giles Fletcher's *Licia* (1593), Michael Drayton's *Idea's Mirror* (1594), Bartholomew Griffin's *Fidessa* (1596), Richard Liche's *Diella* (1596), William Smith's *Chloris* (1596), and Robert Tofte's *Laura* (1597). These sequences are for the most part derivative and fail to engage with the *Rvf* with the profundity and poetic skill displayed by Sidney and Spenser.¹ Furthermore, the impact of the wider socio-cultural changes taking place during the period, not least the concerted attempt at English cultural self-definition sparked by the Elizabethan Reformation, is discernible in the sequences of Sidney and Spenser to a much greater degree, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to focus on them specifically in this chapter.

A discussion of Petrarch's influence on Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Spenser's *Amoretti and Epithalamion* (1595) requires a different approach to that employed in the previous chapter on Petrarch's earliest English imitators and translators. While it is true that Chaucer, Wyatt and Surrey infused their renderings of selected sonnets of the *Rvf* with elements drawn from

¹ For a succinct summary of the earliest manifestations of the genre of the sonnet sequence in England, see Spiller, M. R. G., *The Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 101-04.

the native tradition, as well as from the unique position in which each poet found himself in relation to the culture and politics of the time, it is nevertheless possible to define their versions of Petrarch as “translations”, without much fear of contradiction. The relationship, whether lexical, thematic or formal, between source and target text is, by and large, a close one, and it is possible in all cases to say with certainty that a particular poem by Petrarch has provided a direct template for that poem by Wyatt, Surrey or Chaucer. When confronted with sonnet sequences such as *Astrophil and Stella* and *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, however, it is clear that a more complex and sophisticated concept of literary imitation underlies the creative process.

Heather Dubrow has identified what she calls a “diacritical desire” in Elizabethan literature, which exerts pressure on the author in tandem with a contrapuntal “anxiety of originality”.² The diacritical desire takes the form of a wish to move away both from the comparatively straight-forward translation of Wyatt and Surrey and from the conventional “long-deceased woes” (*Astrophil and Stella* 15, l. 7) of Petrarch and his continental (particularly French) imitators.³ The anxiety of originality seeks to benefit from the inherited authority of literary giants such as Petrarch, while simultaneously acknowledging the usefulness of the innovations of technique, form and diction brought about by the first English sonneteers. Thus, Sidney and Spenser take the *Rvf*, the sonnet sequence *par excellence*, as their starting point, but rather than attempt to reproduce an English equivalent, they both, in different ways, take pains to signal their difference from their model, a cultural distance established by the Elizabethan Reformation which provided the impetus for English self-fashioning during this period.⁴

² Dubrow, H., *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 11-12.

³ I cite from Duncan-Jones, K. (ed.), *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). All subsequent quotations from Sidney’s works are taken from this edition. Hereafter, the full title of Sidney’s sequence will be abbreviated to AS when appearing in parentheses following a direct quotation.

⁴ See Greenblatt, S., *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); also Fox, *The English Renaissance*.

2. *Astrophil and Stella*: Overview

Astrophil and Stella takes place within the context of a contemporary debate on translation and imitation, the significance of which is outlined by a passage from the second book of *The Scholemaster* (1570) by Roger Ascham, a humanist scholar educated at St. John's, Cambridge, and one-time tutor to the young Princess Elizabeth. Expressing his distaste for what he saw as the moral weakness of the new breed of Italianate Englishmen, he rails against the influence of Italian texts which have made their way to England with dire consequences for the Reformist cause:

These be the enchantments of Circes, brought out of Italy to mar men's manners in England; much by example of ill life, but more by precepts of fond books, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London, commended by honest titles the sooner to corrupt honest manners, dedicated over boldly to virtuous and honourable personages the easielier to beguile simple and innocent wits ... Ten sermons at Paul's Cross do not so much good for moving men to true doctrine as one of those books do harm with enticing men to ill living. Yea, I say farther, those books tend not so much to corrupt honest living as they do to subvert true religion. More Papists be made by your merry books of Italy than by your earnest books of Louvain.⁵

In his *Defence of Poesy* (written in 1581, published posthumously in 1595), Sidney, too, expresses a firm belief in the power of poetry to influence the reader:

... I say the philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him, that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught; but the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs, the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher, whereof Aesop's tales give good proof: whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from these dumb speakers.

(*Major Works*, p. 223, lines 466-70)

Who is it that ever was a scholar that doth not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons?

(*Major Works*, p. 234, lines 896-99)

Gorboduc [is a play] ... full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy.

(*Major Works*, p. 242, lines 1259-62)

⁵ Ryan (ed.), *The Schoolmaster*, p. 4.

It is notable, however, that Sidney's *Defence* does not seem to allow for misinterpretation on the part of the reader:

Now, to that which is commonly attributed to the praise of history, in respect of the notable learning is got by marking the success, as though therein a man should see virtue exalted and vice punished – truly that commendation is particular to poetry, and far off from history. For indeed poetry ever sets virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one needs be enamoured of her. Well may you see Ulysses in a storm, and in other hard plights; but they are but exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near-following prosperity. And on the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out (as the tragedy writer answered to one that disliked the show of such persons) so manacled as they little animate folks to follow them.

(*Major Works*, p. 225, lines 539-50)

Perhaps it did not suit Sidney's purposes to admit the possibility of a misreading, either wilful or otherwise, such as that alluded to by Petrarch in *Familiars* 2.8:

Rara lectio est que periculo vacet, nisi legenti lux divina veritatis affulserit, quid sequendum declinandumve sit docens.⁶

[Reading rarely avoids danger, unless the light of divine truth shines upon the reader, teaching what to seek and what to avoid.]

Nevertheless, it seems that the notion of the reader as a lump of wet clay, ready to be moulded by the poet into whatever shape he desired was commonplace among the Elizabethans. A reference by Sidney to the manner in which Orpheus was “listened to by beasts, indeed stony and beastly people” (p. 213), seems to imply that he is in agreement with Ascham over the power of poetry to influence “simple and innocent wittes” in particular. How then, does one explain the behaviour of Astrophil, the hero of the first great English sonnet sequence? If “the very end of poesy” is to “delightfully teach” a “notable morality”, then what message is Sidney trying to convey by creating a protagonist who is whole-heartedly consumed by amorous passion to the detriment of his public duties, overly-aggressive in his pursuit of a woman upon whom he forces himself against her will, and deceives himself to the point of appearing a fool to his friends, whose good

⁶ Rossi, V. (ed.), *Francesco Petrarca: Le Familiari*, 4 vols (Florence: Sansoni, 1933-1942), vol. 1 (1933), p. 93. English translation taken from Bishop (ed. and trans.), *Letters*, p. 183. For an analysis of Petrarch's philosophy on textual interpretation, see Quillen, C. E., *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 64-105.

counsel he so often scorns? There may be some merit in Thomas P. Roche's controversial thesis that Sidney intended to teach morality through negative example,⁷ and indeed this argument seems to find support, as we have seen above, at the end of the passage from the *Defence* just quoted.

However, *Astrophil and Stella* reveals a more ambiguous attitude to the paradigm of the poet-as-teacher. Astrophil filters his experience of love through the lens of literature, attempting to apply the lessons he has learned through reading to his real life pursuit of Stella. The problem, however, is that Astrophil's interpretation of these texts is faulty. Enchanted by the beauty of the medium, his comprehension of the message is impaired to the degree that he is unable to penetrate the surface of the text and arrive at the appropriate conclusion which Petrarch outlined in his opening sonnet: "che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno" (*Rvf* 1.14). My analysis will show how Sidney's portrayal of the relationship between lover and beloved as analogous with the roles of reader and text respectively speaks to the poet's reservations regarding the danger inherent in all literature and glossed over by the polemic of the *Defense*: misinterpretation. The characterisation of Stella as text, and Astrophil as the schoolboy attempting to interpret her/it, reflects this. He constantly misreads Stella, sometimes willingly.

3. The Failure of Astrophil's Unconventionality

From the outset, the poet-protagonist of *Astrophil and Stella* seems to take a dim view of imitation in general, and finds it an inadequate means by which to express his own feelings:

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;
Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame study's blows;
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
[...]
'Fool', said my muse to me; 'look in thy heart, and write'.
(AS 1.5-11, 14)

⁷ See Roche, T. P., *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequence* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1989).

He distances himself from convention at a very early point in the sequence: the first sonnet is written in alexandrines, a technical innovation previously unheard of, while the second begins by breaking with the tradition of the lover falling in love at first glance:

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot,
Love gave the wound which while I breathe will bleed:
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got.
I saw, and liked; I liked, but loved not;
I loved, but straight did not what love decreed:
At length to love's decrees I, forced, agreed.
(AS 2.1-7)

In *The Defence of Poesy*, Sidney had disparaged the type of imitation commonly identified as Petrarchan for its insincerity:

But truly many of such writings as come under the banner of irresistible love, if I were a mistress, would never persuade me they were in love: so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings. (p. 246)

and sonnet 3 reiterates these strongly held sentiments:

Let dainty wits cry on the sisters nine,
That bravely masked, their fancies may be told:
Or Pindar's apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of gold:
Or else let them in statelier glory shine,
Ennobling new-found tropes with problems old:
Or with strange similes enrich each line,
Of herbs or beasts, which Ind or Afric hold.
(AS 3.1-8)

Sonnet 6 goes on to criticise those poets who employ paradoxes after the Petrarchan convention:

Some lovers speak when they their Muses entertain,
Of hopes begot by fear, of wot not what desires,
Of force of heavenly beams, infusing hellish pain,
Of living deaths, dear wounds, fair storms and freezing fires.
(AS 6.2-4)

and even attacks the sincerity of proponents of high (epic) and low (pastoral) genres as well as those who practise a middle (sweet) style:

Some one his song in Jove, and Jove's strange tales attires,
Broidered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden rain.
Another, humbler, wit to shepherd's pipe retires,
Yet hiding royal blood full oft in rural vein.
To some a sweetest plaint a sweetest style affords,
While tears pour out his ink, and sighs breathe out his words,
His paper, pale despair, and pain his pen doth move.

(AS 6.5-11)

This is immediately contrasted with the simple statement "I can speak what I feel" (l. 12), leading to the all-encompassing conclusion "that I do Stella love" (l. 14). This is the first hint at a seeming preference for a plainer, more homely style which is made more explicit in AS 15:

You that do search for every purling spring
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows;
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring;
You that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows;
You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes
With new born sighs and denizened wit do sing.
You take wrong ways, those far-fet helps be such
As do bewray a want of inward touch:
And sure at length stol'n goods do come to light.
But if (both for your love and skill) your name
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of fame,
Stella behold, and then begin to endite.

The irony here is obvious. Astrophil's criticism of "dictionary's method" leads him to illustrate the alliterative technique in the line immediately following. "Petrarch's long-deceased woes" are frequently resurrected in Astrophil's mournful sighs throughout the sequence, which, lest we need reminding, is composed primarily of sonnets, the verse form most associated with "poor Petrarch" himself. Nevertheless, the sardonic tone of line 6 successfully mocks the facility with which alliterative verse may be composed, while the adjectives "poor" and "long-deceased" leave Petrarch to cut a somewhat pathetic figure, to say nothing of his imitators. The bold statement, "You take wrong ways" is indicative of the confidence - the arrogance even - which Astrophil

seems to have found on discovering what he believes to be his own unique voice: it seems he has already come a long way from the hesitant “Fool” in the opening poem, who is seen:

...great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite.

(AS 1.11-12)

Significantly, this boldness appears to be a direct product of the “inward” touch which cannot be found by attempting the “far-fet” tropes outlined in the sonnet’s octave. It has been suggested that this contrast may signify a distaste specifically with foreign models, as was hinted at in Sonnet 6, demonstrating instead a preference for a plainer, more homely style.⁸ This nascent literary nationalism is further emphasised by the proverbial quality of the succeeding line, which recalls the pithy eloquence typical of Wyatt’s “They flee from me”:

And sure at length stol’n goods do come to light,

and while this, like everything Astrophil says, must be taken with a large grain of salt, the effect of such a turn of phrase as a literary device within the text itself is striking, particularly as it is also a stock metaphor in the imitation debate. The contradictions contained within this sonnet provide a useful insight into the difficult position in which English authors found themselves in the Elizabethan period, signifying a desire to engage with the contemporary literary vogue of the sonnet sequence while attempting to carve out a unique stylistic niche which sets English literature apart. While Astrophil’s unreliability as a narrator and his questionable moral character betray a distrust of the archetypal Petrarchan lover and his motives, Sidney’s technical virtuosity and innovative use of language place Astrophil beyond reproach as a stylistic representative of a new generation of poets wishing to explore the possibilities of vernacular poetry in a post-Reformation context.

⁸ Duncan-Jones (ed.), *The Major Works*, p. 359.

At the same time, however, Astrophil proves himself incapable of sustaining this unconventionality. Already in AS 9 we find him reverting to conventional generic conceits in order to describe Stella's supposedly unconventional beauty:

Queen Virtue's court, which some call Stella's face,
Prepared by Nature's chiefest furniture,
Hath his *front* built of *alabaster* pure;
Gold is the *covering* of that stately place.
The door, by which sometimes comes forth her grace,
Red porphyry is, which lock of *pearl* makes sure;
Whose porches rich (which name of 'cheeks' endure)
Marble, mixed with *red and white*, do interlace.
The *windows* now through which this heavenly guest
Looks o'er the world...
(AS 9.1-10 [emphasis added])

Compare this to some of Petrarch's descriptions of Laura:

Muri eran d'*alabastro*, e 'l *tetto d'oro*,
d'avorio uscio, et *fenestre* di zaffiro.
(Rvf 325.16-17 [emphasis added])

La testa òr fino, et calda neve il volto,
hebeno i cigli, et gli occhi eran due stelle,
onde Amor l'arco non tendeva in fallo;
perle et rose vermiglie, ove l'accolto
dolor formava ardenti voci et belle;
(Rvf 157.9-13 [emphasis added])

Se mai *candide rose con vermiglie*
in vassel d'*oro* vider gli occhi miei
allor allor da vergine man colte,
veder pensaro il viso di colei
ch'avanza tutte l'altre meraviglie
con tre belle excellentie in lui raccolte:
(Rvf 127.71-76 [emphasis added])

The strident reassertion of his originality in AS 15 ("You that do search for every purling spring", quoted above) is quickly followed by a second, more conventional *innamoramento* which recalls the fatal moment in which Petrarch's heart was first pierced by Love's dart:⁹

⁹ John Roe sees an echo of Rvf 157, where Petrarch describes Laura's eyebrows as "hebeno", in Sidney's seventh line. See Roe, J., "The Comedy of Astrophil: Petrarchan Motifs in Sidney's 'Astrophil and Stella'", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 229-41 (p. 231).

Per fare una leggiadra sua vendetta
et punire in un dí ben mille offese,
celatamente Amor l'arco riprese,
come huom ch'a nocer luogo et tempo aspetta.
Era la mia virtute al cor ristretta
per far ivi et ne gli occhi sue difese,
quando 'l colpo mortal là giú discese
ove solea spuntarsi ogni saetta.
Però, turbata nel primiero assalto,
non ebbe tanto né vigor né spazio
che potesse al bisogno prender l'arme,
overo al poggio faticoso et alto
ritrarmi accortamente da lo strazio
del quale oggi vorrebbe, et non pò, aitarne.
(Rvf 2)

Fly, fly, my friends, I have my death wound, fly;
See there that boy, that murth'ring boy I say,
Who like a thief hid in dark bush doth lie,
Till bloody bullet get him wrongful prey.
So tyrant he no fitter place could spy,
Nor so fair level in so secret stay
As that sweet black which veils the heav'nly eye;
There himself with his shot he close doth lay.
Poor passenger, pass now thereby I did,
And stayed, pleased with the prospect of the place,
While that black hue from me the bad guest hid:
But straight I saw motions of lightning grace,
And then descried the glist'ring of his dart:
But ere I could fly thence, it pierced my heart.
(AS 20)

As Astrophil makes clear in his opening sonnet, the purpose of the sequence is carefully calculated:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she (dear she) might take some pleasure of my pain;
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know;
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
(AS 1.1-4)

He foresees a logical sequence of events which cannot possibly fail to come to pass, but the constant changing of tack which occurs throughout the collection indicates that there is something wrong with his approach. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the unconventional opening, detailing a casual and altogether underwhelming *innamoramento*, fails to strike a chord with the audience of one for whom the sequence is intended. Consequently, Astrophil is forced into the more dramatic

conventional *innamoramento* here, detailing Love's sudden ambush. It is almost as though the first, unconventional, *innamoramento* of AS 2 has not quite "taken", and Astrophil is forced to retreat to the familiar ground of literary convention and begin again afresh upon tried and tested terrain. The fact that AS 20 is addressed to "my friends" (l. 1) suggests that there is a public, performative element to this sudden shift (recalling the "Voi" of *Rvf* 1), and that Stella is no longer envisaged as the sole reader of the sequence. It would appear that if Astrophil wants to be taken seriously as a lover, then he must convince not only Stella but also his peers (and, indeed, his readers) of the authenticity of his feelings. The problem for Astrophil is that he has had no direct experience of love, as he tells us in sonnet 16 :

In nature apt to like, when I did see,
 Beauties, which were of many carats fine,
 My boiling sprites did thither soon incline,
 And, love, I thought that I was full of thee.
 But finding not those restless flames in me
 Which others said did make their souls to pine,
 I thought those babes of some pin's hurt did whine,
 By my love judging what love's pain might be.
 But while I thus with this young lion played,
 Mine eyes (shall I say cursed or blessed?) beheld
 Stella: now she is named, need more be said?
 In her sight I a lesson new have spelled;
 I now have learned love right, and learned even so
 As who by being poisoned doth poison know.

His only knowledge of the feelings he is now experiencing has come from "others", perhaps his peers, perhaps his literary predecessors, or perhaps a combination of the two. Regardless, he has been forced to become an imitator. Whether that means imitating life or art is unclear for the time being, and throughout the sequence the reader gets the impression that Astrophil finds it difficult to discern one from the other. His characterisation of Stella as a text in the twelfth line of this sonnet is an early indication of this confusion, which will recur time and again over the course of the sequence, and will be discussed further later in this chapter. In Astrophil's world, love literature functions as a touchstone for the authenticity of his own feelings. His inexperience causes him to oscillate between boldness and caution. When he is confronted by a new, unexpected development, he always attempts to filter his, or Stella's, reaction through the lens of literary

convention. Unfortunately for Astrophil, the schoolboy has not been paying his “lesson” due attention. Though he is widely-read, he has not read wisely, and ends up getting things disastrously wrong. Even at this early point in the sequence, he thinks that he has already “learned love right” – he knows where his predecessors have gone wrong, and believes that he can avoid the pitfalls which proved their undoing. What he did not count on was the presence of a real woman – Stella – who refuses to conform to the literary conventions upon which Astrophil has based his misguided assumptions.

Later, in poem 55, he contradicts almost everything he has said previously regarding his style:

Muses, I oft invoked your holy aid,
With choicest flowers my speech to engarland so
That it, despised in true but naked show,
Might win some grace in your sweet skill arrayed;
And oft whole troops of saddest words I stayed,
Striving abroad a-foraging to go,
Until by your inspiring I might know
How their black banner might be best displayed.
But now I mean no more your help to try,
Nor other sugaring of my speech to prove,
But on her name incessantly to cry:
For let me but name her, whom I do love,
So sweet sounds straight mine ear and heart do hit
That I well find no eloquence like it.

The irony here is that he does not mention Stella’s name as he resolves to do (l. 12), but rather falls back immediately on “dictionary’s method” (which he so eagerly dismissed in AS 15) in the alliterative thirteenth line. His invocation of the Muses places him among the “dainty wits” that “cry upon the sisters nine” whom he disowned in the opening line of AS 3. The “choicest flowers” with which he has attempted to “engarland” his speech appear to be the same as those “pied flowers” in AS 3 and “every flower, not sweet perhaps” that were disparaged in AS 15. He admits to being guilty of “striving abroad a-foraging to go” despite his denunciation (again in AS 15) of those who “take wrong ways”, searching for “far-fet helps” instead of displaying the “inward touch” of which Astrophil, by implication, is supposedly possessed. The irony lies also in the fact that the rhetoric of eschewing rhetoric has a long rhetorical tradition behind it.

This recantation comes immediately after another poem (AS 54) professing Astrophil's non-conformity to courtly convention:

Because I breathe not love to every one,
Nor do not use set colours for to wear,
Nor nourish special locks of vowed hair,
Nor give each speech a full point of a groan,
The courtly nymphs, acquainted with the moan
Of them, who in their lips love's standard bear:
'What, he?' say they of me, 'now dare I swear,
He cannot love; no, no, let him alone.'
And think so still, so Stella know my mind.
Profess indeed I do not Cupid's art;
But you fair maids, at length this true shall find,
That his right badge is but worn in the heart;
Dumb swans, not chattering pies, do lovers prove;
They love indeed, who quake to say they love.

So what has given Astrophil the impression that he needs to justify his love to Stella? Since the second *innamoramento*, Astrophil has become increasingly obsessive in his pursuit of Stella. He detaches himself from his fellow courtiers, who wonder at his uncharacteristic lack of interest in the pressing political questions of the day and the petty intrigues of the court (AS 21; AS 30). In fact, Astrophil has begun directing the talents traditionally associated with success in the active, public life towards his own private, erotic ends. Horsemanship becomes a key motif, and briefly becomes the axis upon which the narrative of the sequence turns. In the *Defence*, mastery of horsemanship symbolises the pinnacle of achievement in the active life for the nobleman:

When the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano ... Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman – skill of government was but a *pedanteria* in comparison. Then would he add certain phrases, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse.

(*Defence*, p. 212, ll. 1-3, 13-20)

Horsemanship is associated with soldiers, whom Pugliano asserts constitute "the noblest estate of mankind" (p. 212, l. 10), while horsemen in turn are "the noblest of soldiers" (p. 212, l. 11). The

conventional military *topos* of the courtly love lyric begins to creep into the *Astrophil and Stella* with greater frequency (AS 29, 36, 39, 40), building to a moment of triumph in AS 41.

At a jousting tournament Stella's presence inspires his victory and wins him praise from all in attendance:

Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance,
Guided so well, that I obtained the prize,
Both by the judgement of the English eyes
And of some sent from that sweet enemy, France;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance;
(AS 41, ll. 1-5)

His display of derring-do has now caught Stella's attention and he seems to revel in the limelight. He expresses his wish that Stella should not remove her eyes from him, even if the brightness of her gaze were to cause his death (AS 42). Moreover, it seems that she has become aware of his verses, though she does not appear to take them seriously (AS 44), and dismays Astrophil by weeping at an unnamed fictive tale of unrequited love which she had heard of late, all the while ignoring his actual suit (AS 45). It seems his overconfidence following the triumphant joust has resulted in his feelings for Stella becoming manifest to others at the court, and in AS 47 he attempts to maintain a degree of *sprezzatura* by resolving to avoid contact with Stella. It is too late to save face now, however, and in AS 48 he declares that he can no longer endure separation from her.

The recurrence of the horsemanship motif at this point signals the confusion of the political with the erotic. Astrophil has begun channelling the talents which would have ensured his success as a courtier into his vain pursuit of Stella. Unlike Sidney, he is evidently no "piece of a logician", as he contrives to cast himself as a horse in AS 49:

I on my horse, and love on me, doth try
Our horsemanships, while by strange work I prove
A horseman to my horse, a horse to love;
(AS 49.1-3)

The process which began with his failure to heed Plato's precepts and "tame / Such coltish gyres" (AS 21, ll. 5-6) has culminated with this loss of agency which Astrophil proves unable to recover

for the remainder of the sequence. The erotic drive is now firmly in the saddle, and Astrophil is quickly overcome by physical desire for Stella. This state of affairs is expressed in terms which again demonstrate a misapplied gift – the talent for legal rhetoric and dialectic:

A strife is grown between virtue and love,
While each pretends that Stella must be his.
Her eyes, her lips, her all, saith love, do this,
Since they do wear his badge, most firmly prove.
But virtue thus that title doth disprove:
That Stella, (O dear name) that Stella is
That virtuous soul, sure heir of heavenly bliss,
Not this fair outside, which our hearts doth move;
And therefore, though her beauty and her grace
Be love's indeed, in Stella's self he may
By no pretence claim any manner place.
Well, love, since this demur our suit doth stay,
Let virtue have that Stella's self; yet thus,
That virtue but that body grant to us.

In poem 53, Astrophil is publicly embarrassed in Stella's presence, as the scene of his short-lived former triumph becomes the arena in which his defeat is played out. During another joust, Love, jealous of seeing him dressed in "Mars's livery, prancing in the press" (l. 6), draws his attention to Stella's presence at a window. The beloved's gaze no longer has a positive effect, but instead dazzles him with its radiance, causing him to forget his precarious situation:

One hand forgot to rule, th'other to fight;
Nor trumpet's sound I heard, nor friendly cries;
My foe came on, and beat the air for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see.
(AS 53.11-14)

She has unwittingly come dangerously close to fulfilling the poet's death-wish in AS 42. While Astrophil avoids physical death, he can no longer sustain the character he has been playing. His pride wounded, he feels his all his hard work has been in vain. The carefully crafted image of the dashing courtly lover, cast in the mould of Castiglione's ideal of nobility, which he has been trying to cultivate since the second *innamoramento*, has been shattered, and he must again alter his approach if he is to repair the damage. This point in the sequence marks the end of the first phase of conventionalisation which began with the wounding of the lover in AS 20. Astrophil finds

himself on new poetic ground and, once again, he panics. The conventionalisation of the lover having failed, he now attempts to conventionalise the beloved by filtering her through the literary tropes of the sonnet sequence. Since this process is inextricably linked with the characterisation of Stella as a literary text, it is necessary at this juncture to outline the metaliterary motif before returning to the metamorphosis of Stella later in this chapter.

4. Stella as Text

Stella's first appearance in the sequence sees her surrounded by literary metaphors:

For me, in sooth, no muse but one I know;
Phrases and problems from my reach do grow,
And strange things cost too dear for my poor sprites.
How then? Even thus: *in Stella's face I read*
What love and beauty be; then all my deed
But copying is, what in her nature writes.
(AS 3.9-14 [emphasis added])

This is far from an isolated instance, and the association of Stella and text is consistently maintained throughout the sequence:

"That face, whose *lecture* shows what perfect beauty is".
(AS 77.2 [emphasis added])

"Stella, in whose body is
Writ each character of bliss"
(Eighth song, ll. 41-2 [emphasis added])

"Who have so leaden eyes, as not to see sweet beauty's show;
Or seeing, have so wooden wits, as not that worth to know;
Or knowing, have so muddy minds, as not to be in love;
Or loving, have so frothy thoughts as eas'ly thence to move:
O, let them see these heavenly beams, *and in fair letters read*
A lesson fit, both sight and skill, love and firm love to breed."
(Seventh song, ll. 7-12 [emphasis added])

At one point, he even seems to equate reading with the sexual act:

"See the hand which waking guardeth,
Sleeping, grants a free resort:
Now I will invade the fort;

Cowards Love with loss rewardeth
[...]

Yet those lips so sweetly swelling
Do invite a stealing kiss:

Now will I but venture this;

Who will read must first learn spelling.”

(Second song, ll. 13-16, 21-24 [emphasis added])

These are not the only examples of this strategy, and other instances of Stella as text (such as 56 and, perhaps most famously, 71) are discussed at greater length below. The point is that Stella becomes conflated with the literary works which Astrophil claims have failed to provide him with the necessary tools with which to express his supposedly unconventional love (AS 3.1-8). She is the text which Astrophil attempts to interpret throughout the sequence. The characterisation of himself as a schoolboy in the opening sonnet becomes significant in light of this. He proves himself to be emotionally and psychologically immature, a poor interpreter of texts, transfixed with outward beauty and unable to grasp the full meaning of the text at hand. As elsewhere, his attempts to “read” Stella prove disastrous. The immaturity that informs the schoolboy metaphor causes him to misinterpret the signs she gives him, at times willingly deceiving himself, as in AS 67:

Hope, art thou true, or dost thou flatter me?
Doth Stella now begin with piteous eye
The ruins of her conquest to espy;
Will she take time, before all wracked be?
Her eyes’ speech is translated thus by thee.
But fail’st thou not, in phrase so heavenly-high?
Look on again, *the fair text* better try;
What blushing *notes* dost thou *in margin* see?
What sighs stol’n out, or killed before full-born?
hast thou found such, and such-like *arguments*?
Or art thou else to comfort me forsworn?
Well, how so thou *interpret the contents*,
I am resolved thy error to maintain,
Rather than by more truth to get more pain.

At other times he misapplies the lessons of classical literature. Sonnet 21, immediately following the second *innamoramento*, opens with a warning from his friend regarding exactly this:

Your words, my friend, right healthful caustics, blame
My young mind marred, whom love doth windlass so

That mine own writings like bad servants show,
My wits, quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame;
That Plato I read for nought, but if he tame
Such coltish gyres...

(AS 21.1-6)

Yet before long, he uses Plato precisely in order to justify his desire:

The wisest scholar of the wight most wise
By Phoebus' doom, with sugared sentence says
That Virtue, if it once met with our eyes,
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise;
[...]
Virtue of late, with virtuous care to stir
Love of herself, takes Stella's shape, that she
To mortal eyes might sweetly shine in her.
It is most true, for since I her did see,
Virtue's great beauty in that face I prove,
And find th'effect, for I do burn in love.

(AS 25.1-4, 9-14)

He has misapplied Plato's lesson: rather than love Stella because she is virtuous, he claims to love Virtue because it has taken on Stella's bodily form. He later proves himself incapable of interpreting the meaning behind certain key classical exempla:

Nymph of the garden where all beauties be;
Beauties, who do in excellency pass
His who till death looked in a watery glass,
Or hers whom naked the Trojan boy did see:
Sweet garden nymph, which keeps the cherry tree,
Whose fruit doth far th'Hesperian taste surpass;
Most sweet-fair, most fair-sweet, do not, alas,
From coming near those cherries banish me.

(AS 82.1-8 [emphasis added])

The reference to Narcissus and the Judgement of Paris should constitute immediate warning signals to anyone who has read and understood the myths in question. Astrophil, however, has missed the point entirely. Transfixed by Stella's beauty, he fails to follow through on his analogy, and ignores the potential danger lurking in the cherry orchard. The invocation of the Judgement of Paris is particularly significant. If the poem had read simply that Stella's beauty surpassed that of Venus, then no reader would have had cause for undue alarm, given Astrophil's penchant for hyperbole and exaggeration. However, the reference to the Judgement of Paris shifts the reader's

attention away from the lady's beauty, and towards the disastrous consequences of Paris' arbitration. Having accepted Venus' bribe of the fairest lady in the world, Paris abducts Helen of Troy and instigates the Trojan War, ultimately leading to his own death and the destruction of his city.

Astrophil's patronising description of Love in sonnet 11 could just as easily be applied to himself:

In truth, O Love, with what a boyish kind
Thou doth proceed in thy most serious ways:
That when the heaven to thee his best displays
Yet of that best thou leav'st the best behind.
For like a child, that some fair book doth find,
With gilded leaves or coloured vellum plays,
Or at the most, on some fine picture stays,
But never heeds the fruit of writer's mind:
So when thou saw'st, in nature's cabinet,
Stella, thou straight look'st babies in her eyes,
In her cheek's pit thou did'st thy pit-fold set,
And in her breast bo-peep or couching lies,
Playing and shining in each outward part:
But, fool, seek'st not to get into her heart.

The continued characterisation of Stella as text and Astrophil as interpreter speaks to Sidney's concern regarding the dangers of misinterpretation, and the potential of literature "to begile simple and innocent wittes", in particular. Perhaps the most famous portrayal of Stella as text comes in sonnet 71:

Who will in fairest book of nature know
How virtue may best lodged in beauty be,
Let him but learn of love to read in thee,
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.
There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of reason, from whose light those night-birds fly,
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.
And not content to be perfection's heir
Thy self, dost strive all minds that way to move,
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair;
So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,
As fast thy virtue bends that love to good.
But ah, desire still cries: 'Give me some food.'

If the reader becomes too enraptured with the outward beauty of the text (that is the style, diction, tropes, and form, rather than the beauty of the physical object itself, as in AS 11), it can lead him or her to ignore what is really being said. Astrophil frequently falls into this trap in his dealings with Stella. He is, at various points, called a “fool” or characterised as a schoolboy at his lessons. When confronted with Stella’s overwhelming physical beauty, Astrophil’s emotional and sexual immaturity leads him to misinterpret (sometimes willingly) the words and signs which he “reads” in her. The most obvious example is to be found in poem 63, where Astrophil applies the inscrutable rules of grammar in order to turn Stella’s steadfast refusal into a willing acceptance:

O grammar rules, O now your virtues show:
So children still read you with awful eyes,
As my young dove may in your precepts wise,
Her grant to me, by her own virtue know.
For late, with heart most high, with eyes most low,
I craved the thing, which ever she denies:
She, lightning love, displaying Venus’ skies,
Lest once should not be heard, twice said, ‘No, no.’
Sing then, my muse, now Io Paeon sing;
Heavens, envy not at my high triumphing,
But grammar’s force with sweet success confirm.
For grammar says (O this, dear Stella, weigh),
For grammar says (to grammar who says nay?)
That in one speech two negatives affirm.

The immaturity implied by the schoolboy metaphor manifests itself eventually as an arrogance vis à vis his poetic predecessors, particularly the poet-lover of the *Rvf*. He believes that he understands where Petrarch went wrong, and sets out to succeed where he has failed and win the love of the lady. However, he continually finds his desires frustrated, stymied by Stella’s refusal to conform to her literary precursors, in particular Petrarch’s Laura. Whenever Astrophil is confronted with a generically unprecedented turn of events (such as Stella’s encouragement of his suit), he is forced to retreat back within the bounds of conventionality and re-think his strategy in increasingly radical ways, until he is eventually overtaken by the formal convention of unrequited love.

5. The Metamorphosis of Stella

To return to the discussion of the conventionalising strategy employed by the poet, AS 55 marks the beginning of his attempt to conventionalise Stella. Astrophil has been forced to abandon his own metamorphosis into Petrarch, but now he attempts to turn Stella into Laura. Where once Astrophil professed a purely physical desire, he now attempts to emphasise the ennobling qualities of his love for Stella:

Fie school of patience, fie; your lesson is
far, far too long to learn it without book:
What, a whole week without one piece of look,
And think I should not your large precepts miss?
*When I might read those letters fair of bliss,
Which in her face teach virtue...*
(AS 56.1-6 [emphasis added])

Interestingly, however, it is the Laura of the *Triumphs* that is more relevant to Stella's transformation than the more familiar Laura of the *Rvf*. The reason for this is simple. In *TMII*, Laura appears, *post mortem*, in a vision to the poet. They speak to each other directly with an intimacy never approached in the entirety of the *Rvf*. Laura is shown to be not only sympathetic to the poet's love, but, in an intertextual bombshell which throws new light on the poet-beloved dynamic in the *Rvf*, admits to having loved the poet in measure equal to his own:

Poi disse sospirando: - Mai diviso
da te non fu 'l mio cor, né già mai fia,
ma temprai la tua fiamma col mio viso;
perché a salvar te e me null'altra via
era, e la nostra giovenetta fama;
(*TMII*.88-92)

Stella's reason for refusing Astrophil is identical to that given by Laura to the poet in the above passage:

"Trust me, while I thee deny,
In my self the smart I try;
Tyrant honour thus doth use thee;

Stella's self might not refuse thee".
(Eighth song, ll. 93-96)

There are two advantages to filtering Stella through the Laura of *TMII*. Firstly, it provides Astrophil with an authoritative literary precedent which permits direct engagement with the beloved. Secondly, it allows him to explain away her coldness towards him precisely as evidence of her love, thus justifying his continued pursuit of her. Again, however, Astrophil has failed to take full account of the implications of this new approach. His solution can only ever be temporary owing to the insurmountable obstacle of Laura's death. Petrarch cannot but make do with this crumb of comfort, for Laura and he now inhabit separate dimensions, which guarantees a swift and final end to any hopes of physical congress. For Astrophil, the situation is quite different. Stella, of course, is very much alive. On the one hand, this makes her physically available to Astrophil, and on the other, renders the attempt to portray her as a divine mediatrix even more fraught than it was for Petrarch. The absurdity of the situation is highlighted by the positioning of sonnet 59, in which Stella is portrayed absent-mindedly playing with her dog, immediately before a group of three rapturous sonnets, laced with devotional language, where Astrophil outlines the ennobling effect of Stella's love. When we compare the following image of Stella and her dog:

Yet while I languish, him that bosom clips,
That lap doth lap, nay lets, in spite of spite,
This sour-breathed mate taste of those sugared lips.
(AS 59.9-11)

with the tenor of the subsequent sonnets, the effect is not only comic, but ridiculous (the contrast between the "sour-breathed mate" of AS 59.11 and Stella's "sweet-breathed defense" in AS 61.4 is particularly effective in this respect):

When my *good angel* guides me to the place
Where all my good in Stella I do see,
That *heaven of joys* throws only down on me
Thundered disdains, and lightnings of disgrace.
But when rugged'st step of fortune's race
Makes me *fall* from her sight, then sweetly she

With words, wherein the muses treasures be,
Shows love and pity to my absent case.

[...]

Then some good body tell me how I do,
Whose presence absence, absence presence is;
Blessed in my curse, and cursed in my bliss.

(AS 60.1-8, 11-14 [emphasis added])

Oft with true sighs, oft with uncalled tears,
Now with slow words, now with dumb eloquence,
I Stella's eyes assail, invade her ears;
But this at last is *her sweet-breathed defense*:
That who indeed infelt affection bears,
So captives to *his saint* both *soul* and sense
That wholly hers, all selfness he forbears;
Thence his desires he learns, *his life's course* thence.
Now since *her chaste mind* hates this love in me,
With chastened mind I straight must show that she
Shall quickly me from what she hates remove.
O doctor Cupid, thou for me reply;
Driven else to grant, *by angel's sophistry*,
That I love not, without I leave to love.

(AS 61 [emphasis added])

Late tired with woe, even ready for to pine
With rage of love, I called my love unkind;
She in whose eyes love, though unfelt, doth shine,
Sweet said that I true love in her should find.
I joyed, but straight thus watered was my wine,
That love she did, but loved a love not blind,
Which would not let me, whom she loved, decline
From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind:
And therefore, by her love's authority,
Willed me these tempests of vain love to fly,
And anchor fast myself on virtue's shore.

(AS 62.1-11 [emphasis added])

This devotional language is undermined by some subtle touches which demonstrate that Astrophil is not on the right track and is in danger of falling into the idolatrous trap which rendered the “merry books of Italy” so distasteful to the likes of Ascham: the “Thundered disdains and lightnings of disgrace” in AS 60.4 are the hallmarks of the pagan god Jove, whom Astrophil has conflated with Stella; similarly, the inversion of Christ's miracle at the Wedding at Cana in AS 62.5 suggests that Astrophil's love may not be divinely sanctioned. And though the following sonnet (“O grammar rules”, quoted above) makes clear that his new approach has made little impression on Stella, Astrophil, having cast Stella as the sympathetic Laura, is nevertheless in a

position to deceive himself as to the true nature of her feelings. He deliberately misreads her again, confirming the ‘success’ of this new approach.

It seems as though Astrophil is attempting to fit his situation around the conventions of the sonnet sequence, even to the extent that he enacts Stella’s death towards the end of the sequence, with more than a nod to Petrarch and the *Rvf*. Following Stella’s dismissal of him in the wake of his stolen kiss, Astrophil makes a vague reference to the “iron laws of duty” (87.4) which compelled him to leave her. One suspects, given Astrophil’s proud nature, that this is merely a face-saving mechanism, and that the real reason for his absence from Stella is her refusal to admit him into her presence. He bemoans his absence from her over the course of five sonnets (88-92) and one song (the Tenth), before eventually coming to the realisation that Stella is “vexed” with him (93.4), though he claims to not know why. Any potential reason is difficult to discern, leaving the reader to conclude that Stella has finally had enough of Astrophil’s amorous attentions and that his continued appeals to her clemency have exhausted even her patience.

Over the next seven sonnets (94-100), Astrophil’s language becomes increasingly morbid as he prepares to take the only remaining route that remains open to him in the metamorphosis of Laura into Stella. Sonnet 94 speaks of “harbingers of death” and identifies the poet as “a caitiff, worthy so to die”; in sonnet 95, he asserts that “...sorrow comes with such main rage, that he / Kills his own children, tears, finding that they / By love were made apt to consort with me”. While the poet takes care to ensure that “sorrow’s children” are understood as “tears”, we must remember that he has consistently represented himself as a pregnant woman, on the verge of giving birth to his poems, and that he has previously threatened to strike-out his completed works, which were only saved from his wrath by the inscription of Stella’s name on the page. The fact that Stella, by this point, has become indistinguishable from the text itself adds another, more disturbing dimension to this infanticidal image. A series of four sonnets on night and darkness follows (96-99). Sonnet 96 compares the poet’s thoughts to the night (“Both sadly black, both blackly darkened be, / Night barred from sun, thou [thought] from thy own sun’s light. / Silence in both displays his sullen might” [ll. 3-5]) and invokes the spirits of the dead (“In night, of sprites the ghastly powers stir” [l. 10]). Sonnet 97 sees the same “silent and sad” night donning “mourning

weeds" (l. 8). Sonnet 98 speaks of the "black horrors of the silent night" (l. 9) and "woe's black face" (l. 10), before concluding with an image of worms (l. 14). Sonnet 99 sees the poet's eyes "buried" "in tomb of lids" (l. 12), while sonnet 100 speaks of lilies (l. 2), traditionally associated with the death of innocence, and makes reference to "the hell where my soul fries (l. 8)".

Taken in isolation, these references may not seem terribly significant, but their collective presence within such a confined textual space is surely no coincidence. It seems that the poet is preparing the reader for the staging of a death. This is Astrophil's final appeal to convention. He has been permanently separated from a lady who, unlike Beatrice or Laura, remains alive. Convention dictates that such a separation occurs at the point of the lady's death. Both Beatrice and Laura died, therefore Stella, in Astrophil's system, is bound to follow suit. Sonnet 101 begins: "Stella is sick..." (l. 1), and goes on to echo Petrarch's description of Laura's dead body in *TMII*. Where Petrarch says "pallida no, ma più che neve bianca", Sidney gives us: "Beauty is sick, but sick in so fair guise / That in paleness beauty's white we see". Astrophil ends by leaving the reader in suspense, unsure of whether Stella will overcome her illness:

Nature with care sweats for her darling's sake,
Knowing worlds pass, ere she enough can find
Of such heaven stuff, to clothe so heavenly a mind.
(AS 101.12-14)

The next sonnet (102) encourages the reader to conclude that the sickness of the previous poem has overcome Stella and that the poet is mourning her passing. The opening of poem 102 recalls *Rvf* 267, where Laura's death is revealed to the reader for the first time:

Sidney

Where be those roses gone, which sweetened so our eyes?
Where those red cheeks, which oft with fair increase did frame
The height of honour in the kindly badge of shame?

Petrarch

Oimè il bel viso, oimè il soave sguardo,
oimè il leggiadro portamento altero;
oimè il parlar ch'ogni aspro ingegno et fero
facevi humile, ed ogni huom vil gagliardo!

The rhetorical repetition of “where” and the opposition between “honour” and “shame” recall the structure and language of Petrarch’s lament, while the echo of the moment of death in *TMII* in the previous poem suggests that Astrophil had the death of the beloved in mind when reciting these lines. It appears that Astrophil has again confused life with art, and that his preconception of what is expected of him as a poet has coloured the real events taking place before his eyes. His description of the doctors’ supposed confusion over the cause of Stella’s pallor becomes ironic, followed swiftly as it is by another instance in which the poet confuses Stella with a literary text:

Galen’s adoptive sons, who by a beaten way
 Their judgements hackney on, the fault on sickness lay;
 But feeling proof makes me say they mistake it far:
It is but love, which makes his paper perfect white
To write therein more fresh the story of delight,
While beauty’s reddest ink Venus for him doth stir.
 (AS 102.9-14 [emphasis added])

The difference between Laura’s metamorphosis into the laurel and Astrophil’s transformation of Stella into the text is telling. The laurel in the *Rvf* is both the real, human Laura, and something other than her. It represents poetry itself as well as the attainment of poetic glory, providing a perfect unifying symbol of the two “gilded fetters” (*Secretum* III) which bind Petrarch to the mortal world and prevent him from giving due praise to God: love of Laura, and love of glory. Stella, on the other hand, is completely subsumed by the text. She ceases to be a real woman and rather than standing for poetry itself, she becomes an aggregation of all the literary ladies about whom the poet has previously read. She is always expected to behave in a certain way, and when she does not, Astrophil is willing to deceive himself and the reader in order to make Stella fit in with the convention. Laura died, therefore Stella is *supposed* to die as well. When she refuses to conform to the convention, Astrophil is somewhat bemused, as he has no idea how to react as a poet/lover in this situation. Upon her recovery, she leaves him in no doubt regarding the potential success of his suit. The “Eleventh Song” sees the poet beneath her window after nightfall, while a weary sounding Stella enquires of him: “Be not yet those fancies changed?” (7). Despite his continued protest she displays no desire to rekindle the embers of their previous amorous encounters and appeals to his reasonable faculties to abandon his suit (Eleventh Song, ll. 26-27),

before eventually losing her patience and sending him away on the pretext that someone will hear him (Eleventh Song, ll. 36-37; 41-42). Astrophil, convincing himself that it is not Stella that has sent him away, but that “fortune’s sway” and “louts” have forced him to take his leave, seeks Stella out no more, but rather goes on, in the remaining sonnets, to re-enact the death which Stella had inconveniently avoided in sonnet 102. Sonnets 105 and 106 deal with the beloved’s absence. Stella’s refusal to conform to convention leaves Astrophil to make as honourable an exit as is possible, dedicating himself to some unspecified “great cause” (107) before offering the reader a final glimpse of a broken, defeated man wallowing in despair and self-pity.

Astrophil stands as an example of the danger inherent in all literature. Once a text is openly disseminated, it becomes immediately open to interpretation, and often the incorrect interpretation is just as valid as the correct one. Because Astrophil was unable to see beyond the sensuous delights of Plato, Ovid, Vergil, and Petrarch, he failed to learn the lessons which their texts meant to impart. It is true that Narcissus was possessed of immense beauty; also that Paris was granted the most beautiful woman in the world; even that Laura loved Petrarch, but the relentless fixation on worldly beauty brought Narcissus and Paris to their doom, and threatened to do the same to Petrarch unless he changed his ways. If Astrophil had only realised this, he may have been able to avoid his own ruin.

Astrophil frequently confuses the political and the erotic – the language of love invades the political sphere, and politics likewise intrudes upon the amatory sequence. Sidney attempts to reconcile the active and contemplative lives but finds them incompatible and finally forces Astrophil to choose one over the other. Ultimately, however, we get the sense that his preference for the active, public life of duty and service to monarch and country, the “great cause” of 107, is informed by Stella’s refusal of his suit rather than by any civic pride or patriotic imperative. The final sonnet of the sequence conveys a sense of resignation and reluctant acceptance of his lot, and nowhere are we presented with an outright refutation of his past conduct. There is to be no triumph for the public life, rather a Pyrrhic victory over the private passions which lie dormant, but not dead, behind “iron doors” within Astrophil’s “burning breast” (108): his erotic obsession has cost him his reputation and standing among his peers; the years in which he should have been

honing his political skills were spent in the vain pursuit of a married woman, and the psychological damage which he has sustained as a result of his ordeal renders his belated embrace of the active life half-hearted. Whereas Petrarch's introductory sonnet indicates a measure of spiritual progression ("quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'i' sono") and highlights a moment of repentance and revelation, *Astrophil and Stella* peters out without the protagonist experiencing any moment of transcendence:

So strangely (alas) thy works in me prevail,
That in my woes for thee thou art my joy,
And in my joys for thee my only annoy.
(AS 108.12-14)

Despite his experience, Stella and love are still mysteries to him, and the final Petrarchan paradox reveals Astrophil still trapped in his obsession. As a lover, he is unable to escape Petrarchan desire *per se*, while as a poet, he cannot extricate himself from the conventional Petrarchan mode of discourse. Sidney's biographical relationship to Astrophil has been comprehensively investigated by scholars and it will suffice to say that the many allusions and puns which associate the protagonist with the author, and Stella with Penelope Devereux (the woman he had hoped to marry), leave the reader with no choice but to make the natural connection between the reality of Sidney's failed suit and the fiction of Astrophil's rejection by Stella.¹⁰ For Sidney, himself a failed lover and a failed courtier, *Astrophil and Stella* is the crucible in which his own public and private failings are subjected to the white hot heat of a Calvinist examination of conscience. Despite borrowing much from individual Petrarchan poems, at a macro-textual level, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* rejects the Petrarchan sequence as a model.

¹⁰ In particular, see Smith, H. D., *Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 142-57; Young, R. B., "English Petrarche: A Study of Sidney's 'Astrophil and Stella'", in *Three Studies in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 1-88; Kalstone, D., *Sidney's Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965), pt. 2; Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, ch. 4; Buxton, J., *Elizabethan Taste* (London and New York: McMillan, 1966), pp. 269-94; Rudenstine, N. L., *Sidney's Poetic Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), chs. xi-xvii; Nichols, J. G., *The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney: An Interpretation in the Context of His Life and Times* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1974); Hamilton, A. C., *Sir Philip Sidney: A Study of His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), ch. 3; Sinfield, A., "Sidney and Astrophil", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 20, 1 (Special edition on "The English Renaissance", Winter, 1980): 25-41 (pp. 25-27).

6. Spenser's *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*

Spenser's earliest poetic engagement with Petrarch is his "Visions of Petrarch", published in Jan van der Noot's anthology, *A Theatre for Worldlings* in 1569, when Spenser was only sixteen or seventeen years of age. The poem is based on Petrarch's "Standomi un giorno solo alla finestra" (*Rvf* 323), but Spenser's most immediate source was the "Visions de Pétrarque" by Clément Marot (1496-1544). It is significant that this early exposure to Petrarch was filtered through the work of a French Petrarchan and Reformist. This would have provided him with a slightly different perspective on Petrarch's concerns as portrayed in the *Rvf*. Unlike English Petrarchans, who concentrated almost exclusively on the *In vita* section, French poets were generally more representative of the collection as a whole when selecting their source material. Spenser follows Marot in adding a seventh stanza to the poem, replacing the conventional three-line *envoi* with fourteen lines of *contemptus mundi* which strike a more moralising note than Petrarch's understated conclusion:

Canzon, tu puoi ben dire:
- "Queste sei visioni al signor mio
àn fatto un dolce di morir desio." -
(*Rvf* 323.73-5)

While Petrarch's English imitators, from Chaucer onwards, tended to generalise the subjective experience of the poet in the *Rvf*, their focus remained narrow, concentrated exclusively on the love-story of the poet and his lady. Spenser, via Marot, has introduced a new element to this tradition. While he maintains the shift from specific ("al signor *mio*") to the general, he has, for the first time, associated Petrarch's name with something other than love for the lady:

When I beheld this fickle trustles state
Of vaine worlds glorie, flitting too and fro,
And mortall men tossed by troublous fate
In restles seas of wretchednes and woe,
I wish I might this wearie life forgoe,
And shortly turne vnto my happie rest,
Where my free spirite might not anie moe
Be vext with sights, that doo her peace molest.

And ye faire Ladie, in whose bounteous brest
 All heauenly grace and vertue shrined is,
 When ye these rythmes doo read, and vew the rest,
 Loath this base world, and thinke of heauens blis.
 And though ye be the fairest of Gods creatures,
 Yet thinke, that death shall spoyle your goodly features.
 (*The Visions of Petrarch*, ll. 85-98)¹¹

Though his conclusion to the poem has no equivalent in Petrarch's original, for the first time we encounter an English Petrarchan warning us that "quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno". From the outset, the residual medieval element of Petrarch's poetics, epitomised by his fondness for the *memento mori* topos, appears to resonate with Spenser more than it had with any of his predecessors. Spenser's main innovation and most significant legacy to English Petrarchism is the detachment of the sonnet from the stagnating courtly tradition, restoring the form to the moral and philosophical context which had underpinned Petrarch's sequence. Spenser's rupture with the established courtly poetic locus opened up the possibility of greater variety in Petrarchan modes of discourse. The lover and the lady no longer had to be measured against courtly ideals of nobility, virtue, chastity and beauty. Spenser's *Amoretti* makes possible Shakespeare's sonnets, and even the anti-Petrarchism of Donne. It is perhaps significant in this respect that Spenser spent the majority of his life in Ireland, a world away from the royal court. It was there that he penned his *Amoretti and Epithalamion* in celebration of his marriage to Elizabeth Boyle in 1594.¹²

Courtly and poetic conventions meant that Sidney and others of similar aristocratic status were obliged, officially at any rate, to dismiss their literary endeavours as harmless trifles, which occupied the courtier during moments of leisure and were conceived solely for the purposes of light entertainment among friends of a similar caste, never to make serious philosophical points intended for a wider, more general readership.¹³ For Spenser, a career as a poet necessitated none of the conventional posturing common at the time among writers of a more elevated social rank (such as Sidney, Raleigh and Dyer – all Knights of the Realm) who felt obliged to distance their

¹¹ Oram, W. A., Bjorvand, E., Bond, R., Cain, T. H., Dunlop, A., and Schell, R. (eds.), *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 456-57.

¹² See Hadfield, A., 'Spenser, Edmund (1552?-1599)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26145>, accessed 4 Apr., 2012].

¹³ See Pugh, S., "Sidney, Spenser and Political Petrarchism", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 243-57 (p. 249).

poetry from their public lives and proclaim such “toyes” (AS 18) the product of a leisurely and idle youth, harmless effusions of a simpler time of life which inspired rueful fondness and self-deprecating nostalgia, but which were never (officially) intended as serious declarations of any particular moral, social or artistic philosophy. These men firmly held the active rather than the contemplative life to be most suited to their noble birth. They were groomed for the service of Queen and country - either as soldiers like Surrey and Sidney, or ambassadors like Wyatt and Raleigh - from an early age, leaving little time or use for poetry. However, Spenser’s humble background meant that for him the title of “poet” involved no similar “*déclassement*”.¹⁴ He could go further and endeavour “to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline”, as he declares in a 1589 letter responding to Raleigh’s inquiry as to the purpose of his writing *The Faerie Queene*.¹⁵ As my analysis of the *Amoretti* will show, Spenser’s aim was to dissociate love poetry, and the sonnet sequence in particular, from the taint of concupiscence which rendered his continental sources morally suspect in the eyes of hard-line Reformists like Ascham.

7. Spenser’s Use of the Narcissus Myth

A shift in focus from the beloved to the lover’s self culminating in the transcendence of that self paradoxically confirms Dasenbrock’s statement that Spenser was “the first Petrarchan poet ... to share Petrarch’s desire to lose the self”.¹⁶ The apparent paradox contained within this statement is best resolved by reference to the myth of Narcissus which has its source in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, an episode to which both Petrarch and Spenser refer in their respective sequences and which is key to understanding the relationship between their works.

Petrarch’s search for the self is continually compromised by the elusive nature of the shifting and fragmented reality of his world, the mortal world of shadows. His quest for the self reveals

¹⁴ Helgerson, “The New Poet”, p. 896.

¹⁵ Roche, T.P. and C. P. O’Donnell (eds.), *Edmund Spenser: The Faerie Queene* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 15.

¹⁶ Dasenbrock, R. W., “The Petrarchan Context of Spenser’s ‘Amoretti’”, *PMLA*, 100, 1 (Jan., 1985): 38-50 (p. 42).

not one self, but many sometimes overlapping and often contradictory identities that find expression in the antitheses and conflation of signifiers so characteristic of the *Rvf*. The nature of Narcissistic desire implies an illusory and unattainable goal that can never satisfy the emotional, spiritual or even the physical desires of the lover. Further, the Ovidian oracle's admonition to Narcissus that he will live to old age if he does not come to know himself equates self-knowledge with death.¹⁷ The acknowledgement of the necessity to surrender the ego is precisely what allows us to view the helplessness, loss of agency and impotence described by Dubrow in a positive Christian sense, as the recognition that the Narcissistic love of the self, or, more to the point, the self as reflected in others leads ultimately to self-destruction. It is only by transcending the self and abandoning oneself to the grace of God that one can live not simply to old age as promised to Narcissus, but eternally as promised to the true Christian. To use the terms invoked by Augustinus in the *Secretum*, the rejection of self-love is the means by which the Christian can break the gilded fetters which bind him to the mortal world, allowing the soul to seek out and fulfil its true desire by moving towards its Creator in the Platonic tradition. For Petrarch, however, this process of transcendence is fraught with difficulty. For one to be aware of the need to lose the self, one must possess of an awareness of the self in the first instance. Hence, self-knowledge is both a pre-requisite and an obstacle to eternal life. The eventual resolution takes the form of the sublimation of the poet's desire for Laura and for poetic fame, as expressed in *Rvf* 366, where he acknowledges his powerlessness to come to terms with this impossible situation, whilst simultaneously purging his poetry of the element of erotic desire for the beloved which had been present theretofore, and ennobling his desire for fame by associating himself with other Christian writers such as Paul and Augustine who turned their backs on their "primo giovenile errore" and surrendered themselves to God.

Spenser's strategy for attaining the common goal he and the poet of the *Rvf* share – that of self-transcendence – is, as we shall see, somewhat different. It is notable that the characteristic elision of subject and object noted in the *Rvf*, but absent from *Astrophil and Stella*, resurfaces at

¹⁷ Edwards, C. R., "The Narcissus Myth in Spenser's Poetry" in *Studies in Philology*, 74, 1 (Jan., 1977): 63-88 (p. 67).

several points throughout the *Amoretti*. One such example is found in sonnet 66, in which the poet uses the octave to question how his heavenly beloved could have consented to love “so mean a one” (i.e. the poet). In the sestet, the answer he provides expressly describes a mirroring effect which benefits both parties in a manner which could not be attained through simple isolation from the beloved or the denial of one’s desire:

But ye thereby much greater glory gate,
 then had ye sorted with a prince's peer:
 for now your light doth more it self dilate,
 and in my darkness greater doth appear.
 Yet since your light hath once enlumined me,
 with my reflex yours shall encreased be.
 (Am. 66, ll. 9-14)

Even taking these lines in isolation, we can see the significance of Spenser’s Petrarchism for the future of English literature. They are much more “Shakespearean” than Sidney in concept and execution, also anticipating Donne and the metaphysical conceit. There is a certain muscularity of thought and verse, a working out of the image, forcing it against its logical confines. Myron Turner, in his article “The Imagery of Spenser’s *Amoretti*”, identifies in these lines “a superimposition of being, each self interinvolved with ... the self of the other”.¹⁸ A similar process takes place in 45, in which the poet implores the lady to view his heart as the true mirror of her (immortal) self:

Leave lady in your glass of crystal clean,
 Your goodly self for evermore to view:
 and in my self, my inward self I mean,
 most lively like behold your semblant true.
 Within my heart, though hardly it can show,
 thing so divine to view of earthly eye:
 the fair Idea of your celestial hue,
 and every part remains immortally:
 And were it not that, through your cruelty,
 with sorrow dimmed and deform'd it were:
 the goodly image of your visnomy,
 clearer then crystal would therein appear.
 But if your self in me ye plain will see,
 remove the cause by which your fair beams darkened be.

¹⁸ Turner, M., “The Imagery of Spenser’s *Amoretti*”, *Neophilologus*, 72, 2 (Apr., 1988): 284-299 (p. 297).

His use of the Narcissus myth, as Edwards argues, is heavily influenced by the third century philosopher Plotinus's reading of the original Ovidian text. "Plotinus", Edwards explains, "sees Narcissus as one who is lured away from divine beauty or reality by the deceptive and shadowy beauty of appearances, as one who has not learned to close the eyes of the body and open the inner vision of the soul".¹⁹ The self-awareness which precipitates the death of Narcissus is fatal because it is an inadequate form of self-knowledge which isolates and privileges the physical from the spiritual in a form of teleological collapse. Narcissus's self-awareness is effected through an externalisation of the self, an alienation of the self in the other; the mirror of the water does not merely reflect an image of his physical form but rather reconstitutes his being as a physical form alien to his consciousness; he becomes his reflection, he now is the other. All that is left of the original Narcissus on the riverbank is a consciousness which now must contemplate the self from without: an epistemological conundrum and a psychological nightmare. He has lost possession of himself; the self, always ultimately unknowable, is now utterly unattainable, an ontological paradox from which he cannot extricate himself. His doom is assured. In this sense Narcissus is a symbol of the human yearning to fully know the self, and of the futility and the dangerous impossibility of such desires. To gain true knowledge of the soul is to transcend the physical self and consequently to abandon physical desire as incapable of fulfilling the desires of the soul.

8. Spenser's "Gentle Deer" v. Petrarch's "Candida Cerva"

The difference between Petrarch's Christian Humanist neo-classicism and Spenser's Christological approach is best illustrated by comparing their treatment of the *topos* of the doe and the hunter. Petrarch's *Rvf* 190 is one of his most celebrated sonnets and Wyatt's adaption of it ("Whoso list to hunt") remains one of the most well-known and beautifully-crafted examples of Petrarchan translation to this day.

¹⁹ Edwards, "The Narcissus Myth", p. 67.

The text of the poem is as follows:

Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
verde m'apparve, con duo corna d'oro,
fra due riviére, all'ombra d'un alloro,
levando 'l sole a la stagione acerba.
Era sua vista sì dolce superba,
ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro:
come l'avarò che 'n cercar tesoro
con diletto l'affanno disacerba.
"Nessun mi tocchi – al bel collo d'intorno
scritto avea di diamanti et di topazi –:
libera farmi al mio Cesare parve."
Et era 'l sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno,
gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
quand'io caddi ne l'acqua, et ella sparve.

The sonnet is replete with symbolism which critics have been attempting to decode ever since Antonio da Tempo's first annotated edition of the *Rvf* appeared in 1471.²⁰ The "candida cerva" (l. 1) is, of course, the chaste Laura, who is often associated with the colour green, a symbol of her youth and beauty. The "duo corna d'oro" (l. 2) represent her hair, while the "due riviére" (l. 3) have been interpreted as the Sorgue and the Durance, locating the poem in the pastoral setting of Vaucluse. The rising sun (l. 4) indicates the tender age of the poet at the moment of his *innamoramento*, which happened at his first sight of Laura. This is later thrown into relief by the contrast with the "sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno" (l. 12), indicating the poet's more mature age at the time of Laura's death. The first tercet recounting the inscription on the doe's collar finds its ultimate source in John 20: 17, which tells of Christ's encounter with Mary Magdelene following his resurrection on Easter Sunday:

dicit ei Iesus: '*noli me tangere*: nondum enim ascendi ad Patrem meum. vade autem ad fratres meos et dic eis ascendo ad Patrem meum et Patrem vestrum et Deum meum et Deum vestrum.'

(*Biblia Sacra Vulgata* [emphasis added])

[Jesus saith unto her, "*Touch me not*, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God, and your God]

(*Geneva Bible* (1560 edition) [emphasis added])

²⁰ For the complex exegetical tradition surrounding *Rvf* 190, see Maria Luisa Doglio, "Il sonetto CXC", in *Lectura Petrarce* V, 1985 (Florence: Olschki, 1986), pp. 249-70.

The interpretation of Christ's admonition has been controversial, and relates to the translation of the equivalent Greek passage, which scholars have argued carries the primary meaning of "do not cling to me". However, Petrarch clearly follows the Vulgate text when he renders the phrase in Italian as "Nessun mi tocchi". The point to note in the context of *Rvf* 190 is that Christ wishes to prepare his disciples for his ascension into Heaven. This subtext would appear to indicate that the inscription on Petrarch's doe's collar relates to Laura's death. The "Cesare" (l. 11) is God and the liberation that he wills for the doe constitutes the freedom of the soul from the body. Diamonds and topazes are symbols of steadfastness and chastity respectively, a fact that Wyatt took advantage of by subtly omitting the reference to topazes in his version of the poem, leading many commentators to associate his "hind" with the allegedly profligate Anne Boleyn.

Carrai has demonstrated that the motto "Noli me tangere, Caesaris sum" was probably not coined until in the fifteenth-century, at which point it was retrospectively attributed to the third- or fourth-century Latin grammarian and geographical writer Solinus, whose works were known to Petrarch. Solinus was said to have come across a herd of deer roaming the fields around Rome during his lifetime with those words inscribed on a collar around their necks. This idea was most likely a conflation of a number of sources, not least among which was *Rvf* 190 itself.²¹ Curiously, however, Petrarch recounts a similar tale in *Familiare* 18.8, which no other contemporary or antecedent source corroborates:

sicut non melior piscator est sed fortunatior, cui in visceribus capti piscis iaspis inventa est, nec venator fuit melior qui avorum temporibus sub arthoa plaga, si tamen vera fama est, cervum torque aureo circa collum cepit, in quo, ut perhibent, vetustissimis literis scriptum erat: 'Nemo me capiat, quem Iulius Caesar liberum esse iussit'.²²

[Just as he is not a better fisherman, but rather a luckier one, whose net catches a fish with a gem in its stomach, nor is the northern hunter of ancient times, if the tale is true, a better hunter by virtue of having captured a deer bearing a collar of gold on which was written in the most ancient of letters: "Let no one touch me, for Caesar has decreed that I be free".]

²¹ Carrai, S., "Il sonetto 'Una candida cerva' del Petrarca: Problemi d'interpretazione e di fonti", *Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 3 (1985): 233-51 (pp. 242-47)

²² Cited in Santagata (ed.), *Canzoniere*, p. 827

The final tercet has provided the greatest interpretive challenge to commentators. While most agree that the disappearance of the doe in l. 14 is a sort of premonition of Laura's death, a number of different theories have persisted regarding what exactly the poet is doing falling into the water. Early commentators, such as Vellutello, took Petrarch's "acqua" to represent "il pianto", while it has also been suggested that the line is intended to invoke the myth of Narcissus, though it is difficult to see what relevance this would have to this particular sonnet. A more banal interpretation is that this moment of immersion reflects Petrarch's waking from the dream/vision which he has been describing. None of these interpretations are particularly satisfactory, however. Critics thus far seemed to have overlooked the key subtext to this sonnet, elements of which are inscribed throughout the poem. The text in question is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 11, which has previously been shown to contain some important points of reference for Petrarch, such as the stories of Orpheus and Alcyon.²³ However, the episode which informs the final tercet of *Rvf* 190 is the comparatively little-known tale of Aesacus and Hesperia. This brief episode begins in l. 749 and runs to the end of the eleventh book (l. 795). Perhaps the most satisfying element of this hypothesis is that a close reading of *Rvf* 190 reveals that Petrarch has provided an intertextual clue which points the reader to the episode in question via the author's own *Triumphus*. The penultimate line of *Rvf* 190 ("gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi") is very close to the opening line of *Triumphus Cupidinis* II: "stanco già di mirar, non sazio ancora". Among the lovers whom Petrarch describes in this Book is the forlorn Aesacus, who is represented in various stages of his vain search for Hesperia, one of which is immersion:

lungo costor pensoso Esaco stare
cercando Esperia, or sopra un sasso assiso,
et or sotto acqua, et or alto volare;
(TCII. 160-62 [emphasis added])

If we continue to follow the intertextual trail left by Petrarch, we arrive at Ovid, and can begin to better understand Petrarch's immersion at the close of *Rvf* 190. The verbal echoes of the Aesacus

²³ See Musa, M. (ed.), *Petrarch: Canzoniere* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 678; Migraine-George, T., "Spectacular Desires: Orpheus and Pygmalion as Aesthetic Paradigms in Petrarch's 'Rime sparse', *Comparative Literature*, 36, 9 (1999): 226-46.

episode are so strong in *Rvf* 190 as to leave us in no doubt that Petrarch had these lines of Ovid in mind when composing his sonnet:²⁴

... con *duo corna* d'oro,
fra due *riviere*, all'*ombra* d'un alloro
(*Rvf* 190.2-3 [emphasis added])

Aesacon *umbrosa* furtim peperisse sub Ida
fertur Alexiroe, *Granico* nata *bicorni*.

[[Priam's other son] Aesacus, is said to have been born to Alexirrhoë, daughter of *two-horned Granicus*, the river-god, in secret, *under the shadow* of Mount Ida]
(*Met.* 11.762-63 [emphasis added])

Aesacus is born in the shade of Mount Ida, while Petrarch's hind appears under the shade of a laurel tree. The hind appears beside two rivers, and Petrarch mentions her two horns. Ovid claims that Aesacus' mother Alexirrhoë was the daughter of the two-horned river-God Granicus. Ovid's narrator goes on to describe Aesacus' tenor of mind and the manner of his pursuit of Hesperia:

oderat hic urbes nitidaque remotus ab aula
secretos montes et inambitiosa colebat
rura nec Iliacos coetus nisi rarus adibat.
non agreste tamen nec inexpugnabile amori
pectus habens silvas captatam saepe per omnes
aspicit Hesperien patria Cebrenida ripa
iniectos umeris siccantem sole capillos.

[He hated cities, and lived in the remote mountains, and insignificant country places, far away from the glittering court, and rarely visited crowded Ilium. Yet he did not have an uncultured heart, or one averse to love, and he often pursued Hesperie, the River Cebren's daughter, through all the woodland glades, whom he had caught sight of, drying her flowing hair, in the sun, on her father's shore.]

(*Met.* 11.764-70)

Such a description would surely have resonated with Petrarch, given his distaste for the urban life and the intrigues of the Papal court at Avignon, preferring, like Aesacus, the idyllic rural surroundings in which he locates his poetry and his beloved, whether physically or spiritually.

More specifically, in *Rvf* 190, he tells us: "ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro". We know that,

²⁴ For Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, I cite from Richard J. Tarrant's critical edition, *Publius Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). The Aesacus and Hesperia episode can be found on pp. 342-44. The translation is by A. S. Kline and can be viewed at <<[<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph11.htm#_Toc64105709>>](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Metamorph11.htm#_Toc64105709)>>

like Aesacus, Petrarch turned his back on a career at court in favour of pursuing his heart's twin desires: Laura and poetic fame. However, both Petrarch and Aesacus are shunned by their beloveds. As Santagata has shown, the deer/hunter *topos* had been so well established in the Western tradition by the time Petrarch wrote this sonnet that it is impossible to link *Rvf* 190's "cerva" to any one source text.²⁵ Nevertheless, given the dense concentration of Petrarch's intertextual references to *Metamorphoses* XI in the opening quatrain of *Rvf* 190, it is surely significant that Ovid uses the same image as Petrarch to describe the unattainable lady:

visa fugit nymphe, veluti perterrita fulvum
cerva lupum...

[The nymph fled on sight, as a frightened *hind* flees the tawny wolf...]

(*Met.* 11.771-72 [emphasis added])

Indeed, Ovid's earlier image of Hesperia's hair falling upon her shoulders as it dries in the sun (*Met.* 11.770) would surely have appealed to the poet of *Rvf* 90 ("Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi"). Although the "candida cerva" does not flee Petrarch in such dramatic fashion, Hesperia's fate reflects Laura's, and this subtext strengthens the reading of the first tercet which associates the collar's inscription with the death of the beloved:

ecce latens herba coluber fugientis adunco
dente pedem strinxit virusque in corpore liquit;
cum vita suppressa fuga est...

[Behold, a serpent, hidden in the grass, bit her foot with his curving fang, as she fled by, and left his poison in her body. Her flight ended with her life...]

(*Met.* 11.775-77)

Petrarch's scriptural allusion ingeniously relocates *Rvf* 190 from a pagan to a Christian context, emphasising Laura's future salvation. Furthermore, the immediate reaction of Aesacus to Hesperia's death provides an insight into the fate awaiting Petrarch, and subtly implies the crucial

²⁵ See Santagata (ed.), *Canzoniere*, pp. 825-26

difference between the implications of desire for the mythical pagan lover and his Christian counterpart which provides the unifying theme of the entire *Rvf*:

...amplectitur amens
exanimem clamatque "piget, piget esse secutum!
sed non hoc timui, neque erat mihi vincere tanti."

[The lover clasped her unbreathing body and cried: "I regret, I regret I followed you! But I did not expect this, and it was not worth this to attempt to win you."]

(*Met.* 11.777-79)

Aesacus' desire for Hesperia has led to her death. Petrarch's desire for Laura will lead to his. Like Aesacus, Petrarch will regret his pursuit of the beloved, but for different reasons. He will also wonder whether the attainment of the laurel (in the guise of Laura or of fame) is worth the price Augustinus claims he must pay for it in the *Secretum*: his own soul. What Aesacus decides to do next is the key to unlocking the riddle of Petrarch's final line ("io caddi ne l'acqua"):

dixit et e scopulo, quem rauca subederat unda,
se dedit in pontum...

[He spoke, and *threw himself* from a cliff, eroded below by the rough waves, *into the sea*.]

(*Met.* 11.783-84 [emphasis added])

It is at this point that Aesacus' metamorphosis occurs. Tethys, the wife of the sea-god Oceanus, takes pity on the lover and turns him into a cormorant just as he is about to be submerged in the water. However, this benevolent act becomes a punishment for Aesacus, who has no desire to live without his beloved and is doomed to repeat his futile suicidal plunge ad infinitum :

... Tethys miserata cadentem
molliter excepit nantemque per aequora pennis
texit, et optatae non est data copia mortis.
indignatur amans, invitum vivere cogi
obstarique animae misera de sede volenti
exire, utque novas umeris adsumpserat alas,
subvolat atque iterum corpus super aequora mittit.
pluma levat casus: furit Aesacos inque profundum
pronus abit letique viam sine fine retemptat.

[Tethys, pitying him, caught him gently as he fell, clothed him with feathers as he floated on the water, and denied him the opportunity to choose his death. The lover was angered, that he was forced to live, against his will, and that his spirit was thwarted, wishing to leave its unhappy residence. When he had gained the new wings on his shoulders, he flew up and threw his body again into the sea. His feathers broke his fall. In a rage, Aesacus dived headlong into the deep and tried endlessly to find a path to death.]

(*Met.* 11.784-92)

Petrarch is trapped in a similar cycle of desire and frustration. His “viva morte” is anticipated by Aesacus’ “invitum vivere” not only in its meaning but also in the antithetical suggestion of the phrase’s structure. How many times over the course of the sequence will we witness Petrarch’s bitterness at being kept alive against his will? Just as the goddess has denied Aesacus the option of ending his own life, so Petrarch’s faith precludes him from doing the same. If we were to superimpose Christian symbolism and iconography on Aesacus’ flight, we might compare it to Petrarch’s repeated attempts to turn his mind towards God. Whenever this occurs, however, he finds himself unable to repent fully and is once again plunged back into the depths of his potentially fatal passion. Petrarch’s reading of the myth as evidenced in the *Triumph* is highly significant here. While Ovid’s Aesacus seeks death in the deep, Petrarch’s seeks his beloved, not only in the water, but also among the rocks and in the heavens. In Petrarch’s mind, he and Aesacus have become fused, just as death and desire have become inseparable. Taken together, Petrarch’s submersion and Laura’s subsequent disappearance in the last line of *Rvf* 190 constitute the total integration of the Aesacus myth with Petrarch’s poetics of desire. Desire is a destructive force which threatens the very existence of both lover and beloved. Petrarch’s submersion is both a death wish and a commentary on the self-destructive nature of desire. Laura’s disappearance represents the obliteration of the desired object as she, *per se*, becomes less important to the lover than his obsession.

For Spenser, the case is altogether different, as his treatment of the doe image reveals. By 1594 he would surely have been aware not only of Petrarch’s original, but also, given the popularity of Tottel’s *Miscellany* throughout the Elizabethan period, of Wyatt’s translation. These, and other examples, had served to crystallise the deer/hunter *topos* as a means of expressing frustrated desire. Spenser characteristically turns the convention on its head in *Amoretti* 67,

demonstrating in the process how Protestant theology allowed him to break new ground as a poet and provide a solution to the classic Petrarchan dilemma regarding earthly desire. The text of the sonnet is as follows:

Lyke as a huntsman, after weary chace,
Seeing the game from him escapt away,
Sits downe to rest him in some shady place,
With panting hounds, beguiled of their pray,
So, after long pursuit and vaine assay,
When I all weary had the chace forsooke,
The gentle deer returnd the selfe-same way,
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.
There she, beholding me with mylder looke,
Sought not to fly, but fearlesse still did bide,
Till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke,
And with her own goodwill her fymely tyde.
Strange thing, me seemd, to see a beast so wyld
So goodly wonne, with her owne will beguyld.

While Petrarch had taken Classical mythology as his starting point and interwoven scriptural sources into *Rvf* 190, Spenser's cornerstone is entirely Christian. Kenneth Larsen has demonstrated an irrefutable connection between the numerology of the sequence and Protestant modes of worship, specifically the daily lessons of the Book of Common Prayer, which provide the blueprint for the narrative progression of the *Amoretti*.²⁶ In Spenser's calendrical scheme, *Amoretti* 67 corresponds with Holy Saturday, the day preceding Easter Sunday on which the Resurrection of Christ is celebrated. In a tradition which endures to this day, the Anglican Church does not offer any prayer of consecration or distribute the Reserved Host on Holy Saturday, but instead holds a simple service comprising scripture readings and prayers. One of the readings which would have been prescribed for this day in Spenser's Book of Common Prayer is Psalm 42, commonly referred to as the Baptismal Psalm, looking forward to the promise of new and eternal life symbolised by the following day's feast. It begins: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." This verse is all Spenser needs to enable the reconstitution of the *topos* within a Reformed Christian context. The panting of the hounds, representative of Spenser's physical desire, echoes the panting of the Biblical deer, who thirsts for a divine rather

²⁶ See Larsen (ed.), "*Amoretti*", pp. 1-66

than an earthly love. The “gentle deer” of *Amoretti* 67 who seeks “to quench her thirst at the next brooke” represents the fusion of physical appetite with the soul’s desire to know God. Spenser’s deer does not flee, like Wyatt’s, nor is she, like Petrarch’s, possessed of a *superbia* which places her beyond the poet’s reach. Instead, she permits herself to be claimed by the poet:

There she, beholding me with mylder looke,
Sought not to fly, but fearlesse still did bide,
Till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke,
And with her own goodwill her fyrmely tyde.
(*Am.* 67.9-12)

The alliteration of the eleventh line recalls the famous words which Dante gives to Francesca in *Inferno* V: “La bocca mi baciò tutto tremante”, and is certainly the most sensuous moment in Spenser’s sequence. As Larsen points out, the referent of Spenser’s “halfe trembling” is ambiguous: it could be either the deer or the hunter. However, the description of the deer in the previous line as “fearlesse” may be an indication that the “trembling” is a manifestation of the erotic excitement experienced by the poet at the point of physical contact. The caveat “her own goodwill” is a key concept of the sonnet, and indeed of the *Amoretti* as a whole, and represents the variable which sometimes threatens to undermine Spenser’s proposed solution to the Petrarchan moral quandary. Though Spenser’s deer returns to the spot where he had given up the chase, it was not he whom she sought, but rather “the next brooke”, that of Psalm 42: 1, where the soul’s thirst for God may be quenched. By relinquishing herself willingly to the poet, allowing herself to be “fyrmely tyde” by the bonds of matrimony, she acknowledges the potential of earthly and physical love, once it has received divine sanction, to act as a means of quenching this spiritual thirst. We are left to wonder where Spenser’s sequence might have ended up if, like Petrarch and Astrophil, he had been rejected by his beloved. Yet Spenser does not claim to have all the answers. As he tells us in the final couplet, the deer’s surrender of herself remained to him a “strange thing” (l. 13). The mystery of love reflects the mystery of faith, which, for Spenser, finds its most perfect expression in the Resurrection which he will celebrate in the next sonnet. The point is not that Spenser’s sequence is a success (by Dubrow’s standards) because of his attainment of the beloved, but rather that the Protestant theology of marriage allows him to

expunge from erotic desire itself the concupiscent stain with which it would always be tainted for Petrarch.

9. The Heavenly Justification for Earthly Love

Spenser's strategy for the transcendence of physical desire associates mortal love with divine love as represented by Christ's sacrifice. This finds its clearest expression in the Easter sonnet (68), in which mortal love is represented as a reflection of divine love, the poet first outlining the selfless nature of Christ's sacrifice and in light of this addressing his lady:

So let us love, dear love, like as we ought,
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.
(*Am.* 68, ll. 13-14)

In view of the terms in which Spenser evokes the crucifixion ("...grant that we for whom thou didest die / being with thy dear blood clean washed from sin / may live forever in felicity" (ll. 6-8)), it seems clear that the manner in which we "ought" to love is above all selfless, while the reference to the promise of immortality points towards a love which has at its core a concern for the soul rather than the body. It is interesting to compare Spenser's experience of Good Friday with Petrarch's in *Rvf* 3: for Spenser, it constitutes the prelude to a longed-for re-birth, but for Petrarch, it marks the beginning of the all-consuming passion that he characterises his living death. The divine sanction which Spenser invokes for a certain kind of love among mortals generates another strategy which aims to associate desire for the beloved with a Platonic desire for the soul to know God. We first discern this familiar tactic in sonnet 24:

When I behold that beauty's wonderment,
And rare perfection of each goodly part:
Of nature's skill the only complement,
I honour and admire the maker's art.
(*Am.* 24, ll. 1-4)

In 61, he refers to her as “the glorious image of the maker’s beauty” (l. 1) and claims that she is “...divinely wrought / and of the brood of Angels heavenly born” (ll. 5-6). Here we have a strategy which the reader of the Petrarch will instantly recognise as all but identical to that which Franciscus employed in order to justify his love for Laura to Augustinus in the *Secretum*. However, this approach proves problematic for Spenser as it leaves him open to charges of idolatry akin to those levelled at Petrarch by centuries of readers of the *Rvf*. Sonnet 72 provides an insight into the danger inherent in such an approach:

Oft when my spirit doth spread her bolder winges,
 In mind to mount up to the purest sky:
 It down is weighed with thought of earthly things
 And clogged with burden of mortality,
 Where when that sovereign beauty it doth spy,
 Resembling heaven's glory in her light:
 Drawn with sweet pleasure's bait, it back doth fly,
 And unto heaven forgets her former flight.
 There my frail fancy fed with full delight,
 Doth bathe in bliss and mantleth most at ease:
 Ne thinks of other heaven, but how it might
 Her heart's desire with most contentment please.
 Heart need not with none other happiness,
 But here on earth to have such heaven's bliss.

The sonnet echoes the words of St. Thomas Aquinas whom Chiampì quotes in relation to Petrarch’s desire in *Rvf* 365 to atone for “the scandal which his distracting poetry has caused”.²⁷ Writing on prayer in *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas claims that:

...mens humana, propter infirmitatem naturae, diu in alto stare non potest, pondere enim infirmitatis humanae deprimitur anima ad inferiora. Et ideo contingit quod quando mens orantis ascendit in Deum per contemplationem, subito evagetur ex quadam infirmitate.²⁸

(*Summa theologiae* 2a2ae. (83.13 *responsio*))

[Because of the weakness of human nature, the human mind cannot long remain aloft, and thus by the weight of human weakness the soul is brought down to the level of inferior things. Thus, when the mind of one praying ascends to God in contemplation, it quickly wanders because of weakness.]

²⁷ Chiampì, J. T., “Petrarch’s Augustinian Excess”, *Italica*, 72, 1 (Spring, 1995): 1-20 (p. 4).

²⁸ Trans. cited in Chiampì, “Petrarch’s Augustinian Excess”, p. 3.

This is the situation of the poet in Sonnet 72. What Aquinas describes as weakness, Spenser feels as burden: a different perspective but the same essential experience. While the poet may appear to be satisfied at the conclusion that he has discovered something of heaven in the mortal world, he cannot escape the dichotomy between the “purest sky” of heaven and the “burden of mortality” which weighs down his spirit. Moreover, the manner in which the poet’s “frail fancy” has been tempted by “sweet pleasure’s bait” upon which it feeds with “full delight” signals that the physical element of the poet’s desire may not be altogether insignificant in the spirit’s abandonment of its initial upward flight. That the ambiguities of this sonnet require some clarification is acknowledged in 79 where the poet attempts to justify the conclusion of the final couplet, whilst simultaneously differentiating his proper type of love from that of others:

Men call you fair, and you do credit it,
For that your self ye daily such do see:
But the true fair, that is the gentle wit,
And virtuous mind is much more praised of me.
For all the rest, how ever fair it be,
Shall turn to nought and loose that glorious hue:
But only that is permanent and free
From frail corruption, that doth flesh ensue.
That is true beauty: that doth argue you
To be divine and born of heavenly seed:
Derived from that fair Spirit, from whom all true
And perfect beauty did at first proceed.
He only fair, and what He fair hath made,
All other fair like flowers untimely fade.

This sonnet is a near perfect summary of the Augustinian concepts of *cupiditas* and *caritas*. The poet has clearly located his love in the realm of the spiritual. His desire to lose the self is represented by the elision of himself and the lady as described previously, while his attempted transcendence of the physical finds its expression here. However, as sonnet 72 hints may be the case, this doctrine is an ideal which the poet cannot live up to, and the profession of a purely spiritual love is undermined by the subsequent sonnets. Sonnet 81 emblazons the beloved in the conventional manner, praising her “fair golden hair”, “the rose in her red cheeks”, “her breast like a rich laden bark” containing “precious merchandise”. The poet seems to remember himself in the sestet and attempts to rescue the sonnet from the octave’s *cupiditas*, by praising above all “the gate

with pearls and rubies richly dight” as the portal “through which her words so wise do make their way / to bear the message of her gentle sprite”. However, it seems his resolve is fading quickly, as in 83 he risks regressing into the realm of the physical if his desire cannot be restrained. This retrograde step is signalled by the fact that the sonnet is a virtual repetition of sonnet 35, the only change being the substitution of the word “having” for “seeing” in line 6:

My hungry eyes, through greedy covetise
 Still to behold the object of their pain:
 With no contentment can themselves suffice,
 But having pine, and having not complain.
 For lacking it, they cannot life sustain,
 And seeing it, they gaze on it the more:
 In their amazement, like Narcissus vain
 Whose eyes him starv'd: so plenty makes me poor.
 Yet are mine eyes so filled with the store
 Of that fair sight, that nothing else they brook:
 But loath the things which they did like before,
 And can no more on them endure to look.
 All this world's glory seemeth vain to me,
 And all their shows but shadows saving she.

The invocation of the Narcissus myth at this stage is significant as it shows that the transcendence of physical desire has not yet been achieved, and that the poet, and his poetry, still risk falling into a vicious cycle of concupiscent desire which can never fulfil the spiritual need with which it is at odds. Here there is no attempt by the poet to convince either himself or the reader that that which sets his lady apart from the world of “vain” “shadows” is anything more than the “fair sight” of her physical beauty, which his “greedy eyes” still “covetise” despite his previous affirmations to the contrary. That he is troubled by this (not entirely unexpected) turn of events is evident from the sonnet immediately following (84), which begins by addressing what Larsen calls “his carnal self”.²⁹

Let not one spark of filthy lustful fire
 Break out, that may her sacred peace molest:
 Ne one light glance of sensual desire
 Attempt to work her gentle minds unrest.
 (Am. 84, ll. 1-4)

²⁹ Larsen (ed.), “*Amoretti*”, p. 54.

Instead, he bids his “pure affections bred in spotless breast / and modest thoughts breathed from well-tempered sprites / go visit her in her chaste bower of rest / accompanied with angelic delights” (ll. 5-8). Yet it appears that he is trying to conceal his “filthy lustful fire” from the lady lest she become angry with him, rather than purge himself of such troubling thoughts, when he cautions: “but speak no word to her of these sad plights / which her too constant stiffness doth constrain” (ll. 11-12). Moreover, it seems that the poet’s “sensual desire” has not gone unnoticed by his peers, as sonnet 85 sees him defend himself against accusations of mere flattery: “The world that cannot deem of worthy things / when I do praise her, say I do but flatter” (ll. 1-2). Indeed, the furious invective of sonnet 86, which curses the “venomous tongue tipt with vile adders sting ... that with false forged lies, which thou didst tell / in my poor love did stir up coals of ire” (l. 1, ll. 7-8), leaves the reader with no choice but to conclude that the poet’s attempt to conceal the “sad plights” of sonnet 84 has ultimately been unsuccessful. The concluding three sonnets treat of a period of absence from the beloved, in which the poet wanders mournfully through a darkness both literal and metaphorical.

Sonnet 85 again reveals the faltering nature of the poet’s attempt at transcending the physical desire which has angered his lady:

Since I have lacked the comfort of that light,
 The which was wont to lead my thoughts astray:
 I wander as in darkness of the night,
 Afraid of every dangers least dismay.
 Ne ought I see, though in the clearest day,
 When others gaze upon their shadows vain:
 But th’only image of that heavenly ray,
 Whereof some glance doth in mine eye remain.
 Of which beholding the Idea plain,
 Through contemplation of my purest part:
 With light thereof I do myself sustain,
 And thereon feed my love-affamisht heart.
 But with such brightness whilst I fill my mind,
 I starve my body and mine eyes do blind.

The final couplet makes it clear that, despite the disparaging tone of line 6, the poet’s superior method of contemplation of the soul, expressed here in terms of the Platonic “Idea” in order to emphasise the spiritual nature of the relationship to the “heavenly ray” that is his lady, falls short

of the total fulfilment of the poet's desire as he still yearns after the physical touch and sight of his beloved. The closing sonnet of the sequence reaffirms this reading. The poet, representing himself as a personification of the dove who "sits mourning for the absence of her mate" (l. 2), complains that the only thing "under heaven" that can relieve him of his pain is "her own joyous sight / whose sweet aspect both God and man can move" (ll. 10-11). These concluding sonnets consistently undermine the notion that the denial of physical desire in favour of a Platonic union of souls is enough to sustain the lover, whose physical separation from the beloved engenders a notably Petrarchan state of limbo, the living death in which the poet finds himself in the final couplet of sonnet 89:

Dark is my day, whiles her fair light I miss,
And dead my life that wants such lively bliss.
(*Am.* 89, ll. 13-14)

Thus, like its predecessor, *Astrophil and Stella*, the *Amoretti* ends in despair. Despite this, it is, in Dubrow's terms, a "successful" sonnet sequence, at least in the sense that the poet has succeeded in winning the lady. The powerlessness and helplessness he feels at the close is a temporary state, for as Larsen points out: "in *Faerie Queene* IV.viii.3-12 the dove, by leading Belphebe back to Timias overcomes their separation. Thus by implication the separation of the lovers here will also be overcome".³⁰ What is not evident at the close of this sequence, however, is the wholesale indictment of desire that characterises *Astrophil and Stella*. For Astrophil there is no struggle between the physical and the spiritual – all that exists is physical desire, and all that is important is its fulfilment or denial. The poet of the *Amoretti* on the other hand, is troubled by the nature of desire itself, even after he has successfully courted his lady and is about to marry her. Although his attempts to privilege the spiritual above the physical do not ultimately prove convincing, he is at least possessed of sufficient self-awareness to engage with the moral implications of his desire both for himself and his beloved, and, moreover, one feels that he is sincere in his efforts to overcome this perceived obstacle. What we are left with as readers of Spenser's sequence is a tacit

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 225.

acknowledgement that physical or material desire is an unavoidable element of human love – a similar conclusion, I argue, to that reached at the close of the *Rvf*. For Petrarch, the acceptance of the inability to overcome that desire, be it for Laura or for poetic fame, leads to the Hymn to the Virgin – viewed varyingly as a plea for divine intercession, the sublimation of the desire for Laura and/or the justification for his pursuit of poetic fame. For Spenser, as a Protestant, such an ending was unthinkable for obvious reasons. However, unlike Sidney, he was not willing to roundly condemn physical desire as wholly unredemptive *per se*. Under certain circumstances, it would seem, physical desire could be rendered acceptable provided it complemented “the lesson which the Lord us taught” and found sanction there.

10. Epithalamion and Protestant Marriage Doctrine

We are left in no doubt by the addition of the *Epithalamion*, the marriage hymn which rescues the work as a whole from the despair of the closing sonnets of the *Amoretti* sequence, that Spenser saw the institution of marriage as the divinely sanctioned arena in which physical desire could be consummated without prejudice to the immortal soul. Crucially, this conclusion is indicative of a deliberately programmatic approach by the self-styled “New Poete” to the nascent, self-consciously English and Protestant literature, intended to “illustrate England’s fame / daunting thereby our neighbours ancient pride / that do for poesie challenge chieftest name”.³¹ In the particular context of the *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, this approach had as its aim the furthering of the Protestant perspective on the reform of marriage laws which was current before and during Spenser’s lifetime.

The issue of marriage in Elizabethan England is multi-faceted and complex, and lies largely beyond the scope of this investigation. However, the nature of marriage in relation to the Queen’s status as a single woman as well as the controversial topic of clerical marriage meant that for a committed Protestant such as Spenser, a re-examination of the theology of marriage constituted a central element in Reformist thought, and this is reflected both in Europe and

³¹ From the sonnet “G. W. Senior to the Author” which prefaced the *Amoretti* (p. 67 in Larsen’s edition).

England throughout the sixteenth century. Erasmus, the great Humanist scholar and advocate of ecclesiastical reform (whom William W. Barker describes as “a potent force” for “those writing or reading during the 1590’s”), had penned an *Encomium matrimonii* in 1518, and took up the theme again in his *Institutio christiani matrimonii* of 1526.³² Carrie Euler has examined the influence in England of the Dutch Reformist Heinrich Bullinger, whose treatise on the scriptural authority of the covenant of marriage, *Der Christlich Eestand* (1540), became “the most frequently published continental Protestant work in England during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI”.³³ Translated by Miles Coverdale in 1541 as *The Christen state of Matrimonye*, it had run to eight editions by 1553 and was only displaced in popularity by the translations of Calvin’s *Catechism* and *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which appeared during Elizabeth’s reign. It is difficult to say with certainty to what degree Spenser was directly acquainted with Bullinger’s text, however, as a Cambridge-educated man with a keen interest in the political and religious questions of the day, we may reasonably assume that he was familiar with the arguments contained therein.³⁴ In particular, Bullinger held a prelapsarian view of marriage as an institution uncorrupted by original sin, which is helpful in understanding the manner in which Spenser resolved the dilemma of the poet in the *Amoretti* regarding the persistence of his physical desire for the beloved. Invoking the authority of Scripture by citing the example of Adam and Eve, Bullinger argued that marriage “was ordeyned, even in the begynninge of the worlde, before the fall of man, in al prosperitie” and that “After the fall of Ada[m] and Eve, ther was nothing added further vnto wedlok, nether altered in those thinges that were ordeyned, sauing that by reason of the fall & synne, ther was sorow and payne layed vpo[n] them both, & vpon us all”.³⁵ This view of marriage, as Euler points out, “ran contrary to the medieval theory, based loosely on Augustine, that God reestablished marriage as an accommodation for humanity’s concupiscence” and was directly related to the belief that “the

³² Barker, W. W., “Erasmus, Desiderius”, in Hamilton, A. C. (ed.), *The Spenser Encyclopaedia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 251.

³³ Euler, C., “Heinrich Bullinger, Marriage and the English Reformation: ‘The Christen state of Matrimonye’ in England, 1540-53”, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 34, 2 (Special Edition on “Marriage in Early Modern Europe”; Summer, 2003): 367-393 (p. 369).

³⁴ See Klein, L. M., “‘Let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought’: Protestant Marriage and the Revision of Petrarchan Loving in Spenser’s *Amoretti*”, *Spenser Studies*, 10 (1989): 109-137

³⁵ Cited in Euler, “Heinrich Bullinger”, p. 372.

worke of matrimonye” – sexual intercourse between husband and wife – bore no taint of original sin.³⁶ This doctrine is echoed by Spenser in the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, whose resolution to the traditional Petrarchan struggle between the soul and the body is invested with the authority of Holy Scripture as interpreted by this influential contemporary Protestant thinker. However, that this resolution required Spenser to break with the sonnet cycle and compose what is believed to be England’s first epithalamium is surely evidence of a continuing mistrust of the sonnet form, for if we are to take the *Amoretti* as a single work and disregard the addition of the *Epithalamion*, Spenser’s sequence ends unsatisfactorily and the protagonist follows his predecessor Astrophil down into the pit of despair and frustrated desires, albeit with a far greater degree of self-awareness. Nevertheless, the *Amoretti* engages with a significant pre-occupation of the *Rvf* – that is the nature of desire and its implication for the soul. The desire to lose the self which Dasenbrock identifies as common to Petrarch and Spenser and the recourse to the divine which occurs in the Hymn to the Virgin and the *Epithalamion* place Spenser much closer to Petrarch than to his contemporary Sidney.

11. Conclusion

Astrophil and Stella is Sidney’s contribution to a debate which already enjoyed a long history in the Western tradition, from Aristotle to Petrarch, via significant contributions by Boethius and St. Augustine in the meantime: the dangers of textual misinterpretation. Sidney’s view is informed both by his frustrating experience of life at the royal court and his reservations regarding the morality expressed by the conventional Petrarchan sonnet sequence. Astrophil becomes a conflation of Sidney himself and the rivals at court whom he both envied and scorned for their willingness and ability to “play the game” and seek at any cost the royal favour that would guarantee a successful career. While holding himself to be above such petty intrigues, he was likewise acutely aware of the practicalities of the life of a courtier, and his desperation to secure a royal appointment which would ensure the means by which he could continue his often

³⁶ *ibid.*

extravagant lifestyle seems to have engendered a certain amount of self-loathing. Given the obvious links between the protagonist of his sonnet sequence and the real-life Sidney, his portrayal of Astrophil as foolish, impetuous, vain and the author of his own misfortune seems to speak to this sense of worthlessness and underachievement. However, the frequency of the metaliterary tropes and images in *Astrophil and Stella* indicate that Sidney's sequence is more than just a semi-fictional literary diary of a disenchanted courtier. Sidney certainly was no Italophobe, having spent a considerable amount of time in both Venice and Padua in 1573-74 as part of an extended European tour, befriending the philosopher Giordano Bruno with whom he maintained a correspondence throughout his life.³⁷ Even so, he clearly shared Ascham's concern about the potential of literature, and the love lyric in particular, to captivate the reader to the degree that the attainment of worldly beauty supersedes more important pursuits. That he chose the *Rvf* and the *Triumphs* as the primary textual points of reference for his portrayal of the devastating effects of obsessive earthly desire demonstrates his particular concern over the dominance of Petrarchan love, which functioned not only as a model for literature, but also, given Queen Elizabeth's Laura complex, for political discourse.³⁸

While Ascham was primarily concerned with matters of the spirit and the final destination of the soul, Sidney fears the neglect of public duty, perhaps suggesting that both his failed suit as well as his private literary activity has played a part in his public failure. Of course, in Elizabethan England, service to one's country could not be easily separated from service to one's God, given the Queen's position as head of both state and Church. Astrophil's fate may be intended to serve as a warning to others, recalling the passage in the defence which describes the positive effect of the portrayal of negative examples:

...if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out (as the tragedy writer answered to one that misliked the show of such persons) so manacled as they little animate folks to follow them.

(p. 225, lines 539-50)

³⁷ For Sidney's time in Italy, see Osborn, J. M., *Young Philip Sidney* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 105-201. For his relationship with Bruno, see Gatti, H., "Petrarch, Sidney, Bruno", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 149-60.

³⁸ See King, J., "Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen", *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43, 1 (Spring, 1990): 30-74 (pp. 30-31).

However, the logic of this strategy when applied to *Astrophil and Stella* is self-contradictory as it presumes that the reader has been able to interpret the text correctly. Given Sidney's dying wish that his manuscripts (including the as yet unpublished *Astrophil and Stella*) be consigned to the flames, we may speculate that he himself remained ultimately unconvinced by this argument.

While Sidney shied away from explicit engagement with the spiritual consequences of Petrarchan love, Spenser is the first English poet to confront the Christian implications of Petrarchan desire in their full horror. He does so with the unflinching resolve and unshakable moral conviction that had now become the preserve of the Reformed Elizabethan. By inextricably tying his sequence to Reformist liturgy and doctrine, he rescued the Petrarchan literary mode from the sinful *cupiditas* which Petrarch spent a literary lifetime attempting to escape. The poetics which underpins the *Amoretti* should not be thought of as being conceived in outright Aschamesque hostility to Petrarch and the other authors of the *Scholemaster's* various "merry books of Italy". Indeed, we may even question to what extent the *Rvf* and *Triumphs* may be designated "merry books" to begin with. Rather, Spenser sets out to demonstrate the novel opportunities afforded to Reformed writers by the enlightened position they now occupied with respect to their Catholic counterparts. Spenser's faith gives him the confidence and the assuredness to engage with the spiritual aspect of Petrarchan desire which previous generations had shied away from. Protestant theology of marriage permits him to break new literary ground and compose an amatory sonnet sequence without prejudice to his faith. The "New Poete" has arrived and asserted his moral and poetic superiority over his predecessors.

Paradoxically, Spenser's *Amoretti*, the most comprehensive English engagement with Petrarch and the *Rvf* to date, signals the beginning of the end for Petrarchism in English. Perhaps Spenser's contemporaries and immediate successors now felt that there was nowhere left to go without attempting a complete rupture with Petrarchan modes of expression? Or perhaps Spenser himself made the decline of Petrarchism inevitable? The latter scenario seems to be more likely. Spenser had shown how the formal and tropic conventions of Petrarchism could be used in order to

undermine the authority of the very model upon which they drew. Later, Donne and Shakespeare would become the main proponents of an unofficial, heterogeneous but highly visible school of anti-Petrarchism, which finally rendered “icy fires” and “living deaths” passé and abhorrent to the English literary sensibility.³⁹ In many ways, the effect of this rupture is still felt today and goes some way towards accounting for the distaste modern readers feel when confronted with what they presume to be a stifling conventionality in Petrarch’s vernacular poetry. My next chapter will not examine the post-Spenserian decline of Petrarch’s influence, since, by its very nature, such a process implies a necessity for poets to distance themselves from the Petrarchan model. Instead, I will examine the early fortunes of what has now become thought of as the lesser of Petrarch’s vernacular works, the *Triumphs*, with particular reference to the two earliest translations of the poem, the first by the Henrician translator and diplomat Henry Parker, Lord Morley (1480/81-1556) and the second by the Scottish poet and courtier William Fowler (1560/61-1612).

³⁹ For post-Spenserian Petrarchism, see Braden, G., “Beyond Frustration: Petrarchan Laurels in the Seventeenth Century”, *Studies in English Literature*, 26 (1986): 5-23.

Chapter III – Petrarch’s *Triumph* in Early Modern Britain

1. Introduction

This chapter will examine two translations of Petrarch’s *Triumph*, the first by Henry Parker, Lord Morley (c. 1530), and the second by William Fowler (1587). Although separated by less than sixty years, these translations of the same source text reveal the remarkable impact of the Reformation on literature in English. Morley’s text, which I will argue was completed before Henry’s disestablishment of the Catholic Church, presents a politically and religiously neutral translation, which, mistranslations aside, constitutes a reasonably faithful and transparent translation of Petrarch’s text. Fowler, on the other hand, writing at a time in which James VI’s Scotland was in the throes of a battle for the souls of his subjects between the old and new Churches, wears his Protestant convictions on his sleeve as the rhetoric of reformists such as John Knox colonises his version of Petrarch’s text. Fowler’s name is often mentioned in connection with the “Castalian Band”, understood until recently to be a group of Scottish court poets operating under the guidance of King James VI. Whilst acknowledging Priscilla Bawcutt’s misgivings surrounding the existence of such an organised and coherent group of poets operating at Holyrood,¹ I nevertheless follow Sebastiaan Verweij’s lead in upholding the usefulness of the term as a short-hand for the collective of loosely interrelated Scottish poets who flourished during the reign of James VI/I and shortly thereafter.²

This chapter engages with issues which have been brought to light by previous scholarship, namely the controversy surrounding the dating of Morley’s translation and the Protestant revisionism evident in Fowler’s engagement with Petrarch. Although much work has recently been done on Fowler’s Petrarchan sonnet sequence *The Tarantula of Love*, his version of the *Triumph* remains largely neglected. I will propose a dating of Morley’s translation which

¹ See Bawcutt, P., “James VI’s Castalian Band: A Modern Myth”, *The Scottish Historical Review*, 80, 2, 210 (2001): 251-259.

² See Verweij, S., “The Manuscripts of William Fowler: A Revaluation of ‘The Tarantula of Love’, ‘A Sonnet Sequence’, and ‘Of Death’”, *Scottish Studies Review*, 8 (2007): 9–23 (p. 10).

precedes that proposed by his editor, D. D. Carnicelli, as well as outlining new evidence which allows us to connect Fowler's *Triumphs* with a very specific family of Italian editions of Petrarch's vernacular poetry. I will examine the implications of this for Fowler's translation strategy in the light of the connection between his text and the Italian commentary which would seem his most likely source of information regarding his source text's meaning. A comparative analysis of both texts will reveal the colossal influence on literary imitation of the Elizabethan Reformation which took place during the years that separate the texts in question.

2. The *Triumphs* – A Re-Evaluation

As Nicola Gardini explains, Petrarch's *Triumphs* has not been well served by certain critical tendencies which became prevalent in twentieth-century criticism, and tended to ignore the importance of the text within the context of its reception in the century and a half immediately following Petrarch's death:

Ormai [...] svalutati da un canonico paragone con il modello dantesco e con lo stesso *Canzoniere*, oltretutto da una sopravvalutazione della loro incompletezza, i *Trionfi* hanno rappresentato, invece, nei primi secoli della tradizione volgare un'opera influente e rispettata (più ancora della *Commedia* e non meno del *Canzoniere*, con cui formavano un unico volume, quasi i due testi costituissero un solo organismo).³

In fact, the *Triumphs* occupies a unique position both within the Petrarchan canon and in the broader context of the cultural landscape of *trecento* Italy. As C.F. Goffis explained in his important 1951 study of the poem:

Le due fondamentali interpretazioni dei *Trionfi* partono da punti di vista antitetici: l'antica, risalente ai commenti del '400, vuole vedere nel poemetto una rappresentazione simbolica dei "vari stati" dell'uomo, ossia l'amore vinto dalla pudicizia nella gioventù, poi la morte vincitrice degli uomini nella vecchiaia, e dopo la loro morte, la fama, la dimenticanza nel tempo, l'eternità; la moderna [...] cerca nei *Trionfi* la rappresentazione dei casi di Laura e del P., in una specie di "autobiografia allegorica".⁴

³ Gardini, *Per una biblioteca*, p. 286.

⁴ Goffis, C. F., *Originalità dei "Trionfi"* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1951), p. 29.

To this, we may now add a further modern development, whereby scholars view the work as defying categorisation, often preferring to define it negatively, that is in terms of what it is not. It is not a conventional medieval dream vision, as exemplified by the *Roman de la Rose*; neither is it an episodic moral allegory in the vein of the *Commedia*; nor does it concentrate its focus primarily on the theme of love, like Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* or Petrarch's own *Rvf*. Yet, while it is none of these things, it draws on each of the works mentioned (with the possible exception of Boccaccio's), and on the traditions that engendered them, which they in turn shaped: it is written in a vernacular language; it describes a vision or a dream which leads the protagonist to re-evaluate his life; it is populated by characters from history and literature who serve as *exempla* of the particular virtue under discussion; it poignantly recounts a tale of love in which the beloved is separated from her lover by an untimely death.

More recent scholarship has tended to acknowledge the ambiguities inherent in the *Trionfi* without necessarily attempting to resolve them.⁵ Guardiani sees the *Triumphs* as the resolution to this conflict, making it "the centre piece in the total body of Petrarch's work, halfway between the two generic extremes of *Rvf* and *Africa*".⁶ In this sense, Guardiani's view is more typical of the general trend in criticism, by virtue of which the *Triumphs* has increasingly come to be viewed as the synthesis of an aged Petrarch's views on literature, history, philosophy and theology.⁷ It is, in effect, a manifesto of his particular brand of Christian Humanism. Its imitative strategy sees Petrarch draw not only on traditional classical *auctores* such as Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Cicero and Livy but also on the less frequently imitated writers of the Silver Age and beyond like Seneca, Claudian, Ausonius, Curtius, Eutropius, Aulus Gellius and Justin. This complex weaving of a

⁵ See Guardiani, F., "The Literary Impact of the 'Trionfi'" in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 259-68 (p. 262). Also M. Santagata's introduction to Pacca and Paolino (eds.), *Trionfi*; see also Cachey Jr., T. J., "Between Petrarch and Dante: Prolegomenon to a Critical Discourse", in Baranski, Z., and Cachey Jr., T. J. (eds.), *Petrarch and Dante* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 3-49.

⁶ Guardiani, "The Literary Impact of the 'Trionfi'", p. 262.

⁷ See Baranski, Z., "A Provisional Definition of Petrarch's 'Triumphs'", in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 63-83 (p. 65).

broad tapestry of classical influences was to prove a fruitful strategy for later Humanists of the Renaissance, such as Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola.⁸

However, it is not only in Petrarch's selection of sources *per se* that the innovative nature of the text becomes manifest, but rather the ends to which he employs them. Recent studies in this area have proposed some interesting solutions to problems which had hitherto not been satisfactorily explained by scholarship. For example, the most frequently cited stumbling block to the modern reader's enjoyment of the *Triumphs* is the vast catalogue of names which fills over half the poem, including all three *capitoli* of the "Triumphus Fame" and large sections of the "Triumphus Cupidinis" and the "Triumphus Pudicitie". The catalogue was, of course, a well established poetic technique in both the classical and medieval traditions. Gabriele Erasmi goes so far as to call it "one of the most archaic features of poetic activity".⁹ The general consensus regarding Petrarch's motivation for employing this device had long been that the poet was attempting to dazzle the contemporary reader with his erudition and familiarity with classical, biblical and medieval sources. He was, in essence, showing off. Bergin, for example, concludes that Petrarch "lacked the discretion (God's gift to Dante) to keep the informational drive under control".¹⁰ For Verdicchio, however, this analysis is wide of the mark. He acknowledges that "enumeration in Petrarch departs from the synecdochal type found in Dante's *Commedia*".¹¹ Rather, Petrarch engages in a strategy whereby "enumeration is pushed to its limits only to arrive at the realisation that it is impossible to enumerate everything".¹² He believes that the poet is fully in control of his art, "consciously disrupting a commonly abused medieval device" as part of "a wider polemical stance against [the *Triumphs*'] immediate medieval models – from which Dante's *Commedia* [...] is perhaps not exempt".¹³ Petrarch's ultimate goal, according to Verdicchio, is to question the relationship of historical and literary narrative to the reality and truth it claims to

⁸ See Tateo, "Sulla ricezione umanistica", in Berra, *I "Triumphs"*, pp. 375-401. Also, Corsaro, A., "Fortuna e imitazione nel Cinquecento" in the same volume, pp. 429-85.

⁹ Erasmi, G., "Petrarch's 'Trionfi': The Poetics of Humanism", in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 161-74 (p. 170). See also Eco, U., *Vertigine della Lista* (Milan: Bompiani, 2009).

¹⁰ Cited in Verdicchio, M., "The Rhetoric of Enumeration in Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 135-46 (p. 136).

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 138.

represent. Petrarch's inevitable "failure" to enumerate the totality of his vision is therefore crucial to the polemic in which Verdicchio believes him to be engaged. By highlighting the discrepancy between the narrative and the historical reality, "enumeration [...] disrupts the aesthetic to call attention to itself as rhetoric and in doing so suspends the epistemological claim that its language always and inevitably makes".¹⁴

Verdicchio finds further evidence of this challenge to *auctoritas* in the passages which question the reliability of Virgil's account of the story of Dido and Aeneas. Petrarch even subverts the ambiguity which he himself established in the narrative of the *Rvf*. As we have seen in previous chapters, during Laura's post-mortem visitation of the poet in "Triumphus Mortis II", she informs Petrarch (and the reader) in no uncertain terms that, far from being unaware or contemptuous of the poet's feelings towards her, she was, in fact, equally as enamoured with her lover as he was with her (*TMII*, ll 88-92).

Elsewhere, Gabriele Erasmi views the composition of the catalogues as evidence of Petrarch's Humanistic world view:

The originality of the enumerations [...] lies in the coherent juxtaposition of ancient and modern situations. These are not distributed according to a moral criterion in separate categories of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise; instead, they merely stress a common aspect of suffering which is the effect of love, since the latter, as a sensual desire, cannot be satisfied.¹⁵

Zygmunt Baranski sees a similar mechanism at work in Petrarch's treatment of the triumph as a literary device:

Thanks to Petrarch's novel recovery of the full connotative range of the triumph, which serves as the bridge between the ancient and modern world, and between his public and private faces, he not only aimed to reveal in the *Trionfi* his debts to the classical tradition, but also to highlight how he had successfully and originally modified this via his Christianity, via his use of the vernacular, and via his personal experience as symbolized in his love for Laura.¹⁶

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 144.

¹⁵ Erasmi, "Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", p. 168.

¹⁶ Baranski, "A Provisional Definition", p. 75.

Petrarch's generic originality has been highlighted by Paul Piehler, who terms Petrarch's method: "anti-allegorical, not that it was 'unallegorical' or hostile to allegory but rather in respect of that more specialized meaning of 'anti-', in the sense of 'opposition' or 'rivalling' (as in 'anti-pope')".¹⁷ Specifically, he notes Petrarch's refusal "to be carried away by the power of the dream, that is not to grant allegorical imagery the archetypal hypostatic integrity, the independent spiritual authority hitherto fundamental to medieval visionary experience".¹⁸ Piehler's study highlights the diminished importance that Petrarch ascribes to the *Triumph*'s other *potentiae* (such as Love, Fame, Death and Time) in comparison with earlier visionary allegories, most notably the *Roman de la Rose*, a work disparaged by Petrarch in his *epistola metrica* to Guido Gonzago (3, 30). In contrast to such works, Petrarch's protagonist never engages directly with any of the triumphal *potentiae*. Even when Laura visits him in the "Triumphus Mortis", she does so merely in the guise of the beloved, not as the personification of chastity who appeared in the previous *capitolo*. Her words relate to worldly affairs and provide personal consolation for the broken-hearted poet. They do not purport to reveal any transcendental truth to the reader in the manner of a Beatrice or a Lady Reason. Indeed, as the work progresses, the triumphal apparatus itself disappears and the *potentiae* become more abstract. The "Triumphus Temporis" and "Triumphus Eternitatis" display none of the conventional characteristics of allegory, and are more readily definable as unmediated and transparent poetic meditations in the metaphysical tradition. In the end, it is the poet's own heart in the "Triumphus Eternitatis" which interprets the vision and arrives at the truth, which is revealed to the reader unmediated by archetypal figures and allegorical abstractions.

3. The Dating of Morley's *Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke*

The issue of dating Morley's translation is a thorny one to say the least. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* states that the translation was undertaken "some time in the late 1520s or earlier in imitation of a translation of this work into French by Simon de

¹⁷ Piehler, P., "Image and Structure in Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 97-112 (p. 100).

¹⁸ *ibid.*

Bourgouyn, *valet-de-chambre* to François I’.¹⁹ Indeed, it is very likely that de Bourgouyn is the French translator to whom Morley refers in his dedicatory epistle to Lord Maltravers as “one of late dayes that was grome of the chaumber with that renowned and valyaunte Prynce of hyghe memorye, Fraunces the Frenche kynge, whose name I have forgotten, that dydde translate these tryumphes to that sayde kynge”.²⁰ Thus, if it were possible to establish a date for de Bourgouyn’s translation of the *Triumphs*, we would have a definite *terminus post quem* for Morley’s work. Originally, Franco Simone placed de Bourgouyn’s work in around 1530, which would provide a reasonably narrow window of less than twenty years within which Morley could have completed his translation.²¹ Unfortunately, we have now known for some years that this date is too late, as one of the manuscript copies of the work has been indisputably dated to a period between 1522 and 1524 (Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 6480).²² Even before this was discovered, however, the uncovering of a manuscript in a private collection has, in fact, proved that de Bourgouyn completed the work c. 1500, much earlier than was previously believed and therefore of little use in helping to determine the date of Morley’s work.²³

D. D. Carnicelli, the latest editor of Morley’s *Tryumphes* proposes a date of 1536 or 1537, when Morley had retired from Henry’s court and his interest in Italian literature seemed to be at its peak, as evidenced by his annotations of Machiavelli’s *Istorie Fiorentine* and *Il Principe*, which he sent to Thomas Cromwell as gifts around this time.²⁴ Robert Coogan, adopting a more philological approach, arrives at a date of between 1544 and 1547.²⁵ While both scholars agree that Morley probably translated from Vellutello’s edition of Petrarch, Coogan points out (based on research

¹⁹ Carley, J. P., “Parker, Henry, tenth Baron Morley (1480/81–1556)”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition Jan. 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21305>> [accessed 4 Apr., 2012].

²⁰ Carnicelli (ed.), *Lord Morley’s “Tryumphes”*, p. 31.

²¹ Simone, F., *The French Renaissance: Medieval Tradition and Italian Influence in Shaping the Renaissance in France*, trans. by H. Gaston Hall (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 218.

²² See Carley, J. P. and Orth, M. D., ““Plus que Assez”: Simon de Bourgouyn and his French Translations from Plutarch, Petrarch, and Lucian”, *Viator*, 14 (2003): 328–63 (p. 329).

²³ For a description of the manuscript in question, see König, E. and Bartz, G., *Boccaccio und Petrarca in Paris – Der Boccace des Nicolas-Joseph Foucault, Paris 1460–1470 – Der Petrarca der Anne de Polignac – Die früheste französische Trionfi-handschrift, Paris 1500* (Ramsen: Antiquariat Biebermühle, 1997), pp. 285, 304–306.

²⁴ Carnicelli (ed.), *Lord Morley’s “Tryumphes”*, pp. 10–11.

²⁵ Coogan, “Petrarch’s ‘Trionfi’”, pp. 316–17.

conducted by Ivy Mumford)²⁶ that the only known edition of that work at Henry's court was published in 1544, casting some doubt on Carnicelli's earlier dating. Of course, it is highly likely that other editions of Petrarch were available to Morley, particularly given the popularity of the *Triumph* at the time. If he did not own an edition himself, he may have had occasion to borrow one from a friend or to purchase one either in England or on one of his trips to France in 1520 and 1527. What is indisputable is that the translation was completed during Henry VIII's reign, as the dedicatory epistle specifies that the work was presented to "our late soveraygne Lorde of perpetuall memorye kynge Henrye theyghte, who as he was a Prynce above all other moste eccellente, so toke he the worke verye thankefullye".²⁷ Since Henry died in January of 1547, this provides a *terminus ante quem* of December 1546 for Morley's translation.²⁸ Practically speaking, however, it is likely that the manuscript was presented to Henry at an earlier date than this, as Morley comments in the Epistle that he was unsure what the King did with the work – if he had presented it to him as a New Year's gift, as seems likely, in late 1546 or early 1547, he surely would not have wondered what the King, who was to die less than four weeks later, had done with his gift.

The sheer number of editions of the *Triumph*, which was first printed in 1470, could be expected to dishearten anyone who wishes to locate the precise edition from which Morley translated. However, we are fortunate in this respect, as all editions before the 1501 Aldine edition may be discounted, exhibiting as they do a different order of *capitoli* from that which we find in Morley's *Tryumphes*, whose text corresponds with the standard order found in Petrarch's autograph manuscript in the Vatican Library (*Lat. 3195*), on which the Aldine edition of 1501, and all modern editions are based.²⁹

²⁶ Mumford, I. L., "Petrarchism in Early Tudor England", *Italian Studies*, 19 (1964): 56-63.

²⁷ Carnicelli (ed.), *Lord Morley's "Tryumphes"*, p. 42.

²⁸ See Carnicelli (ed.), *Lord Morley's "Tryumphes"*, p. 10.

²⁹ See Wilkins, "The Fifteenth-Century Editions". For a more recent and comprehensive summary of the many divergences between the different manuscripts and early printed editions of the *Triumph*, see Pasquini, E., "Il testo: fra autografo e i testimoni di collazione", in Berra (ed.), *I "Triumph"*, pp. 11-45.

The assertion that Morley translated from Vellutello is largely based upon textual analysis which aims to show that Morley's translation corresponds to the Italian text that appears in that edition. Coogan, for example, states the following:

[The Legnano edition of 1512], like the later manuscripts and most printed versions of the *Trionfi*, have the customary wording for lines 6 and 71 of the *Trionfo d'Amore* (II), that is, "passavan dolcemente lagrimando" and "notabil cosa, perché 'l tempo è leve". But the [Vellutello] edition of 1544 reads "passavan dolcemente ragionando" and "mirabel cosa, perché 'l tempo è leve". Morley's translation shows that he followed the latter reading: "Hand in hand they went in the prease / Reasonynge together they dyd not sease" and "Yf thou canst se in all this great arraye / Or ells perceauē in all this louers daunce / So wonderfull and so strange a chaunce".³⁰

While it is conceivable that Morley, for the sake of style, could have rendered the prosaic "notabil" with the more emphatic "wonderfull", Coogan's first example is certainly compelling. Other textual particulars, noted here for the first time, appear to strengthen the argument that Morley used Vellutello's edition as his source text:

- 1) TMI, l.1 in Vellutello reads "*Questa leggiadra e gloriosa donna*", while the Aldine/standard edition has "*Quella leggiadra e gloriosa donna*". Morley translates "*This most noble and most gloryouse lady*".
- 2) TCI, l. 25 in Vellutello reads "*Contra lequal non val elmo ne scudo*", while the Aldine/standard edition has "*nulla temea, però non maglia o scudo*". Morley gives us "*Against whom no shyldē nor helme so sheene*".
- 3) TFI, ll. 78-79 in Vellutello reads "*Rimirando, ove l'occhio oltra non varca / Vidi il giusto Ezechia e Sanson vasto*", while the Aldine/standard edition has "*colui vidi, oltra il qual occhio non varca, / la cui inobedienza à il mondo guasto*", a reference to Adam's sin which saw him cast out of the Garden of Eden. Morley clearly follows the former reading when he translates these lines as "*Thus here and there castynge myne eyes alwaye / I sawe the iuste and good kynge Ezechias / And Sampson that so stronge and myghtye was*". [emphasis added]

³⁰ Coogan, "Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", p. 317.

At this point Coogan's claim that Morley translated from Vellutello's 1544 edition appears to be a strong one – we know that the edition in question was to be found at Henry's court during a period when Morley could have undertaken its translation; it was the most popular edition in Tudor England and Patricia Thomson has made a strong case for Wyatt's use of it in his translations and imitations of Petrarch;³¹ certain textual peculiarities indicate that Morley followed the unorthodox readings which Vellutello had "emended" from the more authoritative Aldine edition of 1501; the order of the *capitoli* in Vellutello's edition is reflected in Morley's version. However, the passages listed above, though they are helpful in ruling out a large swathe of the incunabula and post-incunabula *Triumphs*, are not unique to Vellutello's edition, appearing also in popular editions with commentaries by Gesualdo (1533) and Daniello (1541).

Of course, Morley may have used an earlier edition of Vellutello's Petrarch, but had he done so, one would expect him to employ the commentary as a translator's aid in order to fill gaps in his knowledge of both the language and the subject matter. No such evidence can be found to support this within the *Tryumphes*. The following passage, for example, is typical of the inaccuracies which appear regularly in Morley's text:³²

Poco era fuor de la comune strada;
 Quando Socrate e Lelio vidi in prima;
 Con lor più lunga via convien ch'io vada.
 O qual coppia d'amici; che n'en rima,
 Poria, n'en prosa assai ornar ne'n versi;
 Si come di virtu nuda si stime.
 Con questi duo cercai monti diversi
 Andando tutti tre sempre ad un giogo:
 A questi le mie piaghe tutte apersi:
 Da costor non mi puo tempo, ne luogo
 Divider mai; si come spero e bramo;
 In fin al cener del funereo rogo.
 (TCIV, ll. 67-78)

³¹ See Thomson, "Wyatt and the Petrarchan Commentators".

³² When comparing English versions of the *Triumphs* by Morley and with the Italian original, I cite from *Il Petrarca: con dichiarazioni non più stampate* (Venice: Domenico Nicolini, 1573), without modernising spelling, as this was the edition followed by Fowler (as I show later) and contains the same text as Morley's likely edition. When quoting passages from the *Triumphs* in isolation, I cite from Pacca and Paolino (eds.), *Trionfi*.

Unneth was a lytle past the rule
 Of the common lernars in scole
 When fyrste I dyd Socrates workes se
 And Lelius howe fayre they dyd agree.
 Wyth these men I entende styll to goo
 Which I have named hether unto,
 As those whose laude no man can well rehearse,
 Neyther in ryme in prose, nor yet in verse.
 Wyth these two and dyverse other in my dayes
 Have I searched many dyvers wayes
 And from these noo man can me devyde,
 But for alwayes I wyll with them abyde
 Untyll the houre come that I shall dye.
 (*The Tryumphe of Love*, IV, ll. 75-88)

It is clear that Morley has made the (quite understandable) mistake of reading “Socrate” as the famous Greek philosopher, instead of Petrarch’s friend Ludwig van Kempen, whose nickname was “Socrates” and to whom the *Familiars* is dedicated. Likewise, Morley appears to assume that “Lelio” (the pseudonym of another of Petrarch’s acquaintances) is either an author whose works influenced Petrarch, or more probably “Laelius”, the protagonist of Cicero’s *De amicitia*. He thus interprets the remainder of the passage metaphorically, adding “and dyverse” as a reference to the authors previously mentioned in the procession, and omitting the lines “Andando tutti tre sempre ad un giogo: / A questi le mie piaghe tutte apersi:”, which no longer make sense in the context in which Morley has interpreted the passage. If Morley had been using Vellutello’s edition, even a cursory glance at the commentary (which appears alongside the text of the poem) would have furnished him with the information necessary to avoid such an error. Vellutello writes:

...il Po[eta] ne presenti ver[si] dice ch’egli era poco fuori de la comune strada de volgari, quando vide prima Socrate e Lelio, cio è quando egli a principio conobbe questi due suoi grandi & affetionati amici, come per molte sue epi[stole] fra l’altre sue latine a loro scritte si conosce.³³

Other similar instances occur throughout the *Tryumphes* (which will be explored below in comparison with the corresponding passages in Fowler’s text), and a good amount of Morley’s “deviations” from the source text can be put down to these *lacunae* in his knowledge either of the personages mentioned by Petrarch, or of the Italian language itself. The fact that a commentary

³³ *Il Petrarcha con l’espositione di Alessandro Vellutello* (Venice: Erasmo, 1541), f. 182^v.

such as Vellutello's could have filled these *lacunae*, leads us to the conclusion that Morley was using either an uncommented edition (most likely one of the Aldines), or a sparsely commented text which is as yet unknown to scholars. Even so, such passages reveal Morley to be a distinctly average poet whose grasp of Italian was unfortunately not up to the task of translating a text of the *Triumphs*'s complexity. He simply did not possess the talent of his contemporaries, Wyatt and Surrey. Nevertheless, despite the fact that his claim not to have deviated much from the sense of Petrarch's poem may not stand up to rigorous scrutiny, it is to be taken in good faith, and such deviations were most likely unintentional. Unlike Wyatt and Surrey, who, in accordance with the Humanistic principle of literary *imitatio*, sought to re-contextualise their source texts, and foreshadowed the defining creative impulse of the Elizabethan Renaissance by adapting them to their own personal circumstances, Morley's intention is to provide a faithful, or "transparent" in modern critical parlance, translation of Petrarch's text.

Of course, this does not preclude the possibility of the translator's subconscious cultural, political or religious bias being brought to bear on the translation process. However, it is not feasible to argue that any such instances occur in the *Tryumphes*. Indeed, it is difficult to infer Morley's personal convictions from his writings with any great degree of certainty, for while Morley proves himself to be a rather uninspired poet, his skill as a politician is evident wherever we look. Perhaps the greatest testament to this aspect of his character is the fact that he managed to negotiate the stormy seas of Tudor public life while remaining in the favour of such disparate characters as Henry VIII, Thomas Cromwell, Cardinal Wolsey, Anne Boleyn, Edward VI, Queen Mary and the young Princess Elizabeth. The one thing we can say about Morley's politics with certainty is that his loyalty to the crown as an institution was beyond question.

Returning once more to the issue of dating Morley's *Tryumphes* with this in mind, it seems that the apolitical nature of his translation provides a clue as to the period in which the work was undertaken, as well as the approximate date of its presentation to the King. Marie Axton proposes that the *Tryumphes* was undertaken either in the early 1520's or slightly before as a token of gratitude for the King's restoration of Henry Parker to the vacant barony of Morley, with all the

privileges that such a position entailed.³⁴ For this to be possible, Morley would have had to have perused de Bourgouyn's translation either in England pre-1520, or at the Field of Cloth of Gold in that year. Axton seems keen to establish the earliest date possible for Morley's translation, but her suggestion that the years 1514/5 could have brought de Bourgouyn's translation to England due to a flurry of diplomatic exchanges between the two countries is not backed up by any evidence. It is certainly possible that the ceremonial posturing undertaken at the 1520 meeting between Henry and Francis I could have included a display of the French King's most prized treasures, among which Morley numbers that which we presume to be de Bourgouyn's translation of the *Triumph*. Again, however, there is no particular evidence to suggest that this possible scenario actually occurred.

James P. Carley, however, points out that Morley's Epistle, written in the early- to mid-1550's, refers to the *Triumph*'s French translator as a "grome of the chaumber...with Fraunceys the French king". Morley, like most English courtiers at the time, spoke French well, and it is likely that "grome of the chaumber" is his translation of the French "valet-de-chambre". Documentary evidence suggests that de Bourgouyn was not awarded this title until around 1526, so it is unlikely that Morley would have referred to him in these terms had he seen the translation at an earlier date. Morley's second and final visit to France took place in 1527, on a diplomatic mission to Amiens, at which point de Bourgouyn would have occupied this particular position in Francis's court. It is difficult to imagine that Morley would have forgotten de Bourgouyn's name, yet kept up with his career over a period of some years, so we must conclude that Morley saw the translation sometime after 1526 (when de Bourgouyn occupied the position of *valet-de-chambre* at court), and that the most likely occasion for this was on his trip to Amiens in 1527. Although it must be borne in mind that the epistle was written almost thirty years after this trip, and that we must therefore admit both the possibility some confusion of memory on Morley's part along with the conventional attempt to obfuscate one's sources and/or rivals, the best evidence we have

³⁴ Axton, M., "Lord Morley's 'Tryumphes of Petrarcke': Reading Spectacles", in Axton, M., and J. P. Carley (eds.), "*Triumphs of English*": Henry Parker, Lord Morley, Translator to the Tudor Court (London: British Library, 2000), pp. 171-92.

nonetheless leads to the conclusion, arrived at by Carley, that Morley's *Tryumphes* "must have been a product of the late 1520's or early 1530's".³⁵

Carley adds a cautious footnote suggesting that "the most likely date for the presentation would be just after Wolsey's fall [in 1530], when Morley would have been looking for a new patron and when there were many perquisites available".³⁶ To this, I would add that it is significant that many of the more precisely datable works that Morley presented to the King bear a markedly anti-papal slant and have been interpreted as gestures of support for the King in his "Great Matter".³⁷ Morley is particularly hostile to Paul III with regard to his perceived unjust treatment of Henry, and a particular bugbear of Morley's appears to be the secular ambition of the Papacy.³⁸ Morley's status as a religious conservative is evidenced by his voting against a bill proposing the legalisation of clerical marriage, and his criticism of the papacy, though couched in evangelical rhetoric, is more political than doctrinal.³⁹ His stated aim to provide a faithful translation of Petrarch's *Triumphs*, the rendering of a politically neutral text devoid of the factional allegorising so common in late Henrician translations, in conjunction with the *terminus post quem* of 1527 established above, suggest that the *Tryumphes* was completed during the period of relative calm between 1527 and 1529/30, the time of Wolsey's indictment for *praemunire* and subsequent death on his way to answer a charge of High Treason. This would explain both Morley's choice of a politically neutral, religiously conservative text and the transparent manner in which he undertook its translation: there was, as yet, no particular advantage to be gained from employing the anti-papal rhetoric evident in the later translations. Instead, Morley may simply have wished to present the Italophile King with an English translation of a hugely popular work in the hope of raising his prestige at court and receiving some financial recompense for his efforts, as befell his French counterpart de Bourgouyn. An analysis of Morley's text will follow, but given that his

³⁵ Carley, J. P., "The Writings of Henry Parker, Lord Morley: A Bibliographical Survey", in Axton and Carley (eds.), *"Triumphs of English"*, pp. 27-68 (p. 41).

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 62, n. 93.

³⁷ See Carnicelli, *Lord Morley's "Triumphs"*, p. 9.

³⁸ Rex, R., "Morley and the Papacy: Rome, Regime, and Religion", in Axton and Carley (eds.), *"Triumphs of English"*, pp. 87-106 (p. 92).

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 100.

imitative strategy is thrown into greater relief when viewed alongside that of Fowler, I will preface my textual analysis with some contextualising remarks on the Scotsman's later translation.

4. The Political Context of Fowler's *Triumphs*

As Alessandra Petrina has demonstrated, biographical sketches of Fowler must be treated with a certain amount of circumspection, owing to a combination of factors which have wrong-footed scholars in the past. To begin with, William Fowler was a very common name in Scotland at the end of the sixteenth century, which, in the absence of any corroborating evidence, makes it difficult to connect the many contemporary documents in which the name is mentioned to William Fowler the poet. To add to the confusion, it appears that our Fowler had a brother, also named William, who was appointed a "burgess and gild brother of the City of Edinburgh on 31 January 1588-89".⁴⁰ In addition, literary critics have frequently confused the writer with Thomas Fowler, an English diplomat in Edinburgh who, like William, was also in the service of Sir Francis Walsingham. What we can say with certainty is that he was born in 1560 into a well-connected family, his father being in the service of Mary Queen of Scots. He studied at St. Leonard's College at the University of St. Andrews from 1574-78, before leaving for Paris where he continued his studies. His first literary work, published in 1581 and entitled *An Answer to the Calumnious Letter and Erroneous Propositions of an Apostat Named M. Io. Hammiltoun*, recounts an episode which took place during his time in Paris when he became involved in an argument surrounding the doctrine of transubstantiation with a Catholic Scot named John Hamilton. Fowler argued against the orthodox position and ended up being dragged through the streets of Paris and beaten by a group of his Catholic fellow countrymen. He left France soon afterwards. Fowler appears to have visited Italy in the 1590s, but the documentary evidence is inconclusive. The strongest proof available is a matriculation register for the University of Padua

⁴⁰ Petrina, A., *Machiavelli in the British Isles: Two Early-Modern Translations of "The Prince"* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 70-71.

from 1592, which mentions a certain “Gulielmus Foulenus Scottus”.⁴¹ It has been suggested by Meikle, Fowler’s first modern editor, that “Foulenus” is a clerical error which ought to be emended to “Foulerus”. This thesis is supported by the fact that another name on the list, “Walterus Scotus”, refers, in all likelihood, to Fowler’s great friend and his patron Bothwell’s nephew, the Laird of Buccleuch.⁴²

Despite the unmistakably Reformist stance adopted by Fowler in *An Answer*, earlier critical conclusions regarding the steadfastness of Fowler’s Protestantism have been challenged by recent scholarship, which has instead portrayed Fowler as a shrewd political opportunist (in this respect, his reading of Machiavelli, whose *Il principe* he translated sometime in the 1590’s, may not be insignificant).⁴³ The uncertain times in which he lived required him to walk a tightrope between the traditional centre of power constituted by the old nobility (predominantly, but not exclusively, Catholic), and the avowedly Calvinist rising stars of the court, such as John Maitland and James Stewart, Earl of Arran, who, by the mid 1580’s, were beginning to exercise a significant influence over royal policy. Fowler’s friendship with the Catholic Esmé Stuart, fifth Duke of Lennox, and his connections with the household of the French ambassador to England, Michel de Castelnau, Sieur de Mauvissière, aroused the suspicion of the Protestant faction, while his publicly declared Protestantism as evidenced by his early literary works risked alienating his predominantly Catholic allies. Of course, his position as a spy for Francis Walsingham, Elizabeth I’s foreign secretary, which lasted from about 1581 to 1584, required a degree of fraternising with potentially subversive individuals, yet even Walsingham himself expressed some doubts over Fowler’s motivations, advising the diplomat William Davison in a letter dated 13 August 1584: “you do well to deal warily with Fowler. I suspect he is but for an underminer”.⁴⁴ The nature of espionage, however, leaves open the possibility that Walsingham was attempting to manipulate Davison for some greater purpose, and thus some doubt remains as to whether this impression of Fowler constitutes Walsingham’s honest assessment. Nevertheless, Fowler’s reluctance to choose one

⁴¹ Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, p. 78.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ See, in particular, Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, pp. 119-135.

⁴⁴ Cited in Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles*, p. 74.

side over the other seems to have been born out of a strategy of self-preservation rather than mere pusillanimity, given that he had much to lose whatever his final decision. On the one hand, his literary career depended on the support of his patron, the controversial Francis Stewart, fifth Earl of Bothwell. An influential voice in the King's bedchamber, Bothwell had many enemies at court, among whom we may number Maitland. While Bothwell was in the King's favour, Fowler's association with him was unlikely to cause any great problems. However, Bothwell's fiery temperament often drew censure from the monarch and increased the chances of a fall from grace. Under these circumstances, Fowler's links to the Earl could have proved a liability for his career as a courtier.

In the years immediately preceding Fowler's translation of his *Triumphs*, Bothwell's star had seemed to be on the wane. After the fall of the religiously radical Ruthven regime in 1583, Bothwell, who had sympathised with the regime's leaders, was banished from court for a period, and even upon his return to favour later that year, the countess of Arran, wife of another of Bothwell's enemies, still insisted that he should be executed. The following year, Bothwell was suspected of sympathising with another group of rebels, despite raising an army of two thousand men to support the King. Bothwell prudently retired from court following these accusations, and occupied himself with personal and family matters, before returning in 1585. In October of that year, a group of rebel lords met at Bothwell's residence in Kelso and hatched a plan to march against the King and his advisor Arran. Bothwell felt he had no choice but to support his rebel allies, and though their plan succeeded and resulted in the overthrow of Arran, the King felt betrayed by Bothwell and refused to grant him the expected promotion to Lord Chancellor.⁴⁵

Though James appeared to have forgiven Bothwell by July of 1586, when he was chosen to lead negotiations with the English over a mutual defence treaty at Berwick (which Fowler also attended), his disloyalty had not been completely forgotten. The Lord Chancellorship coveted by Bothwell had been bestowed upon his great enemy, Maitland, two months earlier, in May of 1586. Bothwell's indignant response to Maitland's appointment constitutes a pithy synopsis of the larger

⁴⁵ Dunnigan, S. M., "Fowler, William (1560/61–1612)", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Jan. 2008) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10015>> [accessed 16 Apr., 2012].

conflict engulfing Scottish politics during the final quarter of the sixteenth century. In a letter to the ministers and elders of Edinburgh, Bothwell denounced Maitland's appointment and decried his political manoeuvring, as evidenced by his attempts to create discord between Bothwell and Lord Hume, "esteeming the destruction of both, or any of us, should have made [Maitland] elbow room, and given occasion to a puddock-stool of a night [sic] to occupy the place of two ancient cedars".⁴⁶ By mid-1586, then, Fowler must surely have realised that Maitland's prospects at court looked far better than Bothwell's.

It is surely no coincidence then, that in the dedicatory epistle to his *Triumphs*, dated December of that year, Fowler elected, for the first time, to dedicate a literary work to someone other than the Earl of Bothwell, who had served as his patron since 1581. Instead, he commended his translation to Lady Jean Maitland, the wife of the new Lord Chancellor. This was part of a calculated strategy by which Fowler hoped to ingratiate himself with the new men at James' court, and his translation of the *Triumphs* should be viewed in this politicised context as an attempt to put his commitment to the Reformed faith beyond doubt in the eyes of the young King's increasingly influential inner circle. Just as Fowler's sonnet sequence *The Tarantula of Love* attempts a "Protestant or Protestantised revisionism"⁴⁷ of the Petrarchan treatment of erotic love, so, I will argue, his translation of the *Triumphs* undertakes an evangelisation of Petrarch's language which accords with the goal of harmonisation of style with subject matter as advocated by James VI's *Reulis and Cautelis* (1584).

5. Fowler's Italian Edition of Petrarch

Although scholars have been able, by a method similar to that used in the case of Morley's *Tryumphes*, to establish that Fowler translated from the text which appears in the Gesualdo, Daniello, and Vellutello editions, no one has been able to identify the precise edition used by

⁴⁶ Cited in Ives, E. D., *The Bonny Earl of Murray: The Man, the Murder, the Ballad* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997), p. 54.

⁴⁷ Dunnigan, S. M., *Eros and Poetry at the Courts of Mary Queen of Scots and James VI* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 162.

Fowler as his source text.⁴⁸ However, a closer examination of a passage which appears at first to be of Fowler's own invention links his text to the editions published by Guillaume Rouillé (1518-1589; also known as Rouille, Rovillé or Guglielmo Rovillio), an Italian expatriate living in Lyon whose books were highly sought after by the Italian community in France during the mid-sixteenth century.⁴⁹ The passage in question is one of the paratexts, an introductory section preceding the translation proper, entitled "The Argument". This passage at first appears to be a paraphrase of Gesualdo's introduction to the *Triumphs*, as found in his 1533 and 1541 editions. However, Fowler's 'Argument' is not a paraphrase, but rather a translation of a paraphrase of Gesualdo's introduction which appears in several later and lesser known editions of Petrarch's vernacular works, the first of which was published at Lyons by Rouillé in 1550, and subsequently reproduced by the Venetian printers, Domenico Nicolini in 1573, and Giorgio Angelieri in 1586. A close comparison of the section from the three introductions in question, which deals with *TE* and the overall structure of the work, reveals that Fowler's wording is too close to that of the Rouillé/Nicolini/Angelieri introduction to be anything other than a direct translation:

Gesualdo

Il sesto & l'ultimo è de l'Eternità, ch'avanza ogni tempo, perciò che à rispetto di lei il tempo, quantunq[ue] sia grande e lungo, è quasi un momento via minor di quello, che è nostra vita à rispetto di lui, perche dal finito allo infinito non è proportion veruna. Di questi triumph cinque si fanno qua giù sotto il cielo, & il sesto la su nel celeste regno, E di cinque i duo primi ne la vita mortale, il terzo nel dipartir de l'anima, e gli altri duo poi ch'ella s'è sciolta dal corpo, si come vedremo dichiarando ciascuno al suo luogo, e particolarmente ci dimostra il suo stato, e quel di M[adonna] L[aura] e com'egli s'innamorò di lei, e quel che gliene avvenne, e com'ella contrastando vinse il troppo disio di lui, e come poi morì, e per fama non dimeno rimase in vita, e poi che'l tempo havrà spento il suo nome, come fia nel cielo eterna.⁵⁰

Rouillé / Nicolini / Angelieri

Il sesto & ultimo è della Eternità, ch'avanza ogni tempo, perche dal finito allo infinito non è proportion veruna. Et è da notare, che di questi trionfi i duo primi si fanno nella vita mortale, il terzo nel dipartir dell'anima, e gli altri tre poi ch'ella s'è sciolta dal corpo. E tutti sei dipinge il Poeta parte per visione, e parte per imaginatione, e particolarmente dimostra il suo stato, e quel di Madonna Laura: cioè, com'egli s'innamorò di lei, & quel che gliene avvenne, e com'ella contrastando vinse il troppo

⁴⁸ See Jack, "William Fowler", p. 484.

⁴⁹ Burke, P., *The European Renaissance: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 114.

⁵⁰ *Il Petrarcha colla spositione di Messer Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo* (Venice: Giovann'Antonio di Nicolini & fratelli da Sabbio, 1533), f. 391^r.

desio di lui, e cosi si mori, e per fama nondimeno rimase in vita, e quantunque col tempo si spenga il suo nome, sarà nel cielo eterna.⁵¹

Fowler

The sext and last Is of IMMORTALITIE, that ouercummeth all tyme, becaus of things that ar infinit thair is no proportioun. It is more to be noted that these first two Triumphs of LOWE AND CHASTETIE ar in this lyfe, the third, when our saule is in departing from our bodye, and the other thrie after it is frie of the same. Which sex Triumphs our Poet dois depaint partlye by visioun, partlye by Imaginatioun, particularlye how her chastetie ouercame him, and agane hir death, yit how by FAME she reviveth agane, when although that TYME dois prease to dark the glorie of hir famous name, yit shall it be through Immortalitie ETERNALL.⁵²

The first feature that may be noted is that the length of Gesualdo's full introduction (of which the above is only a small excerpt) far exceeds that of Fowler and Rouillé/Nicolini/Angelier, which are of more or less equal length. By comparing these with Fowler's "Argument", we may confidently state that the Scotsman has translated from the later, shortened introduction which appears in the Rouillé, Nicolini, and Angelieri editions, containing the detail about vision and imagination which is not in Gesualdo.

Rouillé's commentary first appears in 1550, and it is largely based on an unfinished edition by Antonio Brucioli from 1548, although the introduction appears to be an editorial addition on the part of Rouillé. Comparing Brucioli's unfinished commentary, published in Venice in 1548, with Rouillé's edition we may discern where Brucioli's commentary stops and the Rouillé commentary begins. The 1548 Venetian edition of Petrarch contains brief commentaries on each of the poems in the *Rvf*, but none on the *Triumph*. Instead, a brief glossary is given at the end of each *capitolo*, with the exception of *TP* and *TM* II, which are left completely blank. It is worth noting that Kennedy has identified Brucioli's commentary as a Reformist exposition of Petrarch.⁵³ Such a slant would undoubtedly have appealed to Fowler and although Brucioli did not comment on the *Triumph*, a reading of the commentaries on the *Rvf*, which the Rouillé edition retained, may have led Fowler to the conclusion that a similar proto-Reformism was at play in the *Triumph*. However, as we shall see, I do not believe that the Brucioli commentary played a role

⁵¹ *Il Petrarca: con nuove e brevi dichiarazioni* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1550), p. 470; *Il Petrarca*, p. 403; *Il Petrarca: con nuove spositioni* (Venice: Giorgio Angelieri, 1586), p. 466.

⁵² I cite from Meikle, H. W. (ed.), *The Works of William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne, Wife of James VI*, 3 vols (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1914-1940), vol. 1(1914), pp. 22-23.

⁵³ Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch*, p. 68.

in Fowler's transformation of Petrarch's text. Rouillé's 1550 edition, in addition to the new introduction, appends brief descriptions of each *capitolo*, limited to describing the narrative progression and making no interpretive claims. Glossaries are added for *TP* and *TM* II to maintain continuity with the Brucioli commentary, and the glossary in *TE* is also slightly enhanced. Rouillé went on to print four further editions of Petrarch, all of which contain the same introductory section, and which therefore could have been used by Fowler as his source edition. The 1551 edition was a close reprint of the 1550 edition, with only some minor editorial changes in the wording of some commentaries. A third edition was printed in 1558, this time with a commentary supposedly adapted from Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), although it is difficult to see how the commentary relates to Bembo's work. Two further editions were issued, one in 1564, the other in 1574. The commentary in these last two editions is more in depth, each *capitolo* being analysed under the headings "Annotatione", which attempts to settle some interpretive issues raised by the text, and "Narratione", which provides a brief summary of the events described. The glossary of the previous editions is maintained with a few minor emendations and additions.

As far as I am aware, only two more editions of Petrarch were printed before December 1586 (the date of Fowler's dedicatory epistle) containing the introduction translated by Fowler which first appeared in Rouillé's 1550 edition. One is a 1573 edition printed in Venice by Domenico Nicolini, the other a 1586 edition from another Venetian workshop – that of Giorgio Angelieri. In terms of text and commentary, Angelieri's 1586 edition is in fact a re-print of Rouillé's 1558 edition, which first attached the pseudo-Bembian commentary to the *Triumphs*. Nicolini's 1573 edition appears to be completely unique, constituting a somewhat haphazard juxtaposition of the earlier and later Rouillé editions. The commentary for *TC*, *TP*, *TM* I, *TF* I, *TF* III, *TT* and *TE* is lifted from the slightly emended 1551 edition, while the commentaries for *TM* II and *TF* II are reprinted from the equivalent "Annotatione" sections in the 1558 edition. It appears that, for typographical reasons, Nicolini has altered the glossaries of some sections in order to prevent their closing lines running onto the next page. As a consequence of this, *TC* I, *TC* II and *TF* I have abbreviated glossaries, while *TM* I and *TF* II have no glossaries whatsoever. I believe this to be of some significance in attempting to deduce the most likely text from which Fowler

translated. Of the seven editions containing the Rouillé introduction, three are unique – Rouillé’s 1550 and 1551 editions, and Nicolini’s 1573 edition.

Two mistranslations contained within Fowler’s text make Nicolini’s edition the most likely candidate for his Italian source. The first of these is “Vago” in *TC I* (l. 31); the second is “drappelletto” in *TM I* (l. 15). Fowler’s translation of “drappelletto” as “clothe of stait” (rather than “small group” or “band”) was already identified by John Purves as a mistranslation (see Jack; 1970, pp. 485-86). “Vago” is mistaken by Fowler for the first person singular present indicative of the verb *vagare*, thus rendering it “wandring”. In fact, Petrarch is employing it as an adjective relating to the protagonist: “Vago d’udir novella”, meaning “desirous” or “wishing”, not, as Fowler translates, “I wandring than to know sum newis”. The 1550 and 1551 Rouillé editions gloss “vago” as “desideroso”, and “drappelletto” as “picciol numero”; the three later Rouillé editions, as well as that of Angelieri in 1586 give the same gloss for “drappelletto”, but do not provide a note on “vago”. As we have seen, *TC I* has had its glossary reduced by Nicolini with the result that the word “vago” is never explained, while in *TM I*, the glossary is excised completely, making this the only edition which glosses neither “vago” nor “drappelletto”. If Fowler had been using any of the other editions mentioned, he would certainly have been able to avoid mistranslating “drappelletto”, while the 1550 and 1551 Rouillé editions would also have provided him with correct meaning of “vago”.

While this is not conclusive proof that Fowler used Nicolini’s 1573 edition as his source text, it certainly would explain these mistranslations, and no other edition tallies so closely with the peculiarities of Fowler’s text. Certainly the 1586 edition is an unlikely source since Fowler would presumably have completed his translation before being able to obtain a copy.

I believe it is possible to say with almost complete certainty that Fowler translated from a member of the small family of closely related Italian texts produced during the mid-sixteenth century discussed above. The commentaries accompanying these editions are defined above all else by their brevity and lack of interpretive thrust when contrasted with the great exegetes of the late *quattrocento* and early *cinquecento* – da Tempo, Filelfo, Ilicino, Vellutello, Gesualdo, and Daniello. Unlike these comprehensive commentaries, which surround the text of the poem on

three sides and offer a line-by-line analysis and interpretation, Fowler's likely commentary is restricted to between ten and fifteen lines at the end of each *capitolo* summarising the narrative and glossing the few words which may have already appeared archaic even to the sixteenth-century reader. The following comparative analysis of Fowler and Morley's texts will reveal the significance of this in relation to the translation process as well as the change which occurs in the standing of European vernacular poetry in the years separating these sixteenth-century translations.

6. Morley and Fowler: A Comparative Analysis

6.1 – Technical Analysis

The popularity of the *Triumphs* in pre-Renaissance England was mirrored in Scotland. Durkan and Ross, in their study of early Scottish libraries, could find no evidence of the presence of any copies of the *Rvf* before the 1560's. On the other hand, there is some evidence that the *Triumphs* did circulate in Scotland during the early 16th century and probably before, and on this basis it could be argued that it was the most popular Italian vernacular text of the time.⁵⁴ Fowler, at any rate, had spent time both in Italy and in France as a student, and as such would probably have come into contact with both the *Triumphs* and the *Rvf* regardless of the situation in his homeland. Both Morley and Fowler preface their translations with dedicatory epistles which provide us with an insight into their motivations for translating this particular Petrarchan text:

Morley:

I dare affirme, yea, and the Italians do the same, that the devine workes set aparte, there was never in any vulgar speche or language, so notable a worke, so clerckely done as this his worke. And albeit that he setteth forth these syxte wonderfull made triumphes all to the laude of hys Ladye Laura, by whome he made so many a swete sonnet, that never yet no poete or gentleman could amend, nor make the lyke, yet who that doth understande them, shall se in them comprehended al morall vertue, all Phylosophye, all storyall matters, and briefly manye devyne sentences theologicall secrets declared.

(*Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke*, p. 31)

Fowler:

Our Laureat Poet, FRANCIS PETRARCH, a noble Florentine, hes dewysed and erected these TRIUMPHS in the honour of her whome he lowed, thairby to mak hir more glorious and him self no less famous: which when I had fullye pervsed, and finding thame both full and fraughted in statelye verse with morall sentences, godlye

⁵⁴ See Durkan, J. and A. Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow: J. S. Burns, 1961), p. 22.

sayings, brawe discoursis, proper and pithie arguments, and with a store of sindrie sort of histories, enbelleshed and inbroudered with the curious pasmentis of poesie and golden frenzies of Eloquence, I was spurred thairby and pricked forward incontinent be translatioun to mak thame sum what more populare than they ar in their Italian originall.

(*Works*, p. 19)

Some common themes emerge from these passages: both poets see Petrarch's primary concern in the *Triumphs* as the immortalisation in verse of Laura, yet both also discern a deeper layer of meaning which will instruct the reader in matters of history, theology and moral philosophy. The *Triumphs*, then, displays elements of both the Petrarch of the *Rvf* and of the Latin works in the minds of its earliest translators. Elements of a burgeoning national sentiment are evident in Morley's patriotic desire to prove "an Englyshe man...myght do aswell as the Frenche man" (referring to the French translation of the *Triumphs* that he had seen some years earlier). Likewise, Fowler's *Triumphs* may be viewed as his contribution to James VI's attempt to create a body of distinctively Scottish literature, in line with the tenets laid out in his *Reulis and Cautelis* (1584). Both translators also express their desire to produce what modern scholars would term a fluent or transparent translation. Morley claims:

I have not erred moche from the letter, but in the ryme, whiche is not possible for me to folow in the translation, nor touche the least poynt of the elegancy that this elegant Poete hath set forth in his owne maternall tongue.

(*Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke*, p. 31)

Fowler is clearly more ambitious, recognising the need for the beauty of the language to be translated as well as the sense if he is to achieve his aim of popularising the *Triumphs*. He even implies a negative judgement on Morley's translation:

I perceawed, bothe in Frenche and Inglish traductionis, this work not onelie traduced, bot evin as It war mangled, and in everie member miserablie maimed and dismembered, besydis the barbar grosnes of boyth their translationis, which I culd sett down by prwif (wer not for prolixity) in twoe hundreth passages and moe.

(*Works*, p. 20)

Unfortunately, for large swathes of the work, Fowler scarcely does any better than his predecessors. He is hamstrung primarily by his decision to employ the clumsy fourteener as his

metre of choice, although, from Fowler's point of view, this must have represented a significant improvement on Morley's stress-based metre, with its irregular syllabic pattern.⁵⁵ Presumably, Fowler was aware that English often needs more words to express itself than Italian, however, his line runs to such a length that he must frequently employ filler phrases, which occur so often that they cease to become embellishments and rapidly begin to irritate the reader. For example, at the opening of the second *capitolo* of the Triumph of Love, Petrarch gives us the following *terzina*:

Stanco già di mirar, non sazio ancora,
or quinci, or quindi mi volgea, guardando
cose ch'a ricontarle è breve l'ora.

(TCII, ll. 1-3)

Compare this to Fowler's equivalent:

Alreddye these my weryed eyes all weryed so to vew
that brave Triumphe and princelie pomp that bravely did ensew,
And yit thairwith not satisfied, desirous more to sie,
now heir and their, to this and that, I did convert myne ee;
Which things for to repeate and shaw as I did sie thame frame
so short a houer will not permit nor thole I shaw the same.

(*The Triumph of Lowe*, II, ll. 1-6)

What Petrarch says in twenty words, thirty three syllables, and three lines, takes Fowler sixty-eight words, eighty-four syllables, and six lines. The considerable amplification which takes place in this passage is exacerbated by Fowler's fondness for tautology as a rhetorical device ("my weryed eyes all weryed"; "that brave Triumphe and princelie pomp"; "now heir and their, to this and that"; "for to repeate and shaw"). Any potential positive effect deriving from these techniques is minimised by the sheer frequency with which Fowler employs them, and serve merely to extend an already long poem without adding much in the way of information, imagery or diction. Nonetheless, Fowler's rendering is surely preferable to Morley's, whose prosaic couplets capture nothing of either the beauty or the sense of the original:

All musynge wyth greate admiration,
As one astonnyed to see the fasshyon,
Nowe here, now there, I loked all aboute

⁵⁵ On Morley's metre in the "Tryumphes", see Woods, S., "Lord Morley's 'Ryding Ryme' and the Origin of Modern English Versification", in Axton and Carley (eds.), "*Triumphs of English*", pp. 201-11.

To se the order of this greate huge route.

(*The Tryumphe of Love*, II, ll. 1-4)

Of these four lines, only the third could be regarded as remaining faithful to its counterpart in the source text, while the repetition of the adjective “greate” in lines 1 and 4, as well as Morley’s own tautological description of the “route” in line 4 are all too representative of the lack of imagination which Morley displays as a translator. Occasionally, Fowler does get it right. Take, for example, the following passage:

Quattro destrier, vie più che neve bianchi,
sovr’un carro di foco un garzon crudo
con arco in man e con saette a fianchi;
contra le qua’ non val elmo né scudo,
ma sugli omeri avea sol due grand’ali
di color mille, tutto l’altro ignudo:
d’intorno innumerabili mortali,
parte presi in battaglia, e parte occisi,
parte feriti di pungenti strali.

(*TCI*, ll. 22-30)

Fowler’s translation of the passage is surprisingly pithy and musical:

Thair than I saw four coursers fair, more whyte than anye snaw,
a childish boy and youngling raw in fyrie chair to draw,
Who in his hand his bow did beare, his arrows be his syde,
as nother helmet nor yit targe thair pearceing shottis can byde;
Abowe his shoulders ther wer plaist twoe fleing feddered wings,
Imbrowdered with Ten thousand hewis, all bair in other things;
And round about him thair did stand and round about his chair
a number of such mortall men that none can tham declair
Whereof than some wer prisoners by him in batall tane,
some pearced by his pearcing darts, and som by him lay slane.

(*The Triumph of Lowe*, I, ll. 27-36)

It is to be noted that Fowler departs very little from the literal sense of the original here. We note only two tautological amplifications (“*childish boy and youngling raw*” (l. 28 [emphasis added])); “*And round about him thair did stand and round about his chair*” (l. 33 [emphasis added])), one alliterative (“*fleing feddered wings*” (l. 31)), and one hyperbolic (“*Ten thousand hewis*” (l. 32) for Petrarch’s “color mille” (l. 27)) in what is practically a word for word translation of Petrarch. The flow of the original description is maintained and the reader is not required to wade through unnecessary embellishments which disrupt the narrative progression. Similarly, Fowler faithfully

translates Petrarch's images, thus replicating the impact which the description has on the reader.

Morley rarely attains these heights, yet certain passages stand out within the context of his own

text. One such example is to be found in *TC* III, when the poet catches his first glimpse of Laura:

Così parlava; ed io, come chi teme
futuro male, e trema anzi la tromba,
sentendo già dov'altri ancho nol preme,
avea color d'uom tratto d'una tomba,
quando una giovinetta ebbi dallato,
pura assai più che candida colomba.
Ella mi prese...

(*TC*III, ll. 85-91)

The series of tropes which Petrarch uses to describe his inner and outer conditions is maintained by Morley, yet the military metaphor implied by "la tromba" (foreshadowing the battle between Laura and Cupid which occurs in the following *capitolo*) is omitted, lessening the force of the description and betraying an unawareness of the subtleties of Petrarch's imagery. Nevertheless, for a translator who denies the possibility that literal meaning and poetic elegance can be transposed simultaneously, this passage is as good as any that Morley produces in the *Tryumphes*:

Thus spake my frende, and I which herkened well
All these hystories that he to me dyd tell
Stode astonied, as in dreade and feare
Of hurt to come that haysteth nere and nere,
Pale and wane as he that is so taken
Oute of his tombe newe rysen and awaken.
When that all sodenly by me there stode
The fayrest yonge maiden of face and mode,
That ever I sawe, whyter than a dove,
Which unprovided toke me soore in love.

(*The Tryumphe of Love*, III, ll. 123-32)

6.2 – Cultural Filters

Regrettably, passages such as those quoted above are the exception rather than the rule for both Fowler and Morley. Indeed, both texts are of little literary value in themselves. Their value as cultural indicators of their respective time periods, however, is highly significant. Although a period of only sixty years or so (less if one subscribes to the theses proposing a later dating of

Morley's text) separates these works, the intervening years had seen a sea-change in the political and religious life of England and Scotland. When Morley translated Petrarch, both England and Scotland were Catholic countries, and though criticism of the Roman Church was by no means uncommon, it was usually more political than doctrinal. Even following the Henrician Reformation in England, the King had to endure criticism from a large number of Protestants who believed that he had not gone far enough in matters of doctrine. That Morley was a religious conservative is evidenced by his voting against a bill proposing the legalisation of clerical marriage. By the time Fowler graduated from St. Leonard's College, St. Andrew's in 1578 at the age of around eighteen, Mary Queen of Scots had been disgraced and executed at the behest of England's first Protestant-born queen, and the radical Reformist faction, with which Fowler would soon take great pains to align himself, held the reins of Power in James VI's court.

Although Kenneth R. Bartlett has proposed that Morley's *Tryumphes* were suddenly published in 1555 in support of a plan to ensure a Protestant heir to the throne by marrying Elizabeth off to Lord Maltravers, to whom the epistle is dedicated,⁵⁶ there is no indication within the text itself that Morley had any sympathy with the Reformist cause during the period in which he was working on his translation. By contrast, Fowler's Reformist rhetoric is in evidence throughout the text, and the political element to his literary output can be clearly seen in his own dedicatory epistle to Lady Jean Fleming, the wife of the new Chancellor.

In terms of the standing of vernacular European literature, the gulf between Morley in 1530's England and Fowler in 1580's Scotland was similarly wide. As discussed above, Morley was translating Petrarch at a time when the latter's stature as a vernacular poet was dwarfed by his standing as a moral philosopher. Wyatt and Surrey, the younger contemporaries of the more conservative Morley, were just beginning their own experimentations in Petrarchan versifying and sonneteering. On the continent, the *Pléiade's* literary manifesto, du Bellay's *La Défense et illustration de la langue française*, would not be published until 1549. Sidney's influential sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, also pre-dates Fowler's *Triumphs*, although it would not be

⁵⁶ See Bartlett, K. R., "The Occasion of Lord Morley's Translation of the 'Trionfi': The Triumph of Chastity over Politics", in Eisenbichler and Iannucci (eds.), *Petrarch's "Triumphs"*, pp. 325-34.

published until 1591. In short, Petrarchism was a much more identifiable literary movement by the time Fowler began his translation. Moreover, there was a growing number of poets throughout Europe convinced of the vernacular's capacity to act as a vehicle for truly great poetry, and, indeed, devoting their considerable talents to the illustration of this claim. Fowler, who had studied in France and visited Italy, was sure to have come across many of the numerous editions of Petrarch's *Rime* and other vernacular texts which were published with great frequency in both countries from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. In addition, Fowler's translation was sanctioned by James VI himself, who had translated Du Bartas' *Uranie*, and often drew on a variety of French and English sources in many of his other works.

Returning to our textual analysis, the most obvious evidence of this change in literary focus and cultural values can be found in the section of *TC IV* which describes the procession of love poets who had made a significant contribution to vernacular literature:

ecco Dante e Beatrice, ecco Selvaggia,
 ecco Cin da Pistoia, Guitton d'Arezzo,
 che di non esser primo par ch'ira aggia;
 ecco i duo Guidi che già fur in prezzo,
 Honesto Bolognese, e i Ciciliani,
 che fur già primi, e quivi eran da sezzo;
 Sennuccio e Franceschin, che fur sì humani,
 come ogni uom vide; e poi v'era un drapello
 di portamenti e di volgari strani:
 fra tutti il primo Arnaldo Daniello,
 gran maestro d'amor, ch'a la sua terra
 ancor fa honor col suo dir strano e bello.
 Eranvi quei ch'Amor sì leve afferra:
 l'un Piero e l'altro, e 'l men famoso Arnaldo
 e quei che fur conquisi con più guerra:
 i' dico l'uno e l'altro Raymbaldo
 che cantò pur Beatrice e Monferrato
 e 'l vecchio Pier d'Alvernia con Giraldo;
 (TCIV, ll. 31-48)

Morley renders this passage as follows:

Dant with Beatryce fayre and gent.
 Lo, on tother syde I might also se
 Cino of Pistoia, wyth hym (trust me)
 Guydo of Rezzo, and in that place
 Two other Guydos in lyke manner and case.

The tone of them was borne in Boleyne;
 The tother was a very ryght Cicelien;
 Senicio and Francisco (so gentle of condicion)
 And Arnolde and Daniell in lyke facion,
 A great maker and dyvyser of love,
 And dyd great honour to his Citie above.
 There was Peter also the Clerke famouse,
 And Rambaldo with his stile curiouse
 That wrote for his Beatryce in Mont Ferrato;
 That old Peter and with hym Geraldo;

(*The Tryumphe of Love*, IV, ll. 34-48)

Fowler's equivalent reads:

and so I saw than first appeir evin DANT incontinent
 With BEATRICE, SELUAGGIA nixt, and CIN OF PISTOI bred;
 and GUIDO OF ARESSO was with thame in that trowpe led,
 That semed for to be displeased, and angrie, malcontent,
 that he was not thair first with lowe and foremost with him went;
 With them two other GUIDOS wer and those of SICILIE,
 and that gude natured BOLONGUESE, a honest man was he;
 SENNICCIO with FRANCESCHIN thair lykwyse did them shaw,
 the gentlest men and courtesest that evir men did know.
 And after such a sort of folk In vulgar clothis I spyed,
 and habits of such strange attyre that marched on that syd:
 Amongst them first they wer in preiss ARNALDO DANIELL,
 a master gritt in CUPIDS court that did in lowe excell,
 Who yit dois by his plesant speiche and his Inventionis new
 renown his natiwe countrey soyle by these thair sight and vew.
 Thair also was whome lightlye lowe with litill pane ourcame –
 on PETER and ARNALDO wes the other of less fame.
 Thair also was these sort of men subdewed by gretar war,
 two of one name, ROMBALDI cald, that song in mountferrar
 Vpoun thair Dames, fair BEATRICE; with him GIRALDUS, loe,
 and aged PETER of Averne;

(*The Triumph of Lowe*, IV, ll. 38-58)

Petrarch in this instance does more than merely ream off a list of names. Instead, he skilfully sketches the character of the poets, as expressed either by secondary literature about them or within their works themselves, while simultaneously providing an assessment of their respective places in literary history. For example, the reference to the anger which Guittone d'Arezzo exhibits at not having pride of place among the Italian vernacular poets has its basis in Dante's description of the same figure in *Purgatorio* XXIV, 55-57 and XXVI, 124-26, and *De vulgari eloquentia* I, XIII, 1 and II, VI, 8, in which Guittone laments the loss of his pre-eminence

following the advent of the *stilnovisti*.⁵⁷ The literary rivalry between Dante and Guittone, and the latter's competitive and proud nature (as represented by his rival at any rate) appears to be unknown to Morley, whose translation glosses over the key line (l. 33) in the source text. Similarly, Morley's translation of the line referring to "i duo Guidi" does no more than identify them as members of the procession, while Petrarch's "che già fur in prezzo" again gives us a clue as to the esteem in which he held these two poets (Guinizelli and Cavalcanti). In the next line, Petrarch's "Honesto Bolognese" refers to Onesto degli Onesti, a thirteenth-century Bolognese poet, while "i Ciciliani" are the poets of the so-called Sicilian school, which flourished in Southern Italy in the first half of the thirteenth century. Petrarch again indicates how the Sicilians' reputation has diminished over time, foreshadowing the theme of the *Triumphus Temporis*, in which Fame is defeated as memory of the great deeds of past heroes fades with the passing of time. Morley, however, does not recognise "Honesto" or "Ciciliani" as proper nouns, but rather interprets them as adjectives referring to the "Guidi" of the previous line. This is perhaps understandable and could be forgiven in the case of "Honesto", and as Guinizelli happened to be born in Bologna, Morley could be given the benefit of the doubt. However, his reading of "i Ciciliani" as a singular masculine adjective, despite the lack of agreement with the noun to which he believes it to refer, betrays an ignorance of the subject matter and a less than expert grasp of Italian grammar. When this misreading creates a problem with regard to the translation of l. 36, Morley simply ignores the line and in doing so the delicately placed anticipation of a major Petrarchan theme – the transitory nature of worldly fame – is lost altogether.

Following the appearance of two of Petrarch's contemporaries "Sennuccio" (del Bene) and "Franceschin" (degli Albizzi), Petrarch moves on to the Provençal poets, whose presence is made known at first by "un drapello / di portamenti e di volgari strani". As one would expect, Petrarch's poem is meticulously structured: having first described the poets of ancient Greece and Rome, he moves onto the Italian versifiers of the late Middle Ages, and here he is indicating another division, after which he will acknowledge the part played in the development of love poetry by the Provençal school of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Morley provides no such indication,

⁵⁷ Pacca and Paolino (eds.), *Trionfi*, p. 190.

again choosing simply to ignore the lines in question (ll. 38-39), and the celebrated “Arnaldo Daniello” (Arnaut Daniel), rather than taking his rightful place as “il primo”, is simply tacked on to the list of Italian versifiers in the preceding lines. Or rather, he would have been had Morley recognised “Arnaldo” and “Daniello” as forename and surname respectively. Instead he inexplicably separates the names, giving us “Arnolde and Daniell”. Again, we could be generous to Morley and hypothesise that perhaps a misprint or too hasty a glance at the text could have led him to read “Arnald e Daniello” in the original. However, even if this were the case, Morley’s failure to rectify this error demonstrates that he had no idea who Arnaut Daniel was, or of his place in the development of love poetry. A similar error occurs twice more in the passage quoted above: bizarrely, whereas Daniel is transformed into two people, “l’un Piero e l’altro”, referring to Pierre Vidal and Pierre Rogier, are conflated into a single “Peter...the clerke famouse”. This is probably due to a misreading on the most basic level, explained perhaps by a lack of clear punctuation in Morley’s Italian text, leading him to read the line as “l’un Piero e l’altro è l’men famoso Arnaldo” (emphasis added), although this does not explain why this particular “Arnaldo” (Arnaut de Mareulh) is omitted altogether. A similar error is repeated when Morley renders “l’uno e l’altro Raymbaldo” (Raimbaut d’Auregna and Raimbaut de Vaqueiras) as a single “Rambaldo”

Fowler, on the other hand, is much more at home with this “who’s who” of vernacular love poetry. He repeats Morley’s error of reading “Onesto” as an adjective, and his misreading of l. 44 seems to have been caused by the same problem of lack of punctuation in the source. Otherwise the remaining figures are listed accurately. Again, Fowler has remained quite faithful to the source text, and though he omits the line regarding the literary standing of the Sicilian school, he preserves the other descriptive asides which help to structure and illuminate Petrarch’s catalogue. Because of this fidelity, it can be argued that the accuracy of Fowler’s translation is achieved thanks to his superior proficiency in Italian rather than a supplementary knowledge of the names if not the texts of continental vernacular poetry. It must be noted, however, that if Fowler, as I have argued above, was using one of the sparsely commented editions of Rouillé or Nicolini, then he had nothing more than his knowledge of Italian grammar and vocabulary as his aid. At any rate, the dense concentration of errors and misreadings in Morley’s translation of this passage gives a

sense that he was unfamiliar with the names listed by Petrarch, a problem which is not evident in the other enumerative passages which he translated, containing mostly figures from political history, mythology and the Bible. Thus, while we cannot say with certainty that, based on the above passages, Fowler was familiar with the names contained therein, it is clear that Morley, a highly educated gentleman of the court with a literary bent, was most certainly not. This is by no means an indictment of Morley, but rather an indication of the standing of vernacular literature among the educated class during the first third of sixteenth-century England.

6.3 – Religious and Political Filters

The great political and religious split between Pope Paul III and King Henry VIII which was to define sixteenth-century politics did not occur until shortly after Morley had completed his translation of Petrarch's *Triumphs*. By the time Fowler began his *Triumphs*, the Protestant faction in England had deepened the rift between the Roman and Anglican Churches through a series of doctrinal reforms, backed up by Acts of Parliament, which amounted to nothing short of heresy in the eyes of Catholics. Affairs were taking a similar course in Scotland, where the teachings of Calvin and John Knox had gained a foothold, and the nobles were aligning themselves with one side or the other in an attempt to exercise whatever influence they could over the King's political choices. As my previous chapter has demonstrated, it was only after the reforms of the Elizabethan era that Petrarchism in England became politicised. With this in mind, one would expect Morley's text, which pre-dates the period, to remain relatively unaffected by the political and religious filters which led Edmund Spenser to undertake his own personal reform of the Petrarchan sonnet sequence along Protestant lines. Similarly, it would be reasonable to assume that Fowler's text, written at a time of considerable religious and political upheaval in Scotland, would be subject to the effects of such filters, particularly given the author's strongly held religious convictions. A comparative analysis will, I believe, confirm these assumptions. However, unlike Spenser, whose imitative strategy allowed him more licence to re-shape his Petrarchan source texts, Fowler's decision to translate, as opposed to imitate, means that his need

to express his personal convictions must find an outlet at the more subtle level of diction and imagery.

As R.D.S. Jack has pointed out, Fowler's *Triumphs* reads very much like a sermon.⁵⁸ I will argue that this was a deliberate strategy on Fowler's part. His choice of the unwieldy fourteener can more easily be explained if we recognise that religious convictions rather than literary sensibilities were uppermost in Fowler's mind when he undertook to translate the *Triumphs*. The fourteener gave Fowler considerable scope for amplification of the source text, allowing him to substitute Petrarch's restrained and unassuming diction with the often bombastic rhetoric characteristic of Reformist texts of the age. Jack has noted that most of Fowler's amplifications of Petrarch's text come in passages with a religious significance - those "moral sentences" and "godlye sayings" which Fowler highlighted in the dedicatory epistle. One example in particular suggests that Fowler knew exactly what he was doing in this respect. Take this example of Petrarch's, in which he describes the effects of Eternity's conquest over Time, which becomes an indivisible unit, as the "mondo novo" of the vision takes shape:

Non sarà più diviso a poco a poco,
ma tutto insieme, e non più state o verno,
ma morto il tempo, e variato il loco;
(*TE*, ll. 76-8)

Turning first to Morley, we observe a rather clumsy translation which doesn't quite grasp the meaning of Petrarch's "a poco a poco", and omits "variato il loco", but which nevertheless eschews amplification and attempts to preserve the somewhat matter-of-fact air of Petrarch's description:

But then all otherwyse shalbe no division at all,
But litle and litle the hole universall
Shalbe together and wynter and somer paste,
And tyme quite gone and no lenger laste.
(*The Tryumphe of Divinitie*, ll. 107-10)

⁵⁸ Jack, "William Fowler", p. 485.

Compare this with Fowler's equivalent:

Thair salbe no diuisioun of les from les at all,
bot all sall ioyntlie be conioyned and framed in this ball;
Nor after that great tryall day the somer tyme sall last,
nor wintar with the sturdie stormes and with hir busling blast,
bot all sall change, and with the same evin tyme by death sall die,
and all this changeles solid place that day sall changed be.
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 103-08)

Here we notice the stark contrast between Petrarch's restraint and Fowler's rhetorical abandon. Phrases are inserted such as "that great tryall day" which have no equivalent in the source text; "verno" is expanded to provide an opportunity for an alliterative description of "the sturdie stormes" and "bustling blasts"; "il loco" becomes "this changeles solid place". Fowler continues to translate this passage in similar fashion, and, tellingly, inserts an entirely new line which has no equivalent in the source text. Petrarch writes:

O felici quelle anime che 'n via
sono o seranno di venire al fine
di ch'io ragiono, quandunque e' si sia!
(*TE*, ll. 82-4)

Fowler's translation is as follows:

O blissed sowles and happie these that ar vpon that way,
or yit heirafter ar to cum that iornay to assay,
Or to that end thair lyfes addres on which I do indyte.
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 115-17)

Up to this point, the translation, aside from some minor amplification, is faithful enough. But then, Fowler finishes with a flourish:

and with such zeale and feruencie thairof dois speak and wryte!
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, l. 118)

In truth, there is little that can be called zealous or fervent about Petrarch's uncomplicated, unadorned diction, and at this point it is clear that it is Fowler who is speaking, not Petrarch, and

moreover, that Fowler recognised this to be the case. It would appear that, for the Scottish translator, Petrarch's language did not do justice to its message and as such required considerable embellishment if the reader was to be sufficiently moved, particularly by the "moral sentences" and "godlye sayings" which Fowler singled out for praise in his dedicatory epistle, and for special treatment in the translation itself. This ties in with something that R. D. S. Jack has identified as characteristic of all Scottish poets of the age – a certain distrust of the reader's imagination.⁵⁹ Where Petrarch's language is deliberately allusive and sometimes ambiguous, Fowler prefers to leave the reader in no doubt as to the meaning (or at least his interpretation of the meaning) of certain phrases or passages.

Although Fowler's amplificatory embellishments may appear somewhat gratuitous to modern literary sensibilities, it should be noted that the rhetorical technique of *amplificatio* was authorised by a long tradition, stretching back to Aristototele via Cicero and Isocrates. The latter, in his *Panegyricus*, held it to be a particularly effective means by which the imitator could signal his difference from his models.⁶⁰ The former proclaimed it a "violent kind of argumentation" in *De Partitione* 27 (*est enim amplificatio vehemens quaedam argumentatio*), particularly effective when attempting to appeal to the emotions.⁶¹

It is no surprise, then, that the *capitolo* in which this tendency is most in evidence is the final "Triumphus Eternitatis", in which the sermon-like effect noted by Jack is achieved mainly by the application of this primarily oratorical technique. In the apocalyptic climax, Time, the subject of the previous Triumph, is overcome by Eternity, and Petrarch describes his vision of the Last Judgement. Having outlined its effect on both the secular world and the celestial, he concludes the work by hinting at his joy at being reunited with Laura in Heaven, reprising the *inamoramento* which took place in the "Triumphus Cupidinis" in a seemingly spiritual and Christian key. The section in which Fowler allows himself most poetic licence deals with the Last Judgement itself. One passage in particular stands out.

⁵⁹ Jack, "William Fowler", p. 485.

⁶⁰ See Calboli Montefusco, "Stylistic and Argumentative Function", p. 69.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 75.

Describing the manner in which the consciences of the entire human race will be laid bare, unable to conceal anything from God or one another, Petrarch writes:

Fia ogni coscienza, o chiara o fosca,
dinanzi a tutto 'l mondo aperta e nuda;
e fia chi ragion giudichi e conosca.
Ciascun poi vedrem prender suo viaggio
come fiera scacciata che s'imbosca;
(*TE*, ll. 110-14)

The equivalent passage in Fowler's text reads:

Bot euerie conscience than sall be dark, duskish, or ellis cleir,
and naked sal before the world and opned than appear;
And than that glorious god and Iudge, who weill these thingis do knaw,
pronounce sall then his Iudgementis iust and sentence furthe sall shaw,
Whair after It the godles men sall tak thame to thair way,
as dois the wyld dispersed beasts, whome houndis dois putt in fray,
Returne with speid vnto the woods to hyde thame in thair hole,
so wicked men sall haist to hellis, thair for thair sins to thole.
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 157-64)

In Fowler's defence, early commentators on this passage saw in Petrarch's bestial simile an infernal connotation. However, as noted by Pacca and Paolino, Petrarch's passage makes no distinction between the damned and the elect.⁶² He talks of "*ogni coscienza, o chiara o fosca*" (emphasis added), and envisages "Ciascun" hastening to their appointed eternal dwelling places. Rather, it is the speed of movement and the element of inevitability that is at the heart of the simile, more so than the dehumanisation of the damned. Certainly, there is no mention in Petrarch of "wicked" or "godles men" being damned to hell for their sins. By way of contrast, let us examine Morley's translation of the same passage:

But all secretes unshote, open, playne, and cleare
All our conscience, whether it be bright or darke;
Before al the world shall appeare our werke.
And then the myghtie and gloriouse king celestiall
That in His fearefull Judgment is not percial
(As reason is, and as it ought to be)
His wise Judgment thereto shall agre.
And when that sentence is both gone and past,

⁶² See Pacca and Paolino (eds.), *Trionfi*, p. 533.

Each man his viage with great dread and hast,
As the wylde beastes that hast them fast to flye
Afore the barkynge doges for fear they in be.

(*The Tryumphe of Divinitie*, ll. 152-62)

Morley's rendering of the simile is again closer to Petrarch's, and the addition of the "barkynge doges" serves to re-enforce the trope rather than to re-interpret it. Given that Fowler's edition of Petrarch made no interpretive claims regarding this passage, it is clear that the translator has seen fit to make explicit that which he believed to be implicit in the source text, severely compromising the transparency of his translation. If we compare Fowler's passage with Chapter 25 of the *Scottish Confession of Faith* of 1560, we may observe that his treatment of the Last Judgment and its implications for the resurrected appears closer to the Scottish Reformer John Knox than to Petrarch:

[Y]ea, the Eternal, our God, shall stretch out his hand upon the dust, and the dead shall arise incorruptible, and that in the substance of the selfsame flesh that every man now bears, to receive according to their works, glory or punishment. For such as now delight in vanity, cruelty, filthiness, superstition, or idolatry, shall be adjudged to the fire unquenchable, in which they shall be tormented for ever, as well in their own bodies, as in their souls, which now they give to serve the devil in all abomination. But such as continue in well doing to the end, boldly professing the Lord Jesus, we constantly believe that they shall receive glory, honour, and immortality, to reign for ever in life everlasting with Christ Jesus, to whose glorified body all his elect shall be made like, when he shall appear again to judgment.⁶³

Fowler's amplification, when coupled with ensuing damnation of the unrighteous, turns one of Petrarch's most poetic and delicately crafted passages into an evangelical tirade, and though there is probably nothing in the meaning of either his or Morley's translation of these lines with which Petrarch would disagree in the context of theology, there is little in the way of poetry which he would be likely to admire.

Petrarch's vision of the Last Judgement, as described in the "Triumphus Eternitatis", is an intensely personal one. In the very first *terzina*, he opens up a dialogue with himself: "mi volsi a me, e dissi: 'in che ti fidi?'". Following this examination of conscience, a picture emerges to the poet of his true self: "quel ch'i' sono e quel ch'i' fui", and the realisation that the responsibility for

⁶³ The full text of Knox's 1560 Scottish Confession of Faith may be accessed online at <<http://www.fpchurch.org.uk/Beliefs/ScotsConfession/Chapter25.php>> [accessed 4 Apr., 2012].

his salvation lies with himself alone: “la colpa è pur mia” (l. 10). As the poet loses himself in these thoughts, the vision begins: “e mentre più s’ interna / la mente mia, veder mi parve un mondo / novo”. From this point on, the reader is invited to share in the poet’s subjective experience, and encouraged to recognise themselves in the poet. This is one of the most revolutionary aspects of Petrarch’s poetry – through the stripping down of his own subjective experience to its essential humanity, Petrarch the poet becomes the Everyman. There is a tendency in Fowler’s translation, however, to eschew the subjective elements of the source text and generalise as though he were, in effect, preaching a sermon to the reader.

For example, at the moment in which Petrarch witnesses the triumph of Eternity over Time, he describes the character of the vision itself:

Passa il penser sì come sole in vetro,
anzi più assai, però che nulla il tene.
(*TE*, ll. 34-6)

The simile relates to Petrarch’s personal experience of the clarity of the vision at that exact moment in time. Morley’s translation again follows the wording of the original closely, keeping the vision (for the time being) in the realm of the subjective:

Then the thought passeth as the sonne the glasse
And much more, for nothing elles for to refrayne.
(*The Tryumphe of Divinitie*, ll. 51-2)

Fowler, on the other hand, tells of the manner in which all of humankind shall experience the Day of Judgement:

And as the SUN transparent Is owt through the glistring glass,
so sall the thoughts of mortall men more through & swiftlie pass;
For they no fancie sall retane whairin the glass is sene
some obiect through the sonnye beames that so replendant bene.
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 51-4)

Fowler’s alliterative amplification (“*glistring glass*”, “so sall”, “*mortal men more*” [emphasis added]) in this case picks up on Petrarch’s consonance and assonance (“*Passa ’l penser*”, “*anzi più*”).

assai, però...” [emphasis added]), yet it is remarkable that Fowler employs four adjectives and three adverbs where Petrarch (and indeed Morley) achieve the desired effect while leaving all their verbs and nouns unqualified.

Similarly, Petrarch goes on to address his own mind, scolding himself for his vain, worldly thoughts:

O mente vaga, al fin sempre digiuna,
a che tanti pensieri? un’ora sgombra
quanto in molt’anni a pena si raguna.

(*TE*, ll. 61-3)

Morley allows himself a degree of poetic license which is rarely seen in his translation, but which is typical of the early English engagement with Petrarch’s poetic subjectivity:

Are not our myndes then worthy of reprehencion,
To loke on that which in the very ende
Commeth to no profite, thereunto to pretende?
For that which we so fast gather together
With much paine in mani years hether and thether
With great and troubles cumbrance of mynd
To day and to morrowe at the last we fynde
As the shadowe doth passe away and glyde;
Even at the poynt so shall all our pryde.

(*The Tryumphe of Divinitie*, ll. 88-96)

Morley’s movement from the specific to the general parallels the imitative strategies of his contemporaries, Wyatt and Surrey. Yet his use of the first person plural pronoun nevertheless inculcates both poet and reader. Contrast this with Fowler’s equivalent, which again seems to place the poet on the pulpit and the reader in the pew:

O wandring myndis that hangis in doubt and hountrie ay in end!
to what effect dois all your thoughts to trouble yow intend,
When that a moment of ane houer sall shaddowles leawe voyd
that vpon which so many yeares yow have your panis employid?

(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 83-6)

The effect of Fowler’s particular movement from the personal to the general is one of turning a confession into an admonishment. Where Petrarch admits “la colpa è pur mia”, Morley expands this to “la colpa è pur nostra”. Fowler, on the other hand, scolds us: “la colpa è pur vostra”!

The sermon-like quality of Fowler's translation is a result of this dual strategy of amplification and generalisation. However, if we return to James VI's *Reulis and Cautelis*, we find some measure of sanction for the line which Fowler took. For, while the King cautioned against translation *per se*, it is generally agreed that this advice was intended for young poets taking their first steps into the world of literature, when slavish adherence to another's style and technique was more likely to inhibit than enable poetic development. Translation could, in practice, be handled skilfully by more experienced and self-confident poets, which explains why James himself didn't shrink from translating Du Bartas' *Uranie*, or using a variety of French and English sources in many of his other works. Fowler's attempt to evangelise Petrarch's language was perfectly in keeping with James' programme for a vernacular renaissance. Though James devotes only a few sentences to diction in his treatise, he is careful to emphasise above all the importance of the congruence of language and theme:

Ye man lykewayis tak heid that ye waill your wordis according to the purpose: as in ane heich and learnit purpose to vse heich, pithie, and learnit wordis.⁶⁴

In this respect, Fowler has followed James' advice to the letter in his *Triumphs of Petrarke*. In treating of matters of religion, he has chosen to adopt the language of the religious texts which, as a man of the Reformed faith, he would have regarded as most suitable to the message which he drew from Petrarch's text. As such, it would appear that in this instance, it was the King, rather than Petrarch, who sanctioned Fowler's interpretation of the text.

7. Beyond Memory: Physical Beauty and Erotic Desire in the *Triumphus Eternitatis*

Verweij's recent ground-breaking study of Fowler's manuscripts allows us to place the *Tarantula* between the years 1584 and 1587, suggesting that it must have been at least partly composed contemporaneously with his translation of the *Triumphus*.⁶⁵ In an equally influential article, Elizabeth Elliott stresses Fowler's interest in mnemonic practice and its controversial

⁶⁴ Cragie, J. (ed.), *The Poetry of James VI of Scotland*, 2 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Texts Society, 1955), vol. 1, p. 32.

⁶⁵ Verweij, "The Manuscripts of William Fowler", p. 11.

religious implications as a theme in the *Tarantula*.⁶⁶ In light of these two studies, it would appear logical to look for evidence of some thematic overlap between both of these contemporary Petrarchan literary endeavours, and it is this line of enquiry that has resulted in the reading I now propose for the ending of Fowler's *Triumphs*. As Elliott explains, traditional mnemonic techniques tended to revolve around the construction of concrete images which served as mental triggers for the recollection of abstract concepts. Because of the necessity for the images to stir strong emotions with which their abstract signifiers could be associated and thus recalled with greater ease, it was often recommended that these mnemonic triggers have their basis in erotic or sensual experience. As a consequence of this, such strategies drew the ire of moralists, who saw the potential of such techniques to incline the practitioner towards sinful thoughts. They were particularly concerned in case the use of such images should be proposed in order to recall some concept which was intended to engage the mind in the contemplation of the divine. These concerns fused with Protestant iconoclasm which was already hostile to the notion of physical images as an aid to spiritual contemplation, even in cases where no erotic association could be said to exist.⁶⁷ Fowler's *Answer to John Hamilton* suggests that he took a moderate stance on the issue, drawing a distinction between devotional and ornamental images:

Christe him selfe did not condemne Caesars Image in the money. For painting & grauing ar things indifferent nather guid nor euil, in sa far, that quhen their vse tends not do deuotioun bot to decoratioun and ornament. Bot euin sua, that God can not be representit be na Image.⁶⁸

While he agreed with the mainstream Reformist position that devotional images veered towards idolatry, Fowler could see no danger in the utilisation of religious imagery for decorative or ornamental purposes, such as, one might imagine, stained-glass windows or textual illustrations of a religious text, where the image itself laid no claim to act as a conduit to God.

In the *Tarantula*, the poet's beloved, Bellisa, is presented as the conventional lady of the sonnet sequence: a chaste and virtuous soul whose outward beauty reflects her inner perfection.

⁶⁶ Elliott, E., "'A Memorie Nourished by Images': Reforming the Art of Memory in William Fowler's 'Tarantula of Love'", *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 2: 1 (Spring, 2010): 36-53.

⁶⁷ Elliott, "'A Memorie'", pp. 39-40.

⁶⁸ Cited in Elliott, "'A Memorie'", p. 42.

However, during the poet's periods of absence from his beloved, his attempts to recollect her image to his mind's eye are fraught with danger. The poet finds that the visual image which he conjures up through memory and describes in his poetry conveys only the outward beauty of his lady, and proves an insufficient means by which to access the abstract inner qualities which he wishes to contemplate and extol to his readers. His memory isolates and privileges the physical and renders his desire and the poetry which describes it morally suspect. The image of the beloved becomes, in Sarah Dunnigan's words, "the locus of sin and an idolatrous object of abject adoration".⁶⁹ Elliott reiterates this point when she concludes that "Bellisa functions as an image of the extremes of worldly mutability, and the speaker's devotion to her reflects an increasing and terrible subjection to matter".⁷⁰

It may have seemed to Fowler that Petrarch's *Triumph* proposed a way in which to circumvent the problem of the disjuncture between the recalled physical image and the spiritual perfection manifested by the abstract qualities of the lady. The final lines of Petrarch's work invite the reader to contemplate the physical image of Laura following the Last Judgement, when her body will be reunited with her heavenly soul in a state of incorruptible perfection which completely consolidates physical and spiritual beauty:

Felice sasso che 'l bel viso serra!
 Che, poi che avrà ripreso il suo bel velo,
 Se fu beato chi la vide in terra,
 Or che fia dunque a rivederla in cielo?
 (TE.142-45)

The sinful foundation of the lover's desire is thus destroyed and that which was felt as an erotic impulse in the sub-lunar world is metamorphosed into an inevitable consequence of the fulfilment of Holy Scripture, and therefore placed beyond the reproach of figures such as the Augustinus of the *Secretum*. In these lines, Petrarch goes beyond memory by combining the recollection of the earthly (expressly physical) beauty of the beloved with the anticipation of her heavenly (but still, in part, physical) beauty following the resurrection of the flesh. By doing so, he has found a way

⁶⁹ Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, p. 150.

⁷⁰ Elliott, "'A Memorie'", p. 46.

in which to present the reader with an image of the lady's physical beauty which may be contemplated without running the risk of neglecting the spiritual, as her outward beauty is now indivisible from her inner moral perfection.

Such a strategy would surely have appealed to Fowler, given the reservations he exhibits regarding the recollection of the beloved's physical beauty in the *Tarantula*. However, it is not easy at first to determine whether he was totally convinced by Petrarch's solution to this particular problem. Fowler's translation of the close of *TE* reads as follows:

O blisshed stone! o happie grawe, that dois within inclose
the fairest face of feminine, yea, of the world the chose!
If I was happie than esteemed, or Iudge my self than blist,
when I on earth beheld thy corpss, or Death hath cutt the twist
That did Prolong thy glorious lyfe, whois wrak dois work my woe,
and causis so my sore lamentis my pleasouris to ourthrooe,
When sall I be when I sall sie the in the heavinis decord
with glorie, and thy glorious corpss vnto hir soule restord?
(*The Triumph of Immortalitie*, ll. 200-07)

The last sentence, which begins in l. 202 with "If", seems to change course at the start of the crucial penultimate line. Where Petrarch asks *what* it shall be to see Laura again in her blessed state ("poi che avrà ripreso il suo bel velo" (l. 143)), Fowler wonders *when* that day will arrive. It may appear from this that Fowler is more concerned with the poet's own personal desire for salvation than his longing to see his beloved in her newly-perfected guise. Of course, given that the insertion of "when" (l. 206) renders the sentence as a whole somewhat illogical, we cannot rule out a simple slip of the pen, particularly since writing "when" (which appears again four words later) rather than "what" does not disturb the scansion of the line. Regardless of this, it must be noted that Fowler has taken advantage of his expansive style in order to emphasise the physicality of both the earthly and heavenly images of the lady. Petrarch's description of Laura refers to her "bel viso" (l. 142) and "bel velo" (l. 143), encompassing only her earthly beauty. When contemplating her heavenly state, he uses the personal pronoun "la" ("or che fia dunque a rivederla in cielo" (l. 145, emphasis added)). Fowler's taste for alliterative amplification is again in evidence as he translates "bel viso" as "the fairest face of feminine, yea, of the world the chose",

yet this is hardly a radical departure in terms of some of Petrarch's more expansive descriptions of Laura's beauty elsewhere in his work. However, if we examine Fowler's treatment of Petrarch's penultimate line ("se fu beato chi la vide in terra" (l. 144)), we see that he has translated "la", not with "her", but with "thy corpss" (l. 203), emphasising the body in particular, unlike Petrarch who avoids using the masculine "lo" which would have referred back to the "bel velo" of the previous line. Indeed, Fowler delays translating "bel velo" until the final line of his version, where it is conflated with the "la" of "rivederla". He shuns Petrarch's abstract image of the veil in favour of the more concrete "glorious corpss" (l. 207), leaving the reader with a more immediate sense of the physicality of the final image of the heavenly lady, which is immediately tempered by reference to the "soule" to which the body has been restored. Fowler's last line makes explicit the elements which remained implicit in the original, providing a more emphatic ending than Petrarch, who perhaps wishes to convey the impossibility of adequately representing Laura in her blessed state.

Fowler goes further than Petrarch in describing Laura's physical beauty. Whereas the original leaves it up to the reader to imagine the effect the restoration of Laura's body to her soul will have on the poet, Fowler attempts to present the reader with a concrete image of the blessed lady's body "decord / with glorye" (ll. 206-07). In this sense, it seems that Fowler has judged Petrarch's attempt to de-eroticise physical desire a success, and taken advantage of this strategy in a way which was impossible for him in the *Tarantula*, which centred upon a living woman.

8. Conclusion

A comparative analysis of Morley's and Fowler's respective renderings of the *Triumph* reveals the magnitude of the shift in the literary landscape of sixteenth-century Britain brought about by the Reformation of the Elizabethan period, despite the fact that England and Scotland remained separate political entities until the Union of the Crowns in 1603. Coogan perhaps overstates his case slightly when he describes Morley's translation of the *Triumph* as forming "the

crest of the second wave of Petrarch's reception as it swept over the English Renaissance".⁷¹ It would be more accurate to view Morley as standing at a crossroads of Petrarch's reception in England. Although he is aware of the "swete sonnets" written in honour of "his ladye Laura", the qualities which inspired him to translate the *Triumphs* are the same as those for which the early English Humanists exalted the *De remediis*. Certainly, Coogan's "second wave" begins to rise in the second quarter of the fifteenth century as Wyatt and Surrey turn to the *Rvf* for inspiration, but Morley, their older and more conservative contemporary, shared none of their interest in Petrarchan modes of expression or the later concern with the moral implications of Petrarchan desire. His decision to translate one of Petrarch's Italian poems could be seen as initiating the shift in emphasis from the Latin moralist to the vernacular poet. However, Morley's dedicatory epistle would suggest that for him, the *Triumphs* was in essence a Latin work, which happened to be written in the vernacular. As such, I would suggest that Morley's translation is best understood as the ebb of the first wave of Petrarch's English reception, following which both the Latin works and the *Triumphs* were overtaken in popularity by the *Rvf*, signalling the true beginning of the English literary Renaissance.

Although Fowler comes across as a somewhat banal translator in his *Triumphs*, his poetic voice rings through loud and clear, revealing the original and unique style of a man dedicated to his faith and utterly convinced of the potential of poetry to instruct others in the way of righteousness. It is likely that Fowler believed that his elaborate rhetoric was entirely in keeping with the message of Petrarch's original, and, as such, that his adaptation of reformist rhetoric to a religious poem did nothing, in his opinion, to compromise the fidelity of the translation, but rather improved upon Petrarch's text by achieving the harmony of diction and subject matter that James VI had advocated in his *Reulis and Cautelis*. In addition, he did much to initiate the change in preference from French to Italian sources in Scottish court literature. His continental education made him more likely than many of his fellows to be directly exposed to the literature of Italy, particularly Petrarch's vernacular poetry, which, as has been discussed above, was being actively printed in France only a few years prior to Fowler's arriving in Paris in the late 1570's or early

⁷¹ Coogan, "Petrarch's 'Trionfi'", p. 320.

1580's to study Law. Unlike Morley, whose interest in Petrarch seems to have been confined to the "morall vertue" exhibited in the *Triumphs*, Fowler composed his own sonnet sequence, *The Tarantula of Love*, in imitation of the *Rvf*. Other members of the "Castalian Band" turned their attention towards Italian sources in the wake of Fowler's efforts, most notably John Stewart of Baldynneis and John Harrington, both of whom translated Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* in the early 1590's, while the Petrarchan sonnet, which was coming under attack as a model from Donne and Shakespeare in England, was preserved by Scottish poets such as Sir William Alexander, Alexander Craig, and William Drummond of Hawthornden (Fowler's nephew).⁷² Following the union of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603, when James moved his court south to London, these Scottish Petrarchans had the opportunity to make a late contribution to Petrarchism in England, operating as they were from the political and cultural centre of this newly enlarged kingdom. However, as literary fashions and tastes began to change, Petrarch's influence was ultimately diluted. His work became one influence among many, ever more difficult to discern as English poets drew on French and non-Petrarchan Italian sources, as well as the increasingly rich native tradition which the imitators of the *Rvf* had helped to establish.

⁷² See Jack, R. D. S., "Petrarch and the Scottish Renaissance Sonnet", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 259-73.

Chapter IV – “The man who is teaching a truth”: J. M. Synge’s Art of (Mis)Translation

1. Introduction: The Decline of Petrarchism and the Romantic Revival

Following the Jacobean engagement with the *Rvf* and *Triumph* in the early seventeenth century, interest in Petrarch began to wane among poets writing in English. Even during the Jacobean period, a strain of sonneteering emerges in reaction to the conventions of Petrarchism, the most notable and obvious example being that of Shakespeare’s “dark lady” sonnets, such as poem 130:

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun.
Coral is far more red than her lips’ red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask’d, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go, –
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Here, the Petrarchan similes typically used to describe the beloved are, one by one, dismissed as empty hyperbole, and no attempt is made to situate the poet’s love in a spiritual or transcendental context. Nor is the poet remotely vexed by the implications which his love might have for himself or his soul. This new development suggests that the once rich treasure trove of verbal tropes and images in the *Rvf* had been exhausted, and that poets must scale a new Helicon in search of literary inspiration. Even though Fowler and Drummond produced sonnet sequences of real literary value, Ben Jonson complained that the versification of his Scottish contemporaries was too conservative and “not after the fancy of the time”.¹ Petrarchism, then, had become outmoded as a literary model, but the *Rvf* in particular continued to be read and translated by a significant minority of the population, though not always by choice and often with a different goal in mind. Bembo’s canonisation of Petrarch as the linguistic model *par*

¹ Sidney, P. (ed.), *Conversations of Ben Jonson with William Drummond of Hawthornden* (London: Gay and Bord, 1906), p.17.

excellence in the *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525) continued to hold sway in Italy, and so by the time Italian began to be taught as a second language to the children (primarily the daughters) of the elite during the eighteenth century in Britain and America, tutors encouraged translations from Petrarch's vernacular poetry even when the *Rvf* had ceased to exert any discernible influence on more serious literary works.² With this in mind, it is not surprising that the first notable translation of Petrarch in Romantic Britain appeared as part of a didactic textbook, Giuseppe Marco Antonio Baretti's *Introduction to the Italian Language* (1755), in which the author translates *Rvf* 366. There then followed English translations of works by continental authors, such as Voltaire, Keyssler, and Rousseau, which brought other poems from the *Rvf* to the attention of readers of English.³ Following the biographical interest (discussed below) which surfaces in 1764, the number of Petrarch translations into English increases dramatically. William Jones translates thirteen poems in 1772; seventeen translation by the anonymous 'Lucia' appear in 1774; in 1777, thirty-three versions are translated by John Nott, who went on to publish his translation of eighty poems in 1808 and claims to have completed a translation of the entire *Rvf* by the time of his death in 1825, though this was never published and is now lost; Thomas Le Mesurier publishes twenty-four sonnets in 1795, followed by twenty-eight versions by John Penn in 1797; James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont, translated twenty-three poems prior to his death in 1799, which were published posthumously in 1822 as *Select Sonnets of Petrarch*.⁴ There is even a version of the *Trionfi* by Henry Boyd, published in 1807, the first complete English rendering since that of Fowler in 1587. Following the aforementioned eighty versions by Nott, Alexander Fraser Tytler translates thirty poems in 1810 to accompany the expanded third edition of his biography of the poet, while Francis Wrangham's translation of forty sonnets appear in 1817; finally, one hundred sonnets translated by Susan Wollaston are published in 1841, before the first two complete English versions of the *Rvf* appear in the 1850's.⁵

² For a discussion of the notion of proficiency in the Italian language as a mark of refinement in girls and young women see Bandiera, L., and Saglia, D., "Introduction: 'Home of the Arts! Land of the Lyre!': Scholarly Approaches and Fictional Myths of Italian Culture in British Romanticism", in Bandiera, L., and D. Saglia (eds.), *British Romanticism and Italian Literature: Translating, Reviewing, Rewriting* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), pp. 7-26 (p. 16).

³ McLaughlin, M. L., "Nineteenth Century British Biographies of Petrarch", in McLaughlin and Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 319-40 (p. 320).

⁴ See Talbot, G. (ed.), *Lord Caulfield's History of Italian Poetry from Dante to Metastasio – A Critical Edition from the Autograph Manuscript*, 3 vols (New York: Mellen Press, 2000).

⁵ McLaughlin, "Nineteenth Century British Biographies", pp. 320-321. See also Watson, G., *The English Petrarchans: A Critical Biography of the "Canzoniere"* (London: Warburg Institute, 1967).

As has been demonstrated by Martin McLaughlin and Edoardo Zuccato, the interest in Petrarch in eighteenth century Britain was initially biographically driven, sparked as it was by Susanna Dobson's 1775 translation of the *Mémoires pour la vie de Francois Pétrarque*, first written by the Abbé de Sade in 1764.⁶ This monumental study, complete with meticulous referencing and scholarly footnotes, was undertaken by Sade in order to prove that the Laura of the sonnets was a woman by the name of Laura de Noves, who had married an ancestor of the Abbé's, Hugues de Sade, and borne him eleven children, thereby refuting many biographical conjectures that were commonly accepted as facts in contemporary Petrarch criticism. In particular, Sade wanted to dispel the notion, favoured among many French scholars, that Laura was a member of the Sade family (as opposed to having married into it), or that she was a certain Laura de Cabriers, an unmarried woman from Avignon identified as Petrarch's Laura by Vellutello in the sixteenth century.⁷

Sade's view was endorsed by Susannah Dobson in Britain, whose abridged translation of the *Mémoires* was first published by James Buckland in London in 1775. Entitled *The Life of Petrarch: Collected from Mémoires pour la vie de Pétrarque*, Dobson's work, as McLaughlin's study has shown, was intended less as a work of scholarship and more as a readable biography. It fulfilled its purpose admirably, running to seven editions in just over thirty years and re-introducing to a large part of the British population a poet who had by now become somewhat obscure.

The most significant aspect of these biographical works is the genesis of the notion that Laura was married and a mother. While the modern reader of the *Rvf* may consider Laura's precise identity to be of secondary importance to her symbolic nature, and might even be willing to accept that she may never have existed at all, the implications of Laura's marital status as proposed by Sade and endorsed by Dobson were immense for their contemporaries. If one were to accept the arguments of these biographers, Petrarch and Laura's relationship, even if never consummated, had to be viewed as adulterous by the prevailing moral standards of eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain. McLaughlin has shown how Dobson, by a process of alternate omissions from and additions to Sade's text, consciously seeks to present to the reader a more favourable image of Petrarch than that which appears in

⁶ Zuccato, E., "Writing Petrarch's Biography: From Susanna Dobson (1775) to Alexander Fraser Tytler (1810)", in Bandiera and Saglia (eds.), *British Romanticism*, pp. 109-20 (p. 109).

⁷ Zuccato, "Writing Petrarch's Biography", p. 110.

the *Mémoires*.⁸ Zuccato suggests that this moralising tendency constitutes an attempt to re-cast the essentially adulterous relationship, as proposed by Sade, in a morally favourable light, in order to justify an interest in Petrarch's work in the context of the cultural climate of the Romantic age.⁹

While Dobson never attempts to refute any of Sade's claims, she is less condemnatory of Petrarch's character than her French source, and indeed concludes that the lesson the reader should draw from Petrarch's story is that love is not something vain that should be avoided. This points firstly to a neglect of the Augustinian spiritual conflict and existential psychological angst which characterises the experience of the lover in the *Rvf*, and secondly to an idealisation of Petrarchan love – both elements which would become characteristic of the Romantic treatment of Petrarch in the wave of imitation which lasts until the 1830's, the most significant and recognisably Petrarchan literary movement in English since the proliferation of sonnet sequences during the Elizabethan era. Of equal significance, perhaps, is that it is a female translator who sparks the renewed interest in Petrarch, just as arguably the most intriguing aspect of the Romantic revival of Petrarchan imitation and translation is that women sonneteers, such as Charlotte Smith, are found at the forefront of the movement.¹⁰

As Zuccato points out, Sade, like many of his contemporaries, regarded Petrarch as “a poet for women or for the effeminate men who spent time with them”.¹¹ Traces of the same misogyny can be found in Coleridge's early criticism of Petrarch, while Edward Gibbon, the respected author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), condemns Petrarch's love poetry on moral grounds, and professes his repugnance for Petrarch's:

metaphysical passion for a nymph so shadowy, that her existence has been questioned; for a matron so prolific that she was delivered of eleven legitimate children, while her amorous swain sighed and sung at the fountain of Vaucluse.¹²

The prevailing view of the Petrarch who emerges from Sade's *Mémoires* is uncompromisingly summed up by Alexander Fraser Tytler, later Lord Woodhouslee, whose biography *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Life and Character of Petrarch* was published in 1810. In an attempt to demonstrate what

⁸ McLaughlin, “Nineteenth Century British Biographies”, pp. 322-323.

⁹ Zuccato, “Writing Petrarch's Biography”, pp. 110-114.

¹⁰ Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England*, pp. xii-xiii.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 2.

¹² Cited in McLaughlin, “Nineteenth Century British Biographies”, p. 324.

he saw as the incongruity of Sade's claims, he sardonically marvels at a Laura who, despite bearing eleven children and dying of consumption at about forty years of age, shows all the signs of being nothing more than a "hackneyed and antiquated coquette", who

[...] all the while ... regardless of the character of a wife and a mother, is practising her *petit manège* of alternate favours and rigours, to turn the head of an infatuated *inamorato* [sic], whose passion was in itself an affront to virtue and morality, and amuse[s] him for a lifetime with the expectation of favours which she is determined never to grant. Such, in the system of the Abbé de Sade, is the all-accomplished Laura, and such the respectable and virtuous Petrarch. How absurd, how disgusting, how contemptible the one; how weak, how culpable, how dishonourable the other!¹³

While Tytler clearly did not wholly agree with the thrust of Sade's thesis regarding the morally corrupt nature of Petrarch's relationship with Laura, the image of Petrarch as weak and effeminate and his poetry as unduly ornate and unbecoming of a man was not uncommon. Coleridge, for example, in his 1818 *Lectures (Notes)*, praises Petrarch's style, but concludes that his poems fail to excite "a gush of manly feeling".¹⁴

However unpalatable this conclusion may be to modern critical sensibilities, and leaving aside the vagueness and presumptions about gender inherent in the concept of "manly feeling" itself, there is no doubt that Petrarch, and vernacular Italian culture and literature in general, were seen as eminently suitable in the training and education of young girls, particularly those of a privileged background in eighteenth century Britain, as noted by Zuccato in his introduction to *Petrarch in Romantic England*.¹⁵ This fashion continued in the first half of the nineteenth century, as C. P. Brand demonstrates by way of the following quotation from the *New Monthly* magazine in 1821:

The Italian language is now indispensably necessary for all young ladies, who ought to vie in accomplishments with their equals and superiors.¹⁶

Given this, a considerable proportion of educated women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries must have been exposed to Petrarch in their youth. This, combined with the biographical

¹³ Cited in Zuccato, "Writing Petrarch's Biography", p. 117.

¹⁴ McLaughlin, "Nineteenth Century British Biographies of Petrarch", p. 327.

¹⁵ Zuccato, *Petrarch in Romantic England*, p. xii.

¹⁶ Cited in Brand, C. P., *Italy and the English Romantics: The Italianate Fashion in Early Nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 37.

interest discussed above, and the growing participation of women in literary pursuits, helped to maintain a degree of interest in Petrarch during this period, albeit primarily among more marginal literary figures.

Much has been written on the Romantic and Victorian love affairs with Dante, and the *Commedia* in particular.¹⁷ Of course, a preference for Dante does not immediately imply a distaste for Petrarch, but nevertheless, this is the pattern that emerges in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. By way of illustrating this point, we are fortunate enough to have a comprehensive catalogue of English translations of Dante compiled by Paget Toynbee, covering the period between Chaucer and 1906, the very year Synge began translating Petrarch.¹⁸ Even a casual perusal of this list enables one to appreciate the radical turnaround in Dante's English *fortuna* that occurred at the dawn of the nineteenth century. Toynbee lists a total of thirty-three authors who turned their hand to translating some element of Dante work (whether Latin or vernacular) between 1380 and 1800. On the other hand, between 1801 and 1906, a staggering two hundred and twenty-six separate authors translated Dante to a greater or lesser degree, covering both his vernacular and, to a lesser extent, his Latin (excerpts from the *De monarchia*, *Eclogues* and *Espistulae* were Englished by Mrs. F. J. Bunbury as early as 1852 in her *Life and Times of Dante Alighieri*). The list of translators includes such nineteenth-century luminaries as Capel Lofft, Ugo Foscolo, John Herman Merivale, William Hazlitt, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, James Henry Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron, Thomas Babington Macaulay, William Ewart Gladstone, Thomas Carlyle, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, John Addington Symonds, Warburton Pike, as well as Toynbee himself, and Henry Francis Cary and Henry Boyd, whose literary reputations are founded primarily upon their translations of the *Commedia*.

¹⁷ See Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics*; Ellis, S., *Dante and English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Havely, N. (ed.), *Dante's Modern Afterlife: Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998); Milbank, A., *Dante and the Victorians* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Braida, A., *Dante and the Romantics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); McLaughlin, M. L., "The Pre-Raphaelites and Italian Literature" in C. Harrison and C. Newall (eds.), *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2010), pp. 22-35.

¹⁸ Toynbee, P., "Chronological List of English Translations from Dante: From Chaucer to the Present Day", *Annual Reports of the Dante Society*, 24 (1905): 1-107; see also Toynbee's *Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary (c. 1380-1844)*, 2 vols (London: Methuen, 1909).

While it is true that “after about 1825 English interest in Petrarch declines considerably”, it cannot be said that Petrarch disappears completely as a presence in English literature for the remainder of the century.¹⁹ The 1850’s saw the publication of the first two complete English versions of the *Rvf*, the first by Captain Robert Guthrie MacGregor as part of his *Indian Leisure* in 1854, and the second in 1859 as part of the popular Bohn Library series. Nevertheless, viewed in the context of the explosion of interest in Dante revealed by Toynbee’s list, Petrarch constitutes an ever more marginal figure in the English literary landscape.²⁰ This situation was not helped by the fact that the majority of Petrarch’s translators and imitators during this era were often casual writers who simply dabbled in literary pursuits as a form of learned recreation. Of the eminent names listed above, only Lofft, Foscolo, Merivale, Shelley, Hunt, and Boyd (who, in 1806, produced the first English translation of the *Triumphs* since Fowler’s version) can be said to have displayed any favourable impression of Petrarch. Moreover, the work of Shelley, the most influential name on that list, displays almost no traces of the *Rvf* and only partial reminiscences of the *Triumphs*. As a result, Petrarchan translations in the second half of the nineteenth century tend towards the eccentric and haphazard, and are often contained within larger works of little literary worth or significance. It should also be noted that, while Petrarch continued to be associated almost exclusively with the *Rvf* (with the notable exception of Boyd’s focus on the *Triumphs*), almost all of Dante’s works, in both Latin and Italian, were rendered into English at some point during the course of the 1800’s. This had the dual effect of exposing the reader of English to the extraordinary breadth of Dante’s thought, both political and literary, while creating a distorted impression of Petrarch as something of a one-trick pony which arguably persists among his critics to this day. All of this makes the engagement of the Irish writer John Millington Synge (1871-1909) with Petrarch all the more surprising and interesting.

¹⁹ Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics*, p. 100.

²⁰ For the main cultural and ideological reasons for this decline, see Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics*, pp. 100-01, and McLaughlin, “Nineteenth Century British Biographies”, pp. 338-40.

2. Synge's Encounter with Petrarch

Having enjoyed pre-eminence as a literary model throughout the Tudor and early-Jacobean periods, the *Rvf* suffered a decline in fortunes from the mid-seventeenth century until the Romantic period, as detailed above. The next significant creative engagement with the *Rvf* was to come from an unlikely source in the form of Synge's *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"* (1909). While the tide of Petrarchism had been sweeping most of Renaissance Europe, Ireland, despite being the country with the oldest vernacular tradition of poetry in Western Europe (or, perhaps, because of this), had remained largely untouched by the phenomenon. This was partly because of its insular bardic literary culture, which actively sought to maintain the forms and language of its ancient poetry through a system of formal education and patronage which encouraged a symbiotic relationship between the bardic class and the ruling indigenous aristocracy.²¹ Following the collapse of the old order in the early seventeenth century, the traditional forms persisted, although the subject matter changed, and by the time the bards had effectively ceased to exist as a force in the eighteenth century, Petrarch's period of ascendancy as a literary model had also long passed. The Anglo-Irish literary tradition initiated by such writers as Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Oliver Goldsmith (1730?-1774) had produced few poets of note. This scarcity was to continue until the arrival of Yeats, whose preference for modern French and old Celtic sources meant that Synge's translations of Petrarch constitute the first recognisably Irish engagement with the *Rvf*.

Synge had a good pedigree as a translator: he began by translating the Irish bardic poet Seathrún Céitinn (Geoffrey Keating) into English. Moreover, he was a meticulous critic of other translators who were attempting to translate both prose and verse from the Old Irish into English in the context of the Irish cultural revival spearheaded by Douglas Hyde's *Conradh na Gaeilge* (Gaelic League) in the late nineteenth century.²² Having studied in Paris, and being competent in three European languages, Synge

²¹ For a concise yet detailed account of the socio-cultural context surrounding the decline of the bards and its consequences for literature in Ireland, see Ó Tuama, S., *Repossessions: Selected Essays on the Irish Poetic Heritage* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), pp. 119-132.

²² Kiberd, D., *Synge and the Irish Language* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1993), p. 54.

was much more orientated towards Continental literature than most of his peers.²³ He had studied not only Petrarch himself, but also prominent French Petrarchans such as Ronsard and Marot. Synge's awareness of the development of European Petrarchism and his sensibility to the creative potential of the translation process led him to transform Petrarch in a similar fashion to his predecessors in the English and French renaissances, yet his grounding in the native Irish tradition gave a certain freshness to Synge's approach. This cultural tug-of-war poses some serious challenges to modern translation theories, particularly those of Venuti, which I intend to investigate in this chapter. I will also demonstrate how Synge's translations, in many ways, constitute a return to the type of personal affinity with the Italian's themes which initiated the first wave of Petrarchism in English, in contrast to the polemical stance of post-Reformation imitators such as Sidney, Spenser, and Fowler (see Chapters II and III).

Owing to his significant position as one of the founders of Anglo-Irish drama, Synge's original poetry is often overlooked, while his translations constitute the most neglected element of his entire body of work. The introduction to Robin Skelton's 1971 edition of Synge's Petrarchan translations, and a 1985 article by Reed Way Dasenbrock constituted, for many years, the only studies dedicated to this aspect of his poetry.²⁴ Later, Chiara Sciarrino devotes a chapter to Synge in her 2005 monograph *Translating Italy*.²⁵ She offers a technical analysis of Synge's version of the Hiberno-English dialect in which he wrote his translations, and while she correctly identifies many linguistic peculiarities which characterise Synge's folk-speech, some of her conclusions regarding their source in Irish language vocabulary and grammar are highly questionable.

Taking the studies of Skelton and Dasenbrock as my points of departure, I will attempt an analysis of Synge's version of *Rvf* 315 as symptomatic of the way in which Synge transformed Petrarch, and address a number of points made by Dasenbrock regarding Synge's identification with Petrarch and the process by which he was first drawn to the translation of the sonnets. Rather than analyse each text in its entirety, I will focus on one representative sonnet initially, and then examine the major themes which emerge as areas of concern for Synge in his translations, and select examples from a wide range of poems in order to

²³ Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language*, p. 59.

²⁴ See Skelton, R. (ed.), "Introduction", in J. M. Synge, *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death" After the Italian of Francesco Petrarch* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1971), pp. 7-23; Dasenbrock, R. W., "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism".

²⁵ Sciarrino, C., *Translating Italy: Notes on Irish Poets Reading Italian Poetry* (Rome: Aracne, 2005).

illustrate the manner in which Synge confronted the issues which Petrarch's sonnets raised during the translation process, on a linguistic as well as an ideological level. This approach will serve to illustrate more clearly the patterns which emerge in Synge's texts, from which we may then deduce the factors behind his selection of certain sonnets and not others, and the reasons for which he chose to transform Petrarch in the manner in which he did.

I will undertake an analysis of his language and discuss its implications for Lawrence Venuti's domesticating/foreignising translation model, which I believe is unsatisfactory when applied to Synge's translation strategy.²⁶ I will therefore propose a new system of categorisation which emphasises the linguistic and formal relationship between source and target text, which I believe Venuti's system overlooks, while acknowledging the role played in the translation process by the ideological filters which this thesis examines.

By the time Synge first read Petrarch's vernacular poetry, the matters of literary taste discussed above had meant that Dante and the *Commedia* had eclipsed the *Rvf* in popularity in Britain. Although Synge had first become interested in Petrarch and Dante during a visit to Italy in 1896,²⁷ he would not turn his hand to translating sonnets until after he had read *Love's Crucifix* (1902) and *On the Death of Madonna Laura* (1906) which contained translations of all but six of the *In morte* poems from the *Rvf* (and one from *In vita*, *Rvf* 91, on the death of Petrarch's sister-in-law) by Agnes Tobin (1864-1939).²⁸ Tobin was an American poet whose search for her familial roots had brought her to Ireland, where she became a friend of both Synge and Yeats. The daughter of an Irish immigrant who rose to prominence as a lawyer and banker in San Francisco, she was provided with a liberal education which eventually led her to Stanford University to study Greek and Latin.²⁹ It is highly likely, however, that her years reading modern languages at a private school in San Francisco first brought her into contact with the *Rvf*. She is therefore a perfect example of the new breed of female poets whose contact with Petrarch was facilitated by the educational conventions of the age, which enshrined Petrarch's poetry as the touchstone for

²⁶ See Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, pp. 15-20.

²⁷ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 7.

²⁸ Tobin, A., *Love's Crucifix: Nine Sonnets and a Canzone from Petrarch* (London: W. Heinemann, 1902); Tobin, A., *On the Death of Madonna Laura* (London, W. Heinemann, 1906). The poems omitted are *Rvf* 322, 350, 355-357, 365.

²⁹ Levy, J., "Rediscovering the Peninsula", in *The San Mateo Daily Journal* (online edition), 24 Sept., 2007. http://www.smdailyjournal.com/article_preview.php?type=news&id=80991 [accessed 14/02/2011].

refinement among modern, educated young women, at a time when the professional *literati*, both in Italy and the Anglophone world (most notably the Pre-Raphaelites), were expressing a marked preference for the more robust style of Dante's *Commedia*.

Born in 1871 into the Protestant landed gentry in Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin, Synge is famed primarily as the playwright whose shocking depiction of a conniving, immoral, gossip-mongering rural Irish peasantry in *The Playboy of the Western World* caused riots among more conservative cultural nationalists at its opening night in Dublin's Abbey Theatre on 26 January, 1907. A contemporary and friend of William Butler Yeats, Synge emerged as one of the leading members of a group of writers who wished to develop a new kind of Anglo-Irish literature which would complement the contemporary Gaelic cultural revival (as typified by the formation in 1893 of the Gaelic Athletics Association and *Conradh na Gaeilge*, or Gaelic League) and popular appetite for a greater degree of political autonomy from Britain (exemplified first by Daniel O'Connell's Repeal Association (1832-47), then by the rise of the Irish Home Rule Party (1873-82), the National Land League/Irish National League (1879-1900) and subsequently Sinn Féin (founded 1905)).

At the heart of Synge's poetics was a belief in the imaginative richness of the common rural folk of Ireland, as expressed particularly in the dialect of Hiberno-English which he first heard among the young servant girls working in the scullery of his aunt's country house on her estate in Co. Wicklow. Synge was exhilarated by the expressive turn of phrase and unconventional syntax which sounded both strangely exotic and charmingly earthy to his refined, gentrified ears. As Synge was aware, this "otherness" is partly a product of the superimposition upon English of grammatical rules and sentence structures common in the Irish language. Synge travelled from Dublin to the remote Aran Islands off the coast of Co. Galway, and proceeded to immerse himself in the culture of the people, learning Irish and jotting down in his ever-present notebook any interesting Hiberno-English phrases or vocabulary he heard, with a view to integrating such patterns of speech into his literary works. This "folk-speech" would become Synge's hallmark as a writer, and is employed throughout his translations of Petrarch. This results in a complex interplay between Irish, English, and Italian, which presents some interesting challenges for modern translation theories such as those proposed in particular by Lawrence Venuti. These will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

3. Synge's Petrarch: Some General Considerations

Before undertaking a detailed comparative analysis of Synge and Petrarch's texts, it will be useful to observe some general trends relating to Synge's selection of poems from the *Rvf*. Firstly, it is remarkable that Synge selects only poems from the "In Morte" section of the *Rvf*. Secondly, all his translations are of sonnets. In total, between 1906 and his death on 24 March, 1909, Synge completed translations of seventeen of Petrarch's sonnets. The 1909 Cuala Press edition of *Poems and Translations* contained eight of these (*Rvf* 272, 273, 278, 300, 310, 315, 321, and 338); the Maunsel edition of *The Works of John M. Synge*, published in 1910, added a further four (*Rvf* 279, 292, 333, and 346); Skelton's 1961 edition added five more (*Rvf* 280, 281, 282, 293, and 344), and was reprinted in 1971 to mark the centenary of the Dubliner's birth. Synge also began translating *Rvf* 349, but died before it could be completed. It is interesting to compare Synge's selection with those of Wyatt and Surrey, who demonstrate a clear preference for the "In vita" section of the *Rvf*, and frequently omit or avoid reference to death partly because of the very real danger their potentially subversive poetry posed in the culture of the Tudor court (see Chapter I). It would appear that Synge, who was diagnosed with the cancer that would eventually kill him during his work on these translations, felt compelled to confront this spectre and to give vent to his anger and sense of injustice at the timing of his demise.

If we examine the themes of the original texts, viewed not as *fragmenta*, but rather considering the overall effect of Synge's selections on the reader, it becomes clear that Synge's collection of translations deals with death, memory, isolation (particularly in the midst of nature) and loss. Though Robin Skelton is surely correct when he writes that Synge used his translations "as an exercise in creating prose poetry of the kind he could use in *Deirdre of the Sorrows* [unfinished, first performed 1910] on which he had begun work", this does not tell the whole story.³⁰ Given that his Italian source contained a broader variety of themes, the thematic narrowness of Synge's selection demonstrates that there was a certain side to Petrarch's poetry that resonated with him personally during the final few years of his life. He had always been a man of uneven temperament, and possibly a manic depressive, and this is reflected in certain utterances he made about poetry and art in general. He once told Yeats that he wanted to fuse

³⁰ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 12.

“asceticism, stoicism, and ecstasy” in his work, while Yeats himself commented in his introduction to Synge’s *Poems and Translations* (1909), that Synge was a man “who could not have loved had he not hated”.³¹ Perhaps it is no surprise that this man of opposing dispositions felt a certain affinity with a poet who had perfected the expression of contradictory feelings through the beauty of his poetry. Synge’s personal life contains many examples of frustrated love, and though he was not short of female companions, his atheism often proved an insurmountable obstacle in his search for the lifelong companionship and intimacy which he craved. In 1905, he met and fell in love with an actress named Molly Allgood, and though their relationship was far from placid, they became secretly engaged the following year. By 1908, however, a growth in his side which had been paining him since the previous year was diagnosed as Hodgkin’s lymphoma, inoperable at the time. This was the culmination of a series of health problems which had begun after a growth in his neck was removed in 1897, and had persisted with regularity ever since. Thus, his translations of Petrarch, begun in 1906 and left unfinished at his death in 1909, aged thirty-eight, straddle periods of great joy – his engagement to Molly – and great sorrow – his diagnosis with cancer and the realisation that his time with Molly would be brief.

4. Technical Analysis

One element which attracts Synge to these particular poems is the sense of helplessness and lack of control expressed by Petrarch. He is at the mercy of death. It has separated him from Laura by taking her too soon, and now prolongs this separation by refusing to end his life. It is not difficult to see how this “living death” would have resonated with Synge following his diagnosis with a terminal form of cancer.

³¹ Yeats, W. B., “Introduction” to Synge, J. M., *Poems and Translations* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1908), p. xi.

A fine example of this dynamic is to be found in *Rvf* 315, and it is no coincidence that it is here that we find Synge at his most effective as a translator:

Petrarch

Tutta la mia fiorita et verde etade
passava, e 'ntepidir sentia già 'l foco
ch'arse il mio core; et era giunto al loco
ove scende la vita ch' al fin cade.
Già incominciava a prender securtade
la mia cara nemica a poco a poco
de' suoi sospetti, e rivolgeva in gioco
mie pene acerbe sua dolce honestade.
Presso era 'l tempo dove Amor si scontra
con Castitate, et a gli amanti è dato
sedersi insieme, et dir che lor incontra.
Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato,
anzi a la speme; e feglisi a l'incontra
a mezza via come nemico armato.

Synge

HE UNDERSTANDS THE GREAT CRUELTY OF DEATH

My flowery and green age was passing away, and I feeling a chill in the fires had been wasting my heart, for I was drawing near the hillside that is above the grave.
Then my sweet enemy was making a start, little by little, to give over her great wariness, the way she was wringing a sweet thing out of my sharp sorrow. The time was coming when Love and Decency can keep company, and lovers may sit together and say out all things are in their hearts. But Death had his grudge against me, and he got up in the way, like an armed robber, with a pike in his hand.³²

The most immediately obvious feature of Synge's translations is the structural departure from the typical Petrarchan sonnet form. The absence of rhyme, regular metre, and the traditional formal division of octave and sestet gives the impression at first glance of a prose translation. However, as Skelton has shown, Synge's translations all share a degree of syllabic regularity which endows his poems with a rhythmic quality not naturally present in prose. In order to demonstrate this quality, Skelton rewrites Synge's translation of *Rvf* 292 in the form of a sonnet and enumerates the syllables and stresses contained in each "line".³³

³² Text taken from Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 49. All subsequent quotations of Synge's work, as well as numbering of his sonnets, refer to this edition.

³³ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 21.

If the same technique is applied to the above translation, we may better observe how the rhythmical complexity and remarkable symmetry of Synge's translations reflect the formal qualities of the traditional sonnet form:

My <i>flowery</i> and <i>green</i> age was <i>passing</i> away,	(11 syllables, 4 stresses)
and I <i>feeling</i> a <i>chill</i> in the <i>fires</i> had been <i>wasting</i> my <i>heart</i> ,	(15 syllables, 5 stresses)
for I was <i>drawing</i> <i>near</i> the <i>hillside</i>	(9 syllables, 3 stresses)
that <i>is</i> above the <i>grave</i> .	(6 syllables, 3 stresses)
Then my sweet <i>enemy</i> was <i>making</i> a <i>start</i> ,	(11 syllables, 4 stresses)
<i>little</i> by <i>little</i> , to give over her <i>great</i> <i>wariness</i> ,	(14 syllables, 5 stresses)
the way she was <i>wringing</i> a <i>sweet</i> thing	(9 syllables, 3 stresses)
out of my <i>sharp</i> <i>sorrow</i> .	(6 syllables, 3 stresses)
The <i>time</i> was <i>coming</i> when <i>Love</i> and <i>Decency</i>	(11 syllables, 4 stresses)
can <i>keep</i> <i>company</i> , and <i>lovers</i> may <i>sit</i> together	(13 syllables, 5 stresses)
and say <i>out</i> all <i>things</i> are <i>in</i> their <i>hearts</i> .	(9 syllables, 4 stresses)
But <i>Death</i> had his <i>grudge</i> against me,	(8 syllables, 3 stresses)
and he <i>got</i> up <i>in</i> the way,	(7 syllables, 3 stresses)
like an <i>armed</i> <i>robber</i> , with a <i>pike</i> in his <i>hand</i> .	(11 syllables, 4 stresses)

As Skelton points out, there is room for disagreement about the exact number and position of the stresses in each "line", and while his example (Rvf 292) produces something close to a classic Petrarchan sonnet of two quatrains and two tercets, the example above appears closer, in syllabic terms at least, to the Shakespearean form with its three quatrains, marked by the regular pattern of eleven syllable "lines" in lines 1, 5, and 9. Synge also maintains the grammatical division present in Petrarch's original, which is divided into four short sentences, each describing a development in the emotional state of either the lover, his lady, or both, until their final separation by death. At any rate, it must be admitted that Synge's poem displays a certain structural sensitivity and regularity of rhythm which is closer to poetry than to prose, and as it is highly unlikely that such symmetry is the product of mere coincidence, we must agree with Skelton's conclusion that "in his translations of Petrarch, Synge was not only exploring themes and moods of deep personal significance to him, but also inventing a new kind of prose poem".³⁴

This connection between translation and originality lies at the heart of Reed Way Dasenbrock's analysis of Synge's imitative strategy. Dasenbrock's article, "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism", which appeared in the journal *Modern Philology* in 1985, constitutes the most detailed study of this largely neglected area of Synge's work. The article demonstrates how "Synge's Irish Renaissance

³⁴ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 22.

Petrarchism in several respects closely parallels Renaissance Petrarchism”, and situates Synge’s translations firmly within the tradition of Wyatt’s and Ronsard’s attempts to raise their respective vernaculars to the level of literary languages, capable of expressing complex emotions in a manner worthy of comparison with the great literature of past and contemporary *auctores*, from Homer and Virgil to Petrarch himself.³⁵ While Dasenbrock’s thesis in this respect is reasonably convincing, his analysis of Synge’s thematic engagement with Petrarch as a poet is more questionable. Highlighting the climax of Synge’s play, *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, in which the heroine, grieving for the death of her beloved, commits suicide at his graveside, Dasenbrock makes the following comparison:

Petrarch is, in a sense, a Deirdre who did not commit suicide on his lover’s grave. He lives on, but his life seems empty and futile. This paradoxically may have reassured Synge. These final poems of the *Rvf* would have shown him that his and Molly’s love could survive his death. They also argue that dying first is better than living on in the absence of the beloved, and they portray death as a blessed state [...] Synge translates primarily those poems of Petrarch’s that are in praise of death.³⁶

In fact, the translations, and indeed the source texts, reveal a much more complex and ambivalent attitude to death than Dasenbrock suggests. It is true that Laura in her post mortem state is represented as a blessed being, but it is the poet rather than the beloved with whom Synge identifies in his translations. The notion that Petrarch praises death in any of the poems translated by Synge is not borne out by an attentive reading of the texts themselves. On the contrary, death is consistently represented as, to borrow Synge’s own image, a “robber”, who is the cause of, and not the solution to, the poet’s unhappy predicament:

Quante fiate sol, pien di sospetto,
per luoghi ombrosi et foschi mi son messo
cercando col penser l’alto diletto
che Morte à tolto...

(*Rvf* 281, ll. 5-8)

³⁵ Dasenbrock, “Synge’s Irish Renaissance Petrarchism”.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 42.

Quant' [invidia porto] a la dispietata et dura Morte,
ch' avendo spento in lei la vita mia,
stassi ne' suoi begli occhi, et me non chiama!
(*Rvf* 300, ll. 12-14)

Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato,
Anzi a la speme; e feglisi à l'incontra
a mezza via come nemico armato.
(*Rvf* 315, ll. 12-14)

Lasciato ài, Morte, senza sole il mondo
oscuro et freddo, Amor cieco et inerme,
Leggiadria ignuda, le bellezze inferme,
me sconsolato et a me grave pondo,
Cortesìa in bando et Honestate in fondo.
(*Rvf* 338, ll. 1-5)

Ogni mio ben crudel Morte m' à tolto;
(*Rvf* 344, l. 9)

He may at times, as in *Rvf* 300, envy or wish for death, but the characterisation of death is either explicitly ("dispìetata et dura", *Rvf* 300; "crudel", *Rvf* 344) or implicitly unsympathetic throughout. Furthermore, it is noticeable that, although Synge restricts himself to what is, in the context of the *Rvf* as a whole, quite a narrow range of poems, he chooses not to translate such sonnets as *Rvf* 271 and 275, which do explicitly praise death as a liberating force which has saved the poet from his own sinful ways.

Certainly, it may be said that Petrarch is left wishing for death in many of the poems which Synge chooses to translate. However, there are two significant aspects to this death-wish which must be considered in the context of Synge's translations. The first is that this is yet another example of frustrated desire. Petrarch is wishing for a death that cannot come soon enough. There is a sense that death bears some sort of personal animosity towards the poet ("Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato"). Having separated Petrarch from Laura so eagerly, he now vindictively delays their reunion: "Quant' [invidia porto] a la dispìetata e dura Morte, / ch' avendo spento in lei la vita mia / stassi ne' suoi begli occhi et me non chiama" (*Rvf* 300). Secondly, death for Petrarch is a means to an end, a necessary step that must be taken in order to be reunited with his beloved. There is nothing left for him in the mortal realm, yet he is condemned to wander the earth in misery until such time as his new enemy, death, relents and allows him to die. Once again, the poet has no control over his own life, and where once he was dependent upon Laura's pity to fulfil his amorous desire, he now requires death to take pity on him so that he may join his

lady in heaven. Thus, death's torment of Petrarch is twofold – it first deprives him of his reason to live, and subsequently prolongs his meaningless existence by not allowing him to follow Laura. It is this sense of injustice and helplessness which attracts Synge to these particular sonnets. However, Synge's death would not signal a reunification, but rather a separation from his beloved. In translating Petrarch, Synge sought neither consolation nor reassurance, but rather an artistic channel through which to vent his anger, frustration and sadness over the profound and catastrophic effect of death – its inevitability, but also its injustice, and most of all, for the atheist Synge, its total and utter finality.

The poem and translation quoted above provide a perfect example of the way in which Synge inserts elements which can be traced to his own personal circumstances in order to transform the Italian text. Petrarch's original describes a change in the dynamic of the poet's relationship with Laura. As he reaches maturity (“[il] loco / ove scende la vita” (ll. -3-4)), his sinful feelings of lust (“l foco / ch’arse il mio core” (ll. 2-3)) begin to recede, calming his lady's fears and allowing for what would appear to be a strictly Platonic, yet mutually satisfying, relationship. However, as soon as the “cara nemica” (l. 6) of the second quatrain begins a thawing of her relationship with the poet, a new “nemico” (l. 14), in the shape of death, appears “a mezza via ... armato” (l. 14), and extinguishes any hope that the poet might have of future happiness. The development of this sonnet is somewhat different to that usually found in Petrarch. In most cases, the poet introduces the theme of the sonnet in the first quatrain, and develops it further in the second. The first tercet then provides a definite *volta*, which attempts to take the reader by surprise by introducing a development which may seem at odds with the manner in which the theme was presented in the octave. The second tercet then completes the turn and attempts to provide an often pithy or epigrammatic conclusion. Petrarch appears to follow this formula for the duration of the octave, however, when we get to the first tercet, we search in vain for the expected *volta*. What we find instead is the continuing development of the octave along much the same lines as before, with “presso era” (l. 9) picking up “era giunto” (l. 3). The postponed *volta* arrives in line 12 with great abruptness, an ingenious technical mirroring of the suddenness of Laura's death, reinforced by the switch from the imperfect tense used mostly in lines 1-11 to the abrupt *passato remoto* in lines 12 (“ebbe”) and 13 (“fegli”). At the end of the poem, the reader is taken aback somewhat at the abruptness of the appearance of death. No hint is given as to the fate of the poet, or his reaction to the untimely death of his beloved. We are simply left

with the sinister image of the “nemico armato”, who seems to have cut short not only Laura’s life, but also Petrarch’s poem.

As noted above, Synge’s relationship with Molly had also undergone a significant change just prior to his diagnosis with cancer. Their engagement seemed to promise a happier, more tranquil life for Synge, who had finally found the lifelong companionship he had craved for most of his adult life. His diagnosis would change all that, of course, and it is here that we can see Synge’s anger and bitterness emerge through the subtle additions he makes to Petrarch’s text. The first noticeable change occurs in the opening quatrain, where Petrarch’s characteristically abstract image is rendered somewhat more concrete by Synge:

et era giunto al loco
ove scende la vita ch’ al fin cade;
(*Rvf* 315, ll. 3-4)

for I was drawing near the hillside that is above the grave.
(*Laura in Death*, XLVII)

Petrarch’s arc of life becomes a hillside for Synge in a creative departure from the original, who possibly has in mind Mt. Jerome Cemetery, the former Protestant graveyard in the Harold’s Cross area of Dublin. Synge was aware that this would be his final resting place, and it was, as the name suggests, located on a hill. Even if this was not the case, he no doubt felt that Petrarch’s slowly descending arc, rendered aurally with broad, elongated vowel sounds, was somewhat inappropriate for his own untimely and sudden demise, and the more concrete and foreboding image of a hillside overlooking a grave more suitable to his own situation.

A second deviation occurs in Synge’s translation of lines 7 and 8 of the sonnet:

[...] rivolgeva in gioco
mie pene acerbe sua dolce honestade.
(*Rvf* 315, ll. 7-8)

[...] the way she was wringing a sweet thing out of my sharp sorrow.
(*Laura in Death*, XLVII)

This is an example of Synge’s refusal to glorify the beloved, a tendency displayed throughout his translations. Petrarch’s Laura is endowed with noble, chivalric, chaste qualities (“sua dolce onestade”)

which by their mere existence can effect a change in the poet's emotional state. Synge's Laura is altogether more human, and the verb "wringing" seems to imply that considerable effort was required in order for the poet to overcome his depression.

Thirdly, there is the substitution of Petrarch's "Castitate" in line 10 with "Decency". Aside from the continuing de-mystification of the lady, it would seem that this deviation pertains particularly to the recent change in the dynamic of Synge's relationship with Molly. While Petrarch appears to be content to settle for a Platonic relationship with Laura, Synge's relationship with Molly had, for some time, been, as Robin Skelton writes, "blessedly un-Petrarchan". Skelton goes on to note that "by changing Chastity to Decency [Synge] may have been attempting to hint rather at a totally accepted marriage than at a platonic relationship".³⁷

These first three deviations from Petrarch's text serve to ground the translation very much in the modern age and also in the context of Synge's personal circumstances in the final few years of his life. The fourth develops this strategy further, and at once demonstrates the profound level of emotional resonance which Petrarch's sonnets had for Synge, and the manner in which he achieved the remarkable relocation of *trecento* Italy to contemporary Ireland that is in evidence throughout his translations. The crucial moment comes in Petrarch's closing tercet:

Morte ebbe invidia al mio felice stato,
anzi a la speme; e feglisi a l'incontra
a mezza via come nemico armato.

(*Rvf* 315, ll. 12-14)

But Death had his grudge against me, and he got up in the way, like an armed robber, with a pike in his hand.

(*Laura in Death*, XLVII)

It is here that Synge allows the muted feeling of resentment which bubbles beneath the surface of Petrarch's wistful complaint to burst forth, turning it into anger and outright bitterness. Synge's use of the word "grudge" in place of "invidia" has a much more personal ring to it, as though Synge feels that Death has singled him out specifically, and this is confirmed in the remainder of Synge's line: "Death had his grudge against *me*" (emphasis added), as opposed to Petrarch's "Morte ebbe invidia *al mio felice*

³⁷ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 18.

stato, / anzi a la speme” (emphasis added). Synge simultaneously shirks Petrarch’s more abstract formulation and eschews any note of positivity in the original, omitting the reference to “mio felice stato” and “speme”. It was not merely hope he nurtured that Molly would marry him, rather it was a certainty, and Death’s grudge is against the poet himself. Petrarch’s “a mezza via” lends a tragic air to the final line, implying that the lovers’ way has been cut short by Death. Synge also expresses this sentiment, but steers it in a different direction, simply through subtly altering, and then amplifying the final two words of Petrarch’s text. The “nemico armato” becomes “an armed robber, with a pike in his hand”. The crucial factor is the translation of “nemico” as “robber”. The word is far more evocative than the usual English translation of “enemy”, and thus has a greater effect on the reader. It conveys the sense that Death has taken something that doesn’t belong to him, and more importantly, that he has no right to take.

The pike is Synge’s own invention, and a clear statement that he intends to make use of the same artistic licence employed by the previous translators and imitators of Petrarch he so admired, such as Ronsard and Wyatt. Moreover, the added detail gives a vividness to the image, and brings to the fore the sense of helplessness and fear which Petrarch struggles to keep buried. But the pike symbolises more than that, for it establishes a connection between Petrarch’s Italy, where the pike was the weapon of choice for infantrymen, and rural Ireland, where the highwayman, or rapparee, was a popular character in the folk songs and stories which Synge would surely have encountered during his time in Mayo and the Aran Islands. The word “rapparee” itself is an Anglicisation of the Irish word “rapairi”, the plural of “rapaire”, meaning pike, and by extension, pike-wielding person. This one simple addition to Petrarch’s text serves as a perfect illustration for the way in which Synge transformed Petrarch’s text, situating it simultaneously within the context of his own personal life as well as the broader literary context of early twentieth century Ireland.

5. Synge’s (Mis)Reading of Petrarch

Synge’s desire to rewrite Petrarch in the manner demonstrated above meant that accuracy was not as great a concern for him as it might have been had he wished simply to translate in the more conventional sense, that is in order to make Petrarch’s poetry accessible to the English speaker. Indeed, such a project,

had it interested Synge, would have been doomed to failure from the start, for the simple reason that his mastery of the Italian language was by no means complete. Though he did study briefly in Rome (February to April, 1896),³⁸ and could read complicated Italian texts like the *Rvf* without too much difficulty, he could not do so without help, as Robin Skelton points out.³⁹ Ann Saddlemyer, in her introduction to Synge's *Collected Letters*, notes that he purchased a 1740 edition of Petrarch during his time in Rome.⁴⁰ However, there is no record of any edition having been published that year, although two identical editions, uncommented but containing two distinct biographies of the poet by Muratori and Tassoni were issued in 1739 and 1741.

As well as Tobin's translations, which we know he read, it is quite possible that Synge had recourse to one or more of the many partial translations of the *Rvf* which began to appear in the early nineteenth century on the heels of the upsurge of biographical interest in Petrarch discussed above. However, while Synge's versions display certain reminiscences of some of these renderings, he never seems to follow the interpretive choices of any one translator, and it is impossible to say whether these verbal echoes are anything more than the natural convergence which is to be expected when dealing with translations of a common source.⁴¹ Furthermore, the fact that his versions are nothing like the sentimental and somewhat melodramatic renderings of the one translator whose work we know he read (Tobin) might lead one to conclude that he purposely avoided putting his faith in the interpretations of his predecessors. It is difficult to imagine that the religious (and overtly Catholic) overtones of Tobin's renderings would have appealed to Synge. The 1902 edition of *Love's Crucifix* even features an illustration of Petrarch being bound, in the manner of a *Christus triumphans*, to a laurel tree by two ladies, one living, the other with the wings of an angel, representing Laura *in vita* and *in morte* respectively.⁴² This hypothesis appears to be confirmed by an analysis of Synge's deviations from Petrarch, and in particular the unintentional divergences brought about by the mistranslations which appear throughout the text with some frequency. Many of these errors are quite fundamental, and could have been easily avoided had Synge consulted any of the versions anthologised from various sources in the Bohn Library edition

³⁸ Sciarrina, C., *Translating Italy: Notes on Irish Poets Reading Italian Poetry* (Rome: Aracne, 2005), p. 20.

³⁹ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Saddlemyer, A. (ed.), *The Collected Letters of J. M. Synge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 7.

⁴¹ See Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from "Laura in Death"*, pp. 13-16.

⁴² Tobin, *Love's Crucifix*, p. 6.

(1859) of the *Rvf* in English. The fact that he did not undertake such “quality control” checks means that either his opinion of his Italian comprehension skills was somewhat elevated, or that he was more concerned with offering an unmediated literary reaction to the original texts, even if doing so meant potentially compromising the accuracy of his translations. Since either explanation is entirely consistent with Synge’s character, both as a man and as a poet, it is also possible that these factors combined to shape the final form of Synge’s versions of Petrarch’s sonnets.

Two mistranslations reoccur in Synge’s poems which are quite understandable in one with little or no formal training in the language, but which subtly alter the meaning of the original text, and demonstrate how Petrarch as read by Synge differs from the poet familiar to a native or fluent Italian speaker. The first of these relates to the verb “tornare”:

Tornami avanti s’alcun dolce mai
ebbe ’l cor tristo...

(*Rvf* 272, ll. 9-10)

If my dark heart has any sweet thing it is turned away from me...

(IV)

Sol un riposo trovo in molti affani;
che, quando torni, te conosco e ’ntendo.

(*Rvf* 282, ll. 12-13)

It is when I have great sorrow only that I find rest, for it is when I turn round I see and know you.

(XIV)

In the first example, Synge makes two errors, the second of which is a direct consequence of the first. Firstly, he seems unaware that *tornare* means “to return”, and not “to turn” (*girare*). As a result of this confusion (which is repeated in his version of *Rvf* 315), he translates *avanti* as its antonym, since the correct meaning of “before” or “in front” no longer makes logical sense. The result is to turn a hopeful (albeit, we may presume, ultimately fruitless) appeal to memory into an unequivocal statement of desperation which continues, rather than interrupts, a process of miserable aggregation. The mistranslation crushes any fleeting hope of respite which may have been carried over from the original had Synge enjoyed a better command of Italian. The second example confirms Synge’s basic misunderstanding of *tornare*, and here, the second person singular is mistaken for the first person, making

the poet, rather than the lady, the subject of the verb. He also misunderstands the function of “sol” in the previous line, treating it as an adverbial qualification of “trovo”, rather than an adjective relating to “un riposo”. Again, the overall effect is to obliterate the brief moment of relief experienced by Petrarch during Laura’s visitations. Instead, the poet’s “rest” can only be experienced in the midst of his “great sorrow”, never as an escape from it. Indeed, Synge’s rendering of “quando torni, ti conosco” as “when I turn round I see you” (as opposed to “when you return, I know you”) gives the impression of a malevolent and unwanted haunting rather than a benign, consolatory visitation.

Another word which troubles Synge is “fortuna”, which occurs in two of the sonnets he chooses to translate. In both instances, he mistranslates “fortuna” as “good luck”, seemingly unaware that the same word can also mean “storm” or “tempest”. This error occurs first in his version of *Rvf* 272. The original text reads:

veggio al mio navigar turbati i venti,
veggio *fortuna* in porto, et stanco omai
il mio nocchier...

(*Rvf* 272, ll. 11-13, emphasis added)

Synge gives us:

I see the great winds where I must be sailing. I see my *good luck* far away in the harbour,
but my steersman is tired out...

(IV, emphasis added)

It is conceivable that Synge interpreted this “good luck” as the final release of death, and indeed when Petrarch speaks of “il porto”, that is most likely what he means. However, the implication in Synge’s version, brought about by the insertion of the word “but”, is that the safe haven can never be reached, whereas in Petrarch, we find a sense of resignation that even until his dying day, he will never find peace. The “nocchier”, though wearied, must carry on, while the masts and lines of the boat are broken, and the “lumi bei” (which Synge rather prosaically translates as “beautiful lights”, where “stars” may have been a more appropriate extension of the nautical metaphor) representing Laura’s eyes, have disappeared, leaving the poet lost, enveloped in darkness. Synge’s lack of diligence here has led to a crucial alteration of the key point in the original text. As Petrarch tells us in the opening quatrain:

le cose presenti et le passate
mi dànno guerra et le future anchora,
e 'l rimembrare et l'aspettar m'accora
or quinci or quindi...

(*Rvf* 272 ll. 3-6)

The poet, deprived of his lady, is in total despair and can have no hope of redeeming his hopeless situation. This idea is outlined explicitly in the octet, while the sestet uses the nautical metaphor to express the same feelings of hopelessness, and introduces a note of wearied resignation. Petrarch's "fortuna" represents the remainder of his days on earth which he knows he must spend without Laura. Synge's mistranslation of "fortuna" introduces, albeit fleetingly, a glimmer of hope, which is then crushed as a result of his steersman's weariness. Petrarch's journey continues, albeit through rough seas, but Synge's is interrupted, denying him the "good luck" for which he seemed destined.

The same error occurs in Synge's version of *Rvf* 292, and has a similar effect with regard to the sense and imagery of the poem. Petrarch begins by reminiscing about Laura's beauty, listing her physical characteristics, and the effect she had on him while still alive. Synge gives a faithful rendering of this, but the crucial change comes in the sestet, and is again instigated by the misunderstanding of the word "fortuna". Petrarch's text is as follows:

Et io pur vivo, onde mi doglio et sdegno,
rimaso senza 'l lume ch'amai tanto
in gran fortuna e 'n disarmato legno.

(*Rvf* 292, ll. 9-11)

The corresponding lines in Synge's version are:

And yet I myself am living; it is for this I am making a complaint, to be left without the light
I had such a great love for, in good fortune and bad.

Synge has obviously misinterpreted the last line in this passage as a typical Petrarchan conceit, taking the "disarmato legno" to be symbolic of misfortune, contrasting with "fortuna", which Synge mistranslates again as "good luck". What we have here, however, is yet another of the nautical metaphors so common in Petrarch. "Fortuna" again means a tempest, and the image of the dismasted ship is used, not by way of contrast, but as a reinforcement of the first image. Not only does Synge's misunderstanding of the Italian

lead to a bland translation and the loss of the poetic device utilized in the original, it also necessitates that the meaning of the entire passage be changed in order for it to make logical sense. In Petrarch's version "in gran fortuna e 'n disarmato legno" refers to the poet's psychological state subsequent to the lady's death. Once again, the poet despairs, and is sorrowful and angry at having been left without "il lume ch'amai tanto" to guide him. In Synge, this note of despair is lost, the poet is merely "making a complaint", and the line "in good fortune and in bad" can no longer logically refer to the poet's wholly negative state in the original, following the death of his lady. Once the mistranslation has occurred, Synge must associate the line with the nature of the poet's love for the lady while she was still alive.

A second misunderstanding occurs in the final line of this poem which produces a similar effect:

Or sia qui fine al mio amoroso canto
secca è la vena de l'usato ingegno,
et la cetera mia rivolta in pianto.

(Rvf 292, ll. 13-14)

...and this will be the end of my songs of love, for the vein where I had cleverness is dried
up, and everything I have is turned to complaint only.
(XXIV)

The key word here is "cetera", meaning "lyre", and functioning as a metaphor for Petrarch's poetry, the tone of which he resolves to change now that the physical beauty of his beloved, in which he found the inspiration for his earlier verses, has been obliterated by death. No doubt falling back on his training in Latin at Trinity College, Synge has taken "cetera" to mean "the rest", as in *et cetera*. The resultant rendering, "everything I have", has more far-reaching implications than Petrarch's "cetera", which, in this case at any rate, refers only to his poetry. In Synge's version, the poet's despair seems once again to be more profound and all-encompassing. It should be noted that Petrarch's line is a re-working of a phrase from the Book of Job (30: 31), "Versa est in luctum cithara mea". We cannot say for certain whether Synge was aware of this Biblical echo, but his mistranslation of Petrarch's "cetera", accidental or otherwise, completely erases any religious overtones from the text.

Another mistranslation occurs in Synge's last poem, where Petrarch's describes Laura's arrival in Heaven:

Ella, contenta aver cangiato albergo
si paragona pur coi più perfecti;

(*Rvf* 346, ll. 9-10)

And herself, well pleased with the Heavens, was going forward, matching herself with the
most perfect that were before her.

(LXXV)

Here, Synge misreads "si paragona" as a reflexive verb, giving us "matching herself" rather than "she is equal to". Dasenbrock has already identified this error and remarked upon the manner in which it contributes to the demystification of the beloved which Synge undertakes in his translations.⁴³ However, it must be acknowledged that if Synge did indeed misunderstand this verbal construction, he was in rather esteemed company. Ludovico Castelvetro clearly shares this interpretation, and disapprovingly comments: "Non mi par cosa convenevole, che ella si paragoni".⁴⁴ Ludovico Muratori, in his 1711 commentary, seems to feel the need to insulate Petrarch's text against any potentially blasphemous interpretation: "Che s'ella *si paragona coi più perfetti*, può dirsi, che nol faccia per vanità, o superbia, ma per istupore giustissimo della sua gran felicità, maggiore di quella di tant'altri, e per ringraziare la divina clemenza, che abbia lei condotta a cotal perfezione".⁴⁵ Thus, regardless of whether one believes the passage to be blasphemous or not, Synge's reading of "si paragona" as a reflexive verb is lent a degree of authority by these respected Petrarchan commentators. Moreover, such a reading would have appealed to the atheist Synge, whom we would expect to err on the side of blasphemy when confronted by any such ambiguity in Petrarch's text. Indeed, it should be noted at this juncture that not all of Synge's deviations from his source text are unintentional mistranslations owing to a less than perfect grasp of Italian vocabulary and grammar. An example of this controlled and conscious process of "creative mistranslation" has been highlighted above, when "Castità" was rendered as "Decency" to reflect the

⁴³ Dasenbrock, "Synge's Irish Renaissance Petrarchism", p. 40.

⁴⁴ Castelvetro, L. (ed.), *Le Rime del Petrarca* (Basel: Pietro de Sedabonis, 1582; repr. Venice: Antonio Zatta, 1756), p. 185.

⁴⁵ Muratori, L., *Le Rime di Francesco Petrarca* (Modena: Bartolomeo Soliani, 1711; repr. Venice: Sebastian Coleti, 1727), p. 537.

difference in dynamic between the courtly Petrarch-Laura and the modern Synge-Molly relationships. A further instance occurs in the first tercet of “Ite, rime dolenti, al duro sasso”:

sol di lei ragionando viva et morta,
anzi pur viva et or fatta immortale,
a ciò che 'l mondo la conosca et ame.

(*Rvf* 333, ll. 9-11)

It is of her only I do be thinking, and she living and dead, and now I have made her with my
songs so that the whole world may know her, and give her the love that is her due.

(LX)

Lines 9 and 11 are translated reasonably faithfully by Synge, the substitution of “ragionando” with “thinking” making little difference to the meaning of the original. In line 11, “ame” is amplified to become “give her the love that is her due”, which serves to reinforce the somewhat haughty nature of Synge’s Laura, as identified by Dasenbrock. The most interesting feature of this passage, however, is Synge’s rendering of Petrarch’s tenth line, which bears only a tangential relationship to the Italian text. He begins by omitting the palinodic “anzi pur viva” altogether, and proceeds to amplify the remainder of the line beyond all recognition. The most immediate sense the reader has of Petrarch’s tenth line, is that Laura is “viva” because she has ascended into heaven. She is “fatta immortale” not by the poet’s songs, but by God, who has granted her the reward that is the due of the true Christian. As usual, there is a deeper layer of meaning in Petrarch’s language which allows for an interpretation consistent with the manner in which Synge renders the line. The reference to immortality comes in close proximity to “di lei ragionando”, inviting the reader to make a logical connection between Petrarch’s poetry and Laura’s immortality. Regardless of which interpretation the reader prefers, it must at the very least be acknowledged that both meanings are present and both readings possible. Synge’s atheism, however, leads him to foreground the more obscure meaning to the extent that no scope whatever is left for the religious interpretation. Even at that, the very concept of immortality, even of the literary kind, seems unpalatable to Synge, who omits all reference to it in his version. In this instance we are clearly not dealing with a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the source text, but rather the direct operation of an atheistic filter upon the translation process. This is a clear indication that even though Synge is ostensibly translating Petrarch, he views the final product of this process as his own work, which must

conform to his own poetics, and which therefore demands to be read as the work of J.M Synge rather than that of Petrarch.

Synge's unintentional mistranslations, on the other hand, provide a fascinating insight into the way in which he read Petrarch. They reveal to us what Synge *thinks* Petrarch is saying. In each of the examples discussed above, Synge's misunderstandings give the impression of a much darker, more despairing body of poetry. It is this profound impression of inescapable doom that resonated with Synge, given his own hopeless situation at the time he embarked upon his *Laura in Death*. For Synge there could be no consolation to be found in Petrarch's final appeal to the Virgin, nor, as we have seen, the promise of life after death as represented by Laura's visitation of the poet. The manner in which Synge read Petrarch, as revealed by his mistranslations, led him to view the *In morte* section of the *Rvf* as a study in abject misery, and the precise nature of his identification with Petrarch as a poet can be glimpsed through a final example of Synge's art of mistranslation, taken from his version of *Rvf* 344:

...Ben sa 'l ver chi l'impara,
com'ò fatt'io con mio grave dolore.

(*Rvf* 344, ll. 3-4)

The man who is teaching a truth knows it better than any other, and that is the way I am with
my great sorrow.

(LXXIII)

Here, it is not clear whether Synge's translation of "imparare" as "to teach" rather than "to learn" is an unconscious error or an intentional redirection of the original. Nevertheless, it provides us with a telling insight into the way in which Synge saw his relationship with Petrarch's poetry. For Synge, Petrarch is the master of writing despair. In translating, or more accurately, rewriting Petrarch in his own image, he is undertaking a kind of poetic apprenticeship, looking to Petrarch in the hope that the maestro might teach him how best to express his "great sorrow". Yet crucially, it is Synge's sorrow, and not Petrarch's. Despite the difference in the poet's situations emphasised by Dasenbrock, whereby one confronts the death of the beloved, while the other must face his own imminent demise, Synge's translations are borne out of a deep affinity with what he saw as Petrarch's poetics of despair. Both poets are helpless in the face of death's destructive power, yet the manner in which they react to loss determines the tone and

thrust of their poetry. Synge presents us with a Petrarch stripped of his only possible consolation – that of the Christian afterlife.

6. Synge's Pro-Active Translation Strategy

The 1909 Cuala Press edition of Synge's *Poems and Translations*, in which a number of translations from Petrarch and Villon appeared alongside original works, contains a preface by the author which constitutes the closest thing we have to a theoretical statement of Synge's poetics, and which, owing to its brevity, may be quoted in full here:

I have often thought that at the side of the poetic diction, which everyone condemns, modern verse contains a great deal of poetic material, using poetic in the same special sense. The poetry of exaltation will be always the highest, but when men lose their poetic feeling for ordinary life, and cannot write poetry of ordinary things, their exalted poetry is likely to lose its strength of exaltation, in the way men cease to build beautiful churches when they have lost happiness in building shops.

Many of the older poets, such as Villon and Herrick and Burns, used the whole of their personal life as their material, and the verse written in this way was read by strong men, and thieves, and deacons, not by little cliques only. Then, in the town writing of the eighteenth century, ordinary life was put into verse that was not poetry, and when poetry came back with Coleridge and Shelley, it went into verse that was not always human.

In these days poetry is usually a flower of evil or good, but it is the timber of poetry that wears most surely, and there is no timber that has not strong roots among the clay & worms.

Even if we grant that exalted poetry can be kept successful by itself, the strong things of life are needed in poetry also, to show that what is exalted, or tender, is not made by feeble blood. It may also be said that before verse can be human again it must learn to be brutal.

The poems which follow were written at different times during the last sixteen or seventeen years, most of them before the views just stated, with which they have little to do, had come into my head.

The translations are sometimes free, and sometimes almost literal, according as seemed most fitting with the form of language I have used.⁴⁶

Despite Synge's disclaimer that most of the poems in the collection have little to do with the thoughts expressed in the preface, we may reasonably assume that his translations of Petrarch, composed during the final two years of his life and which he was still revising up to his death, were undertaken either after or around the same time that the poetics described in the passage above began to exert their effect upon

⁴⁶ Synge, J. M., *Poems and Translations* (Dundrum: Cuala Press, 1909), pp. 1-2.

Synge's writing. The key to Synge's poetry, as presented here, is that it must be grounded in the everyday, the mundane, and in particular that this should be reflected in its language. By claiming that "it is the timber of poetry that wears most surely, and there is no timber that has not strong roots in clay and worms", Synge is building on a widely-held and long-standing belief, stretching at least as far back as Plato, that poetry serves as a mirror for life itself.⁴⁷ But while Shelley's mirror "makes beautiful that which is distorted",⁴⁸ Synge's reflects the decay inherent in the human condition, with its eventual end in the same "clay and worms" in which the "timber of poetry", that is its themes and language, has its roots. In the pre-Romantic age (or at least in Synge's idealised version of it) the poetry of the mundane had been read in all social strata, from thieves to deacons, but the Romantics had lost the connection with the everyday, and poetry had become the prerogative of "little cliques" of privileged *literati*. These groups communicated with one another in a kind of a secret code, to be understood only by the initiated, a practice which Synge subtly parodies in this very passage through his reference to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*. Synge's translations of Petrarch can be viewed as part of his attempt to make poetry "learn to be brutal", to radically deconstruct the very foundations of European lyric poetry and start to build afresh from the bottom upwards. In this respect, Synge's modernism shares some of the Imagist ideals later developed by his younger contemporary Ezra Pound, but his demotic poetics militate against the avant-garde elitism which characterised the modernist movement in general.

It is noticeable that Synge's original poems (most of which constitute the "many" which precede the formation of this demotic poetics) appear decidedly conventional in language and form when compared with his translations, both of Petrarch and Villon. His poems are generally short, and alternate between regular iambic and trochaic verses of either three or four feet, often contained within the same stanza. He makes use of rhyme throughout, favouring the couplet in particular but also employing an alternating ABAB rhyme scheme and a simple 4-line ABCB pattern. His most adventurous composition in formal terms is "Beg-Innish" with a rhyme scheme of AbCbCCCb, where a capital letter indicates a tetrameter and a lower case letter a trimeter, and which features identical second and final lines, a pattern maintained throughout all three stanzas. The overall effect throughout Synge's original poetic corpus is a folksy

⁴⁷ See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Charleston: Forgotten Books, 2008), Book X, pp. 373-407.

⁴⁸ Shelley, P. B., *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), p. 30.

simplicity, falling somewhere between a nursery rhyme and a popular ballad. Many poems evoke the uncomplicated life of a remote corner of rural Ireland, populated by simple peasants who spend their time dancing, fishing, hunting, drinking, and loving. Others are more personal, dealing with intimate moments between himself and a lover, his affinity for nature, his feelings about his own mortality, and his reactions to works of art both literary and pictorial.

Remarkably, however, his diction, like his verse forms, is significantly different to the idiom he uses in the translations. That trademark “melancholy dialect of his”,⁴⁹ written without care for rhyme or meter, is reserved for his renderings of Petrarch and Villon. He states in his preface that “the translations are sometimes free, sometimes almost literal, according as seemed most fitting with the form of language I have used”.⁵⁰ This seems to be a clear indication that Synge felt that his folk-speech placed certain constraints on him as a translator, that fluency and accuracy were impossible because of his decision to write in a certain way. Synge’s language would serve as the mould within which Petrarch’s clay would have to fit, and if it refused to do so, he would insist upon it by adding to or subtracting from the original material. While the early Petrarchan movements across Europe were characterised by the attempt to demonstrate the capacity of each writer’s own *volgare* to produce the kind of “exalted” poetry which Synge describes in his preface, previously the preserve of Latin and Greek literature, Synge appears to have had no similar pretensions for his folk-speech. Instead, Synge wanted to write about the ordinary, yet in doing so, he was engaged himself in a sort of exaltation of the mundane. For a scholar like Synge, who was aware of the seminal importance of the *Rvf* for a European poetic tradition which had lost its way, Petrarch’s poetry was of the exalted type – it dealt sublimely with the great themes of love and death and laid the foundations for the vernacular European lyric. Wyatt and Surrey had recognised what Petrarch had done and were inspired by his example to create a new type of English poem by shaping their language around the form of the sonnet. Their early experimentations eventually resulted in the crystallisation of the sonnet form which was brought to perfection by Shakespeare and thus bears his name. The departure had been a radical one for English poetry, brought about through the imposition of an alien form onto the English language, necessitating the invention of even a new strain of diction in

⁴⁹ Yeats, W. B., “Preface to the First Edition of John M. Synge’s Poems and Translations”, in *The Cutting of an Agate* (New York: McMillan, 1912), p. 141.

⁵⁰ Synge, “Preface” to *Poems and Translations*, p. xviii.

order to express the concepts contained within the original Italian texts, which, despite their originality, still lean on a native tradition stretching back to the thirteenth-century, as well as incorporating a more ample store of cognates drawn from both the Provençal poets and the classical Latin *auctores*. In this respect, the poetic language of Wyatt and Surrey is essentially reactive. Synge, on the other hand, consciously inverts this relationship between target and source languages, forcing the original text to conform to the exigencies of the translating language. This may consequently be described as a pro-active translation strategy. I believe these new categories to be more helpful, at least in terms of analysing Synge's translations, than the division between foreignising and domesticating strategies proposed by Venuti which has dominated discourse in translation studies for close to two decades now.⁵¹

Venuti's system of categorisation is an elaboration of Schleiermacher's celebrated statement that a translator either "leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (domesticating) or "leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him" (foreignising).⁵² Taking this basic dichotomy as his starting point, Venuti develops a theory of translation along Marxist critical lines, accusing the domesticating translator of perpetuating the dominant values of the translating culture by negating the foreign elements of the source text which threaten or subvert the hegemony of the translating culture. Venuti favours foreignising translations in "aggressively monolingual" cultures, since it calls attention to "the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad".⁵³ It is difficult to see where Synge's Petrarch fits into this scheme. If we consider Venuti's point of departure in Schleiermacher, it is clear that Synge has not left Petrarch "in peace, as much as possible", yet, because of the unconventional form and diction employed, he has also made considerable demands on the reader. Venuti lists among the characteristics of a foreignising translation "the use of foreign words" and "the use of non-standard dialects or sociolects",⁵⁴ both of which feature as part of Synge's translating diction. But while it is true that Synge's translations are

⁵¹ See Venuti, L., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000); and Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*. For other notable recent contributions to the debate on translation studies, see Bassnett, S., *Translation Studies* [3rd ed.] (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); Baker, M. (ed.), *Critical Readings in Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Asimakoulas, D., and M. Rogers (eds.), *Translation and Opposition* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011); Beebe, T. O., *Transmesis: Inside Translation's Black Box* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

⁵² Cited in Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 15.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 20.

possessed of a certain otherness which challenges the prevailing elitist, modernist literary culture, and thus suggest a foreignising strategy, that otherness does not reflect the values of the foreign text. This is of no real consequence, however, for in order to account for such a circumstance, Venuti defines his concept of foreignisation in a very specific and somewhat counter-intuitive sense:

The “foreign” in foreignising translation is not a transparent representation of the essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current situation *in the receiving culture*. Foreignising translation signifies the differences of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail *in the translating language* [emphasis added].⁵⁵

This differentiates Venuti’s foreignising paradigm from Philip Lewis’ notion of “abusive fidelity”, a process whereby the translator:

...eschews the prevailing fluent strategy in order to imitate in the translation whatever features of the foreign text abuse or resist dominant cultural values *in the foreign language* [emphasis added].⁵⁶

In Lewis’ theory, the foreignness of the target text remains grounded in the source text, and demands that the translator produce an effect in the target language which replicates the effect of the original text upon its original audience. For Venuti, on the other hand, the foreign is located with reference to the values of the translating culture alone, rendering the values of the foreign culture peripheral at best, inconsequential at worst. At this point, Venuti’s theory short-circuits itself. The foreignising translation that he believes all translators should practise depends entirely upon the existence of a dominant translating culture against which to rebel. Even if we grant that the process of translation is, by its nature, creative (in an original rather than a derivative sense), as Venuti claims, we must still come to terms with the unqualified assumption that all translators, simply by virtue of their engagement in a creative process, should adopt a polemical stance towards the dominant culture of the translating language, regardless of the values expressed in the source text. Synge’s translations of Villon, for example, read very much like his versions of Petrarch, despite the gulf which exists between the cultural values and poetics expressed by the fifteenth-century Frenchman and the *trecento* Italian respectively. When we examine Venuti’s model,

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 18.

we are left wondering whether a source text is even necessary, except as a pretext to engage in the process of a foreignising textual strategy as an end in itself. A foreignising translation, in the final analysis, is a purely intra-cultural dialogue of the kind which may be undertaken (and indeed has been for centuries) in the absence of any foreign language text. As a creative literary act, it requires nothing more than a counter-cultural set of values (almost always already present within the translating culture, albeit, by definition, at a peripheral level), which stands in opposition to prevailing cultural norms (be they political, social, artistic, etc.). This absolves the ideal translator of any responsibility for the violence which Venuti claims is inherent in any translation, as long as he or she inscribes the source text with a marginal set of values in respect of his or her own culture to which all translators, by some mysterious and unexplained process, are bound to subscribe by the sole virtue of their being translators.

Synge's translations demonstrate the inadequacy of Venuti's system of categorisation, and reveal it as a self-defeating model which, in fact, strengthens and perpetuates the very cultural imbalance which it purports to redress. As has been noted, the Hiberno-English dialect upon which Synge bases his characteristic style is largely the result of the superimposition of Irish grammatical structures and vocabulary on English. While controversy has long raged over the question of whether any Hiberno-Irish speaker ever spoke in the somewhat exaggerated, melodramatic manner characteristic of Synge's folk-speech,⁵⁷ certain authentic elements of the dialect (many of which still survive today) are undeniably present in his translations as well as his drama. For example, the "do be + gerund" (or occasionally "do be + past participle") construction which occurs in several of his Petrarch translations:

That's where I do be stretched out thinking of love
(XI [Rvf 279])

I was never anyplace where I saw so clearly one I do be wishing to see when I do not see...
(XII [Rvf 280])

Sweet spirit you do be coming down so often...
(XIV [Rvf 282])

And she has left me after her dejected and lonesome, turning back all times to the place I do
be making much of for her sake only...
(LIII [Rvf 321])

⁵⁷ See Kiberd, "Synge and the Irish Language"; Fleming, D., *A Man Who Does Not Exist: The Irish Peasant in the Work of W. B. Yeats* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 5-44.

It is only of her I do be thinking...

(LX [Rvf 333])

This construction is a result of the absence in English of a tense known in Irish as *an Aimsir Ghnáthláithreach* (literally “the usual-present tense”), used to express an habitual action in the present, and far more common in Irish than the simple present, whose use is much more restricted than its English equivalent. The non-habitual (or simple) present tense and the habitual present tense have a common form in all Irish verbs except for the verb “bí” (to be). Therefore, the easiest way for the speaker to indicate that an action takes place in the habitual present, without having to supply adverbial clarifications such as “often”, “every day”, frequently”, etc., is to couple the habitual present form of “bí” with the gerundive form of the main verb. Thus “I go to the shop (every day)” is rendered as “Bím ag dul go dtí an siopa” (literally “I am [habitual present form] going to the shop”). When native Irish speakers learning English wished to express an action in the habitual present in that language, they retained the gerundive form required by the *gnáthláithreach* (“ag dul”/“going”) and employed “be” as an auxiliary verb due to its similarity in both meaning and sound to the root of the *gnáthláithreach* form of the verb “bí”. The addition of “do” may, as Tamami Shimada suggests, result from “a re-interpretation of the periphrastic *do* of the early modern English, which in Hiberno-English is juxtaposed with *be* to mark habitual, durative, or generic aspect”.⁵⁸

The restricted usage of the simple present in Irish also gives rise to another feature of Hiberno-English which differentiates the dialect from standard English – the preference for the continuous present tense. Whereas the *gnáthláithreach* in Irish is used to express habitual actions in the present, the continuous present is used, as in English, in order to express actions which are not habitual but are merely occurring as the speaker is describing them. Because of the restrictive conditions under which the simple present may be used in Irish, the continuous present functions as the *de facto* English simple present. It is formed in Irish by the same process as in English, i.e. the simple present of the verb *to be* + *gerund*.

⁵⁸ Shimada, T., “The *do be* form in contemporary Hiberno-English: An implication for grammatical transformations” in *Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, 16 (Apr., 2006) – available online at http://www.inst.at/trans/16Nr/03_2/shimada16.htm [accessed 23 March 2012].

The instances in which Synge employs this construction are too numerous for an exhaustive list, but the octave of sonnet IV (*Rvf* 272) may serve as an example of the frequency with which he employs this form:

Life *is flying* from me, not *stopping* an hour, and Death *is making* great strides following my track. The days about me and the days passed over me, *are bringing* me desolation, and the days to come will be the same surely.

All things that *I am bearing* in mind, and all things I am dread of, *are keeping* me in troubles, in this way one time, in that way another time, so that if I wasn't taking pity on my own self it's long ago I'd have given up my life.

The continuous present is the default present tense in Synge's folk-speech, and serves to translate verbs in the Italian present tense which would normally be translated by the simple present in standard English (*fugge; s'arresta; vien; danno; m'accora*). It should be noted that, in contrast to the *do be + gerund* formation discussed above, it is the frequency with which Synge employs this tense rather than its construction *per se* that marks it out as a feature of Hiberno-English.

A very noticeable feature of Hiberno-English is the way in which the pluperfect and present perfect tenses are formed. The pluperfect uses the construction *simple past of "to be" + after + verbal noun*, so that the standard English phrase "I had arrived" is expressed in Hiberno-English as "I was after arriving". The present perfect follows the same pattern but employs the present tense of the verb "to be", so "I have arrived" becomes "I am after arriving". This construction mimics the construction of the equivalent Irish tenses exactly in every respect. Although this is one of the most easily identifiable characteristics of Hiberno-English, and one which has enjoyed a greater degree of penetration across all demographics than forms such as the *do be* construction, it occurs only once in Synge's translations of Petrarch:

What a grudge I am bearing the heavens that *are after taking* her, and *shutting* her in with greediness...

(XXXII)

It is interesting to note that the equivalent line in Petrarch reads:

Quanta ne porto al ciel, che chiude et serra,
et sì cupidamente à in sé raccolto
lo spirto da le belle membra sciolto

(Rvf 300)

Petrarch's use of the *passato prossimo* here may have suggested the English present perfect to Synge, through the literal translation of each of its component parts, causing "ha...raccolto" to be read as "has gathered", which was then converted into the Hiberno-English form of the present perfect.

We may also note the use of the reflexive form of the pronoun for emphasis:

Ohone, when will I see that day breaking that will be my first day with *herself* in Paradise?
(X [Rvf 278])

...and *herself* that Heaven shows me though hidden in the earth I set my eyes on...
(XI [Rvf 279])

But *yourself* are calling to me out of Heaven...
(XII [Rvf 280])

...showing me in her look she has a pity for *myself*.
(XIII [Rvf 281])

...singing of *yourself*...
(XIV [Rvf 282])

And what is coming to me is great sighing and trouble, which *herself* is drawing out of my deep heart...
(XLII [Rvf 310])

...let you call out till *herself* that is in the Heavens will make answer...
...may she be there to meet me, *herself* in the Heavens...
(LX [Rvf 333])

I am making lamentation alone, though it isn't *myself* only that has a cause to be crying out...
(LXVII [Rvf 338])

Herself that was the honour of our age.
(LXXIII [Rvf 344])

"The like of *herself* hasn't risen up these long years from the common world".
And *herself*, well pleased with the Heavens...
(LXXV [Rvf 346])

This construction takes advantage of a feature of Irish which is of particular use to the writer, namely the presence of a series of emphatic pronouns which differ from ordinary pronouns, and provide an effect which can only be achieved with comparable concision in spoken English, by placing a vocal stress on the relevant pronoun. Although the reflexive form of the pronoun in English is not a direct translation of

the emphatic Irish form strictly speaking, in many cases (though not all), the Irish reflexive pronoun may be substituted for the emphatic pronoun, and as such the equivalent English term provides the closest approximation available to the Hiberno-English speaker wishing to replicate the effect of the emphatic Irish pronoun. In addition, the use of “herself” in some of the above cases contributes in a very subtle way to the irreverent attitude Synge displays towards Petrarch’s exalted beloved. The use of the third person reflexive pronoun in Hiberno-English can denote a certain lack of respect on the part of the speaker for the person to whom it refers, attributing to them a certain sense of self-importance or arrogance depending on the context in which it is used. This sense can be felt particularly strongly in the last two examples above, taken from sonnet LXXV.

Another feature of Hiberno-English which Synge employs is the use of the interrogative phrase “for what” to translate “che”, when “why” would be the natural choice of a speaker of standard English. In Irish there is no exact equivalent for the word “why”. Instead “cén fáth” is used, which literally translates as “what is the reason”. The interrogative form used by Synge in sonnet V expresses the same concept:

...che pur dietro guardi
 nel tempo che tornar non pòte omai,
 anima sconsolata? che pur vai
 giugnendo legno al foco ove tu ardi?
 (Rvf 273)

*For what is it you’re turning back ever and always to times that are away from you? For
 what is it you’re throwing sticks on the fire where it is your own self that is burning?*
 (V)

Again, though this is not a direct literal translation of the Irish, the element of circumlocution present certainly recalls the construction of “cén fáth”. What is also particularly interesting about this phrase is that “for what” constitutes an exact literal translation into English of the Italian “perché”, though the effect upon the reader of the respective languages is quite different. It is also worth noting that the phrase is combined with both the continuous present (“you’re turning”; “you’re throwing”) and emphatic reflexive pronoun (“your own self”) described above.

The final element of Synge's folk-speech drawn from the Hiberno-English dialect which I will mention is the use of "and" as a temporal conjunct which introduces a clause with no finite verb.⁵⁹

Take the following examples:

Or other days I have seen her on the fresh grass *and she picking* flowers like a living lady...
(XIII [Rvf 281])

...now it is the one pleasure I am seeking that she would call to me *and I silent and tired* out.
(XXV [Rvf 293])

My flowery and green age was passing away, *and I feeling* a chill in the fires had been
wasting my heart...
(XLVII [Rvf 315])

And she has left me after her dejected and lonesome, turning back all times to the place I do
be making much of for her sake only, *and I seeing* the night on the little hills...
(LIII [Rvf 321])

It is only of her I do be thinking, *and she living and dead*...
(LX [Rvf 333])

The world didn't know her the time she was in it, but I myself knew her – *and I left* now to
be weeping in this place.
(LXVII [Rvf 338])

In the above instances, the word "and" is used as a temporal conjunct where a temporal subjunct such as "while", "as", or "when" would be used in standard English. In Irish, the word "agus" or "is" (both meaning "and") can perform the same function and, in the active voice, must be followed immediately by the subject pronoun. The speaker may then add a gerund (e.g. "picking"), adjective (e.g. "silent"), verbal noun (e.g. "living"), or past participle adjective (e.g. "left") in the exact manner of the above examples from Synge. This, like the Hiberno-English present perfect, is another example of the direct superimposition of an Irish usage and grammatical construction upon English.

This complex interplay that occurs between English and Irish in Synge's translations highlights a flaw in Venuti's system of categorisation and illuminates the contradiction upon which it is founded. Using Venuti's own terminology, the formation of the Hiberno-English dialect may be described, from the Irish speaker's view, as a process of grammatical domestication of the colonising language carried out

⁵⁹ See Hickey, R., "Syntactic Ambiguity in Hiberno-English", in *Studia Anglica Posnaniensa*, 15 (1983): 39-45 (p. 41).

by the colonised. Yet viewed from the point of view of a speaker of standard English, this same process constitutes a foreignisation – an aggressive distortion of the prevailing linguistic norms of a dominant culture by a marginalised one. The same may be said of Synge’s translations of Petrarch. That an Irishman making Petrarch “speak with the accents of Aran and cry “Ohone”[Sonnet X]”⁶⁰ at the death of his Laura can fall so neatly into the category of a foreignising translation demonstrates that Venuti’s system itself is defined purely on the terms of the Imperialist cultural hegemony which he decries. This criticism would seem to be hinted at by Steven Rendall, who asks “whether ‘domesticating translation’ might not play a quite different role in other cultures [i.e. cultures that are not ‘aggressively monolingual’] – for instance, in post-colonial cultures where bending the foreign text to domestic norms might itself be a form of resistance”.⁶¹ This line of questioning further highlights the peculiarity of the Irish situation and its resistance to Venuti’s model, in that Synge, by writing in a non-standard dialect of English and attempting to challenge the dominant contemporary literary values of the English-speaking world, can only be considered a foreignising translator within Venuti’s system.

It is beyond doubt that Synge intends to challenge what Venuti calls “dominant” literary values, and that his choice of the folk-speech in which he presents his Petrarch to us is central to that very aim, but the consequent categorisation of Synge’s translation strategy as “foreignising” is profoundly unsatisfactory. It would be more accurate to say that his poetic language acts upon the source text, with the intention of demoticising Petrarch’s exalted verse in line with the poetics he outlines in his preface. An example of this demotic impulse is evident in his translation of the octave of *Rvf* 310:

Zefiro torna, e ’l bel tempo rimena,
e i fiori et l’erbe, sua dolce famiglia,
et garrir Progne et pianger Philomena,
et primavera candida et vermiglia.
Ridono i prati e ’l ciel si rasserena;
Giove s’allegro di mirar sua figlia;
l’aria et l’acqua et la terra è d’amor piena;
ogni animal d’amar si riconsiglia.

(*Rvf* 310, ll. 1-8)

⁶⁰ Skelton (ed.), *Some Sonnets from “Laura in Death”*, pp. 22-23.

⁶¹ Rendall, S., “Review: Changing Translation”, *Comparative Literature*, 46, 4 (Autumn, 1996): 359-364 (p. 362, n. 3).

The south wind is coming back, bringing the fine season, and the flowers and the grass, her sweet family, along with her. The swallow and the nightingale are making a stir, and the spring is turning white and red in every place.

There is a cheerful look on the meadows, and peace in the sky, and the sun is well pleased, I'm thinking, looking downward, and the air and the waters and the earth herself are full of love, and every beast is turning back looking for its mate.

(XLII)

It is immediately obvious how Synge has altered Petrarch's poem in this instance. When faced with Petrarch's classical and learned allusions, Synge converts them into everyday language which could be understood by any child. "Zefiro" becomes "The south wind"; "Progne" and "Philomena", "the swallow" and "the nightingale"; "Giove" is rendered as "the sun", while the reference to Venus ("sua figlia"), indicating the alignment of heavenly bodies specific to the beginning of springtime, is simply omitted altogether. This is a general tendency in Synge's translations, although the retention of the figure of the Phoenix in his version of *Rvf* 321 ("È questo 'l nido in che la mia fenice") would seem to contradict this. In fact, the presence of the Phoenix in the folklore of the Irish peasant finds authorisation in an episode which Synge recounts in *The Aran Islands*, in which a man named Old Pat tells him "a story of the goose that lays the golden eggs, which he calls the Phoenix".⁶² While Synge maintains the personification present in *Rvf* 310, his refusal to translate the mythological elements forces him to make some secondary alterations to the text which further simplify the allusive tapestry woven by Petrarch. In the original, we are aware that Philomela is weeping because she has been raped by Tereus. Synge's nightingale, however, has nothing to do with the Ovidian myth, and as such, she is merely "making a stir" in the same manner as the swallow beside her. Similarly, Petrarch's Jove rejoices at the sight of his daughter, but Synge's decision to omit this reference to Venus means that the most likely reason for the sun's appearing "well pleased" is the "cheerful look" on the meadows as he is "looking downward". Indeed, the narrative interjection of "I'm thinking" in Synge's version gives the impression that the sun's joyful aspect may be nothing more than a projection of the poet's own making. There is a certain unity between Petrarch's quatrains which is brought about by the recurring theme of the familial connections of the communing classical personages. Zephyrus brings with him "sua dolce famiglia"; Philomela may be weeping, but at least she has her sister Procne to console her with her sweet song; Jove enjoys a happy reunion with his daughter. This octave is perhaps the most joyful moment in the whole *Rvf*, which only serves to heighten

⁶² Synge, J. M., *The Aran Islands*, ed. by Skelton, R. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 58

the arresting effect of the image of the barren desert, populated by savage and wild beasts, in which the poet, who is denied his own longed-for reunion with his beloved, finds himself at the close of the poem. In this instance, Synge's insistence upon the demoticisation of Petrarch in the octave weakens the effect of his own ending, and his version of the poem has little to recommend it in comparison with the original. Nevertheless, it provides an example of Synge's commitment to his pro-active method of translation. It is this process of Synge's language acting upon Petrarch's text in terms of diction (the use of Hiberno-English), form (the deconstruction of the sonnet form and rhyme scheme), and ideology (the foregrounding of the mundane at moments which tend towards transcendentalism or classicism in the source text) that should be understood as the key concept in the definition of a pro-active translation strategy.

7. Conclusion

The impetus for the pro-activism we have observed in Synge's translation method is provided primarily by Synge's personal politics. The movement for Irish independence was accompanied on the one hand by an emancipation of the rural peasantry by Michael Davitt's Land League, which campaigned for what they called "The Three F's" – fair rent, free sale, and fixity of tenure – and, on the other, by a cultural movement which itself developed along two separate, though ideologically compatible, tracks. Firstly, there was Douglas Hyde's *Conradh na Gaeilge*, or Gaelic League, founded in Dublin on 31 July, 1893, which sought to promote the Irish language and culture through the organisation of language classes and social gatherings at which traditional Irish music and dancing were performed. It also produced a weekly Irish language newspaper, which was edited for a time by Pádraig Pearse, who would go on to become the leader of the 1916 Rising against British rule. By 1900, the organisation had established a publishing house which by 1909 had produced over 150 titles, many by authors who would later be acknowledged as the founders of modern Irish literature, including Pearse, Pádraig Ó Conaire, P. S. Ó Duinnín, and Fr. Peadar Ó Laoghaire. Running parallel with this movement was a group of Anglo-Irish writers, with Yeats and Synge to the fore, nationalist in their political outlook, but writing in English and for the most part born into the Protestant ascendancy (although it should be noted that neither

movement was in any way sectarian, Douglas Hyde himself being the son of a Church of Ireland rector). The Anglo-Irish group was more outward looking in terms of its influence, and its members cultivated an interest in European literature in general – Synge, as we have seen, studied in France and Italy, and both he and Yeats spent a good deal of time living and writing in London, where Yeats founded the Irish Literary Society in 1891. Nevertheless, the defining feature of the Anglo-Irish movement was its belief in native Irish literature and culture as an untapped resource for this new generation of Irish writers writing in English. Though these writers identified passionately with Ireland, and felt themselves in their hearts to be as Irish as any McCarthy or O'Neill, their Protestant background and English ancestry conferred upon them an elite social status which led to a vague sense of otherness when confronted with the native tradition of folklore and mythology which they wished to mine for the purposes of their art. They were determined, however, to embrace this otherness and to harness the apparent mystical power of the ancient tradition which they felt was necessary in order to express their particular sense of Irish identity in the language of a country from whose culture and values they felt entirely divorced.

Yeats felt himself drawn particularly to the pagan strand in early mythologies, and frequently decried the indifference of his contemporary Irish audience to art and literature in poems such as “September 1913”. In “The Fisherman” he describes his ideal reader as “The freckled man who goes / To a grey place on a hill / In grey Connemara clothes / At dawn to cast his flies”, but goes on to conclude that he is in reality “A man who does not exist / A man who is but a dream”. While Synge may have also harboured some resentment towards contemporary audiences, particularly following the *Playboy* riots of 1907, he had clearly not reached the conclusion Yeats offers in “The Fisherman” regarding the decline of the “wise and simple” peasant, but rather discerned a vitality and a certain unprepossessing nobility in the common rural folk, to the degree that he not only wished to write *for* them, like Yeats, but to bestow a voice upon them by writing in their own idiom. It is also quite possible that Synge had sympathised greatly with the peasants in their struggle for “The Three F’s” which took place between 1879 and 1890, and their way of life may therefore have become a romantic symbol for the nationalist ideals which he embraced. Acting upon Yeats’ advice to “go to the Aran islands, and find a life there that has never been

expressed in literature”,⁶³ Synge immersed himself in the Island’s culture and language, and the beauty which he saw in the very simplicity of the islanders’ everyday life surely played a significant part in the formation of the demoticising poetics which he outlined in the preface to *Poems and Translations* quoted above, and finds its fullest poetic expression in the manner in which he transformed Petrarch.

Synge’s Petrarch garnered little attention upon its publication, and, along with his translations of Villon, constitutes the most neglected element of his work in general. Though this may say something about the esteem in which translation is held in modern literary culture in comparison with original composition, it is also true that Synge’s folk-speech offers little scope as a poetic idiom. To give Synge his due, it seems that he was well aware of its restrictions and unwilling to stretch it beyond its limitations, but in his view there was as much, if not more, of the beauty that is worthy of poetry in the simple life which he wished to portray as in the “exalted” subjects which inspired Petrarch. Neither can it be said that Synge’s translations did much to revive the popularity of Petrarch’s poetry, nor did he provide any discernible spur to other writers to partake of the long tradition of Petrarchan translation into English. Certainly his versions seem to have had little effect upon the latest wave of translations of the *Rvf*, begun by Robert Durling in 1976 with his complete edition entitled *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*, which is generally more concerned with fluency of translation than originality of expression. Nonetheless, Synge’s pro-active translation strategy may provide a useful model for translators who wish to challenge the prevailing perception of translation as a derivative process, without the need to resort to the kind of obfuscating strategies required by Venuti’s paradigm of foreignising translation.

⁶³ O’Donnell, W. H., and D. N. Archibald (eds.), *Autobiographies: The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*, vol. III. (New York: Scribner, 1999), p. 262.

Conclusion

This dissertation has dealt with a significant aspect of Petrarch's critical fortune, seeking to analyse the ways in which cultural, political, and religious filters have affected the English reception of Petrarch's vernacular poetry. The abundance of critical and scholarly interventions into this debate is testament to Petrarch's status as one of the most significant and fundamental formative influences on English letters. This extensive body of secondary literature has, to some extent, dictated the manner in which I have framed my own contribution to the topic: I have simultaneously attempted to re-evaluate prevailing critical opinions on the matter whilst also addressing some lesser studied texts and authors. Broadly speaking, my approach has been both chronological and comparative. This has allowed me to demonstrate with greater clarity the monumental effect of the Elizabethan Reformation on the English reception of Petrarch. Structurally, the greatest challenge has been the accommodation of a modern writer (Synge) within a thesis which cannot but focus predominantly on sixteenth-century English literature. With this in mind, I have attempted to demonstrate how Synge utilised some similar strategies to earlier Petrarchan imitators and translators in order to achieve a similar goal: challenging dominant ideas and modes of expression through the inherited authority of Petrarch's text(s).

In Chapter I, we found that the "Canticus Troili" represents a false start for the English reception of Petrarch. Viewed collectively, Chaucer's additions and omissions point to a deliberate imitative strategy intended to conceal the source text by assimilating it to the native medieval tradition. However, this does not necessarily imply a hostility to Petrarch's poetics. Indeed, the manner in which Chaucer adapted *Rvf* 132 to the context of his own poem finds sanction in Petrarch's famous letter to Boccaccio (*Familiars* 23.19) in which he describes his theory of how a good imitator should operate, and is, in many ways, evidence of Chaucer's sensitivity to what would become a key concept for Petrarch's literary inheritors in the Renaissance. It should, however, be noted that Chaucer was unlikely to have been familiar with Petrarch's letter itself. It is more probable that both poets based their imitative strategy on common ancient sources, including Seneca, from whose *Epistulae morales* 84 Petrarch draws his

father-son metaphor, but also pronouncements such as Cicero's in *De optimo genere oratorum* 5.14, which would become axiomatic for writers in the Renaissance. Chaucer's *imitatio* of Petrarch in the "Canticus" thus underlines the English poet's precocity in singling out an archetypal Petrarchan poem for imitation and re-writing long before Petrarchism proper began to affect European vernacular poetry. Nevertheless, the obfuscation of Petrarch's original text helps to explain why the "Canticus" never served as a point of departure for poets in the century and a half following the appearance of *Troilus and Criseyde*. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest that Wyatt or Surrey were even aware of, much less inspired by, Chaucer's borrowing from an author and text in whom they shared an interest. Instead, a combination of factors which had more to do with the intellectual and cultural climate of Europe as a whole combined to spark the Henrician interest in Petrarch: the growing prestige of vernacular poetry, the Italianate fashion at courts around Europe, but particularly Henry's court, and the foothold gained by the Humanist literary values shaped by Petrarch's writings, which encouraged the type of imitation practised by Wyatt and Surrey.

The dating suggested in Chapter I for Wyatt's "Love, Fortune, and my mind" would appear to strengthen Mason's much-cited contention that "Wyatt turned to creative translation when he had some urgent personal matter to 'distance'".¹ Although the Petrarchan imitations of Wyatt and Surrey are undertaken against the backdrop of Henry's split with Rome, they do not exhibit any hostility to Petrarch's "Catholicism" in the manner of a Spenser or a Fowler. Indeed, both appear entirely unconcerned with exploring the spiritual dimension to Petrarch's work. Nevertheless, their Petrarchism provided a platform from which their contemporaries, if not they themselves, could make a case for the entry of the English language into the pantheon of great European literary languages. As Tottel states in the preface to his *Miscellany*:

That to have wel written in verse, yea & in small parcelles, deserveth great praise, the workes of divers Latines, Italians, and other, doe prove sufficiently. That our tong is able in that kynde to do as praiseworthy as ye rest, the honorable stile of the noble earle of Surrey, and the weightinesse of the depewitted sir Thomas Wyat the elders

¹ Mason, *Humanism and Poetry*, p. 185.

verse, with severall graces in sondry good Englishe writers, doe show abundantly.²

As can be seen from this passage, Petrarchan imitation had already become a staging ground upon which the respective vernaculars of burgeoning European nation states vied for supremacy. For Tottel, the proof of this supremacy was assessed in a purely literary context. This situation changed radically in the years to come, however, as English cultural superiority came to be expressed more and more in terms of the spiritual enlightenment which Reformists believed precipitated and accompanied the Elizabethan Reformation.

In the second chapter, we saw how the political and doctrinal reforms of Elizabeth's reign caused a seismic shift in the English perception of Petrarch as a literary model. On one side of the cultural chasm stand Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey and Morley, on the other, Sidney, Spenser and Fowler. The former group needed no justification for their engagement with Petrarch. They operated within the same cultural milieu as the Italian. In Chaucer's case, this is to be expected, given that he was a contemporary of Petrarch's inhabiting a Christendom which adhered to the same spiritual code as interpreted and dictated by the one Church. In the case of the Henrician poets, though the secular authority of the Church was beginning to unravel, doctrinal orthodoxy held firm. For the Elizabethan writers, however, the situation was markedly different. An element of national pride had always been a factor in vernacular literary production. However, where previously poets had been content to vie for supremacy with their French and Italian counterparts on a purely literary level (that is in terms of linguistic harmony and refinement), now they were obliged to express cultural superiority over Catholic models on a macro-poetic level as expressions of English self-definition became inextricably linked to programmes for religious reform. The early English engagement with Petrarch displays no concern with the spiritual conflict which defines the *Rvf*, yet by the close of the sixteenth-century, Sidney had composed *Astrophil and Stella*, a sonnet sequence which exhibits a marked concern over the potential of the love lyric to distract both the reader and the practitioner from their social and/or political responsibilities, with

² Arber, E. (ed.), *Tottel's Miscellany: Songes and Sonnets* (London, Bombay and Sydney: Constable and Company, 1921), p. 2.

particular reference to the *Rvf* specifically and the Petrarchan mode in general. Spenser went further in his *Amoretti and Epithalamion* and produced a text with the specific goal of demonstrating how the classic Petrarchan spiritual conflict might be resolved with reference to the new ideas of the Reformation. The concerted attempt at English cultural self-definition which took place under Elizabeth I forced English Petrarchans to engage with a key element of Petrarch which had previously been ignored. By addressing the spiritual implications of Petrarchan love, Reformed English writers were able to signal their superiority over their models on a level which transcended the purely literary sphere and showcased the advantageous position afforded them by their religious enlightenment, offering a point of access to salvation which, in their eyes, remained closed off to their Catholic counterparts.

Chapter III showed how the contrast between Morley and Fowler re-affirms the effect of the Elizabethan Reformation, but also demonstrates how much more aware writers had become of the vernacular European lyric tradition in the years between Morley's translation in the late 1520's and Fowler's *Triumphs* of 1587. My dating of Morley's text shows that a case may be made for the *Tryumphes* being the earliest post-Chaucerian engagement with Petrarch, and therefore it is no surprise that Morley's translation is politically and doctrinally neutral. The tone of his translation is remarkable when compared with Fowler's later version of the same poem, and the contrast between the two works demonstrates the cultural distance which the Reformation established between Catholic Italy and Protestant England and Scotland. The copious mistranslations and misunderstanding which litter Morley's "Triumphe of Love IV" show how little impact the Provençal and Italian schools had had on literature in English up to that point and, again, the contrast with the analogous section in Fowler's *Triumphs* shows how much had changed in the space of a little over fifty years.

Fowler, like Spenser, felt compelled to express his nationalism by incorporating modes of worship particular to his own nation into his translation strategy. He also juxtaposed this element with his sovereign's guidelines on literary aesthetics. Criticism of Petrarch's poetics is more subtle in this case, taking place only implicitly on a fundamental linguistic level. Nevertheless, this attempt to "correct" Petrarch's mode of expression may be regarded as a polemical

engagement inspired by the same sense of cultural superiority which inspired Spenser's reform of the sonnet sequence. Fowler, like his sovereign James, considered Scots to be a language in its own right rather than a dialect of English, and therefore his criticism of the "barbar grosnes"³ of previous English and French translations of the *Triumphs* implies a nationalistic element to his endeavour which answers the requirements of his young king's programme for literary reform. Given that Morley's *Tryumphes* is the only English version of Petrarch's poem to which Fowler can be referring, his criticism of its style may be taken as an attempt to signal the superiority of Reformed Scottish literature over pre-Reformation English literature in addition to the more obvious contrast drawn with his continental Catholic predecessors.

The fourth chapter constitutes the most extensive investigation to date of Synge's engagement with the *Rvf*, and deals with the question of translation as subversion. Synge's importance as a dramatist has resulted in the neglect of his poetry in general, and his Petrarchan imitations in particular. Even when they have inspired commentary, it has usually been framed within the context of the continued development of the idiosyncratic "folk-speech" which characterises his dramatic diction in the plays. Yet, when Synge began translating Petrarch in 1906, he had already completed *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903), *Riders to the Sea* (1904) and *The Well of the Saints* (1905), and had begun work on *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) and *The Tinker's Wedding* (1908). If, by 1903, Synge had felt sufficiently confident in the emotive power of this new mode of expression to allow actors to give voice to his characters' words on stage, it would seem unlikely that, three years and three plays later, he would have felt the need to engage in the type of linguistic experimentation which Forster calls "Petrarchism as training in poetic diction".⁴ My research reveals a more complex process underlying Synge's Petrarchism. At its heart is the desire to tear down the foundations of the European lyric tradition, to make poetry "brutal".⁵ In this context, his use of folk-speech takes on an added significance which goes to the heart of Synge's poetics. Only in his poetic translations, whether of Petrarch or

³ Meikle, H. W. (ed.), *The Works of William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne, Wife of James VI*, 3 vols (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1914-1940), vol. 1(1914), p. 20.

⁴ Forster *The Icy Fire*, p. 61.

⁵ Synge, *Poems and Translations*, pp. 1-2.

of Villon, does Synge employ his folk-speech. It is difficult to imagine two more different medieval poets: the sublime Petrarch and the grotesque Villon. By translating them with the same idiom, Synge erases this difference and makes them sound as if they were part of a single, unified tradition. By dismantling the sonnet form, he strikes at the heart of the English lyric tradition initiated by the Italianate sequences of Sidney and Spenser. By choosing sonnets from the *In morte* section of the *Rvf*, he highlights the difference between his approach and that of Wyatt and Surrey. In short, Synge attempts to create a parallel universe of Petrarchan poetry, departing from the same point as the founding fathers of English verse but taking a radically different direction. The works studied in this thesis end with Synge, as the last example of a creative poet and imitator engaging with the Petrarchan tradition, before the modern age of new translations began in earnest with Durling's 1976 translation of all 366 poems (see below).

The research carried out so far has also raised questions that could be developed in future studies. The identification of the likely source for Fowler's translation of the *Triumph* means that his *Tarantula of Love*, an imitation of the *Rvf*, can also be cross-referenced with the commentary in Nicolini's edition. Given that the *Tarantula* has been identified by Dunnigan as an attempt at a "Protestant or Protestantised revisionism" of the *Rvf*, such an approach would cast light on the degree to which Fowler's rewriting of his source text is authorised by the commentator.⁶

My analysis of the interplay between three languages – Irish, English and Italian – at work in Synge's translations of Petrarch highlights the need for a re-appraisal of Venuti's system of categorisation of translations, particularly in a post-colonial context in which the colonised language has exerted an influence upon the colonising language to the degree that it becomes a mark of the otherness by which the colonised speaker may subvert the values of the coloniser.

Although the present study, through the addition of the chapter on Synge's translations, goes beyond the scope of the latest volume of conference proceedings, it has avoided dealing with the most recent wave of translations of the *Rvf*. These were initiated in 1932 by Morris Bishop's *Love Rhymes of Petrarch* (Ithaca, NY: Dragon Press). There then followed Anna Maria Armi's *Petrarch: Sonnets and Songs* (New York: Pantheon, 1946) and Thomas Bergin's *Selected Sonnets*,

⁶ See Dunnigan, *Eros and Poetry*, p. 162.

Odes and Letters (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966). Perhaps the most influential modern version has been Robert Durling's literal prose translations of the entire *Rvf*, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976) the publication of which coincided with a renewed interest in Petrarch inspired by the sixth centenary of Petrarch's death, celebrated in 1974. More recently still, numerous whole or partial translations have been produced by Nicholas Kilmer (*Songs and Sonnets from Laura's Lifetime* (Albany, CA: North Point Press, 1981)), Mark Musa (*Selections from the "Canzoniere" and Other Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)), John G. Nichols (*Canzoniere* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000)), Frederick Jones (*The Canzoniere (Rerum vulgarium fragmenta)* (Market Harborough: Troubador, 2001 [2 vols])), Anthony Mortimer (*Canzoniere: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2002)), David Young (*The Poetry of Petrarch* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2004)), Peter Hainsworth (*The Essential Petrarch* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2010)), and David Slavitt (*Petrarch: Sonnets and Shorter Poems* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012)).⁷ These translations have varied in their approaches, some attempting to provide versions of all or some of Petrarch's poems in as literal a form as possible, others trying to produce English versions which retain the structure, rhyme scheme, and musicality of Petrarch's originals. In nearly all of these efforts, the ultimate goal would seem to be to grant access to Petrarch to the reader with little or no Italian. Therefore, the translations themselves often consciously try to avoid, in so far as is possible when translating, making interpretive choices or distorting the original in order to make an ideological point. The degree to which this is an achievable goal given the long tradition of political Petrarchism in English would form the basis of an interesting future study which would be relevant not only to Petrarch studies but to the general field of translation studies as well.

While it may not be wholly surprising that the programme of religious and political reform undertaken during the Elizabethan Reformation exercised such a profound influence over the English reception of Petrarch, the manner in which writers continued to engage with the *Rvf* and *Triumph* even while appearing to reject the values contained therein is striking. It would appear

⁷ For a discussion of some of these translations, see Hainsworth, P., "Translating Petrarch", in McLaughlin, M. L., and L. Panizza (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain*, pp. 341-58.

that the ambiguity which characterises Petrarch's language provides an opportunity to practise translation and imitation as subversion. Chaucer, Surrey, and Morley prove that Petrarchism does not always have to be political, operating as they do within a predominantly literary milieu by seeking to harness the purely poetic power of Petrarch's lyrics in order to enhance the beauty of their own works. In Wyatt's case, however, Petrarchan imitation permitted veiled attacks on Henry's social and political tyranny; for Sidney, Spenser and Fowler, Petrarchism could be used to challenge literary conventions, even when the very *topoi* they employed in doing so were products of the Petrarchan mode itself; Synge even found a way of using Petrarch to express his hostility to the literary practices of the English Petrarchans who had exercised a formative influence on the lyrical mode of expression which remained dominant during his lifetime, and proves that Petrarch and his vernacular poetry remain relevant in a modern context.

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