planning or military organisation. He convincingly suggests that urban public health initiatives from 1000 onwards may have owed less to the intellectual developments of the era than continuity with ideas and practices of ancient and early medieval society. He then describes studies of public health in pre-modern England, Spain, and France before expanding the focus to review measures implemented in non-European contexts. It is, however, surprising that Geltner chose not to discuss this wealth of material in the introduction, where he instead explained at length the reasons for the absence of studies of pre-modern public health initiatives, or at least health-scaping. There is, after all, an important distinction between the claim that little or no work has been carried out on a topic, and the argument that it is necessary to draw upon and expand the insights gleaned from existing historical research.

These reservations notwithstanding, the broader thrust of Geltner's critique of the secondary literature contained in his introduction remains important. Max Weber and Foucault's conceptions of modernity—which emphasised inter alia discipline and bureaucracy—still influences scholars' understanding of both the medieval and early modern periods. To take one example, historians continue to discuss confessionalisation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They use it to describe and explain the process of modernisation, even though numerous studies have shown that church and state created structures of pastoral care that allowed them to exert spiritual and social discipline long before the advent of the Reformation. Similarly, Geltner's study, alongside the body of secondary literature that he cited, suggests that early modern developments in the administration of public health built upon earlier systems and practices. Perhaps the biggest development of the modern era was the degree of centralisation permitted by bureaucratic innovations and improved communication. Geltner therefore offers a valuable framework to reconsider prevailing narratives of the origins of modernity.

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Manuele Gragnolati, and Francesca Southerden. *Possibilities of Lyric. Reading Petrarch in Dialogue*. With an Epilogue by Antonella Anedda Angioy. Berlin: ICI Berlin Press 2020. Pp. 216.

In this volume by Manuele Gragnolati and Francesca Southerden, lyric textuality is understood as imbued with desire and as deeply connected to subjectivity. The two scholars draw from the lyric tradition to create dialogues between Petrarch and poets from his own context and beyond, especially Dante, Cavalcanti and Shakespeare. This approach opens the way for an exploration of desire's transformative potential as well as the role of medieval lyric as "a space for affect"

(5). The structure of the volume is inspired by Emily Dickinson's butterfly, which flitters from flower to flower just as Gragnolati and Southerden drift from text to text, drawing out the sweetness of the poetry for the delectation of their readers. In *Possibilities of Lyric*, the two scholars introduce a creative mode of reading and writing about lyric which is explicitly inspired by the lyric tradition. The volume is benefited most by its open, associative use of theory in reference to a variety of rhetorical and stylistic questions, which in turn enriches the discussion of the intellectual and cultural contexts of the poets studied.

Drawing from the scholarship of Donna Haraway and Anne Carson, Gragnolati and Southerden present the idea of the "textual encounter" as a central aspect of their methodology (1). They are inspired by the way in which light travels during the optical phenomenon of diffraction, aiming to examine their different primary sources "one through the other" (3). This approach enables them to create conversations between the poets which are not based on pre-established historical or social connections but which still use the works of one poet to better understand the other. In addition, this methodology is reflected in the seamless blend of the voices of the two authors in this collaborative work, which likewise constitutes a dialogue between them.

The dialogical nature of the volume can also be seen clearly in chapters 1-2 and 4-5, two diptychs which explore the different dimensions of Petrarch's articulations of desire. Chapter 1, "The Shape of Desire: Metamorphosis and Hybridity in *Rvf* 23 and *Rvf* 70," explores the tensions in Petrarch's textuality, linking it to an inherently paradoxical, masochistic form of pleasure (17-44). Chapter 2, "Openness and Intensity: Petrarch's Becoming Laurel in *Rvf* 23 and *Rvf* 228," further explores the passivity of Petrarch's experience of desire, incorporating philosophical ideas about the porous nature of plant existence in the discussion of Petrarch's self-representation as a laurel tree (45-63). In chapters 4-5, "Declensions of 'Now': Lyric Epiphanies in Cavalcanti, Dante, and Petrarch" and "Extension: Reaching the Beloved in Cavalcanti, Dante, and Petrarch", Petrarch's experience of desire is engaged with forms of non-linear temporality developed in queer theory. While chapter 4 compares the notion of instantaneity in the works of Petrarch, Cavalcanti and Dante (85-108), chapter 5 explores the modalities of these poets' encounters with a distanced beloved, comparing their fantasies of the afterlife (111-133).

The incorporation of these diptychs into the volume's fluid structure allows the scholars to explore the cyclicity of desire which they observe in their primary sources. For example, inspired by queer forms of temporality, one of the most striking observations which reappears throughout these chapters is the idea of Petrarch's "almost-mode," which describes his moral errancy and his refusal "to yield to the constrictions of totality and closure" (133). Presented as a way of visualizing Petrarch's moral state, a connected suggestion in chapter 1 is that Petrarch's affective life can be understood in terms of a Möbius strip, which "holds together contradictory impulses without resolving them in a linear process

but instead inserting them into an infinite process of retroaction" (42). It may be important to signal that Gragnolati's and Southerden's reflections potentially open the way for a new understanding of the nature of textuality in Petrarch's entire corpus, not only his poetic production. As a challenge to the apparent linearity of the traditional medieval conversion narrative, a trope which Petrarch often revisits in his Latin prose writings, the "almost-mode" represents a profound subversion of the meaning of authorship in the medieval literary tradition.

According to the authors, the textual encounters presented in this volume are not intended to disregard the contexts in which the individual poems were produced. Particularly in chapters 3 and 6, "'Lust in Action': Control and Abandon in Dante, Petrarch, and Shakespeare" and "Body: Dante's and Petrarch's Lyric Eschatologies," consideration of the poets' intellectual and cultural backgrounds informs the discussion of the conceptual complexity of the primary sources. Chapter 3 explores how different degrees of control competed with the force of desire in sonnets by Dante, Petrarch, and Shakespeare, especially in light of their engagement with the vocabulary of medieval scholastic discourse (65-84). Arranged chronologically, the poets are presented as increasingly open to desire and distanced from medieval intellectual culture. Chapter 6 presents a comparative reading of Dante's *Paradiso* and Petrarch's *Triumphus Eternitatis* which focuses on how Dante and Petrarch negotiate the doctrine of corporeal resurrection in the context of contemporary eschatological tenets (135-162). Gragnolati's and Southerden's methodology skillfully avoids the interpretive obstacles involved in the comparative reading of these two poets, whose relationship has been much contested, and leads to a nuanced vision of the late medieval Italian context.

The lyrical approach of the volume is taken to its full potential in the epilogue, "Radure/Clearings," where the poet Antonella Anedda Angioy provides an evocative translation of *Rvf* 164 informed by Ossip Mandel'štam and Paul Celan (163-184). Her epilogue is itself translated from Italian to English by Jamie McKendrick, which draws attention to the self-reflexive nature of the volume and the way in which medieval Italian lyric reaches across time and language even today. The epilogue is also a testament to the value of an affective mode of scholarship, an approach which makes this volume a delightful reading for any appreciator of the medieval lyric tradition.

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