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PETRARCH'S FRENCH FORTUNES:

negotiating the relationship between poet, place, and identity in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries

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This article reconsiders Petrarch's French afterlife by juxtaposing a time of long-recognised Petrarchism — the sixteenth century — with a less familiar and more modern Petrarchist age, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Of particular interest is how French writers from both periods understand and represent Petrarch's associations with place. This variously proposed, geographically defined identity is in turn regional (Tuscan/Provençal) and national (Italian/French), located by river (Arno/Sorgue) and city (Florence/Avignon). I argue that sixteenth-century poets stress Petrarch's foreignness, thereby keeping him at a safe distance, whereas later writers embrace Petrarch as French, drawing the poet closer to (their) home.

The medieval Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (known in English as Petrarch, in French as Pétrarque) is the author of many works in Latin and in Italian, in poetry and in prose (for the most complete and accessible account, see Kirkham and Maggi). Since the sixteenth century, however, his fame has resided in one particular vernacular form: the sonnet. In his poetic collection *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, more commonly and simply known as the *Canzoniere*, 317 of the total 366 are sonnets. These poems reflect on the experience of love and later of grief, centred on the poet's beloved Laura, and have been so often imitated by later poets as to have given rise to a poetic movement named after the poet: Petrarchism. In the words of Jonathan Culler, "Petrarch's *Canzoniere* established a grammar for the European love lyric: a set of tropes, images, oppositions (fire and ice), and typical scenarios that permitted generations of poets throughout Europe to exercise their ingenuity in the construction of love sonnets" (69).

Petrarch crossed geographical and linguistic borders in his life and has continued to do so posthumously through the reception of his work. The most important border for Petrarch's life — and, arguably, his work — is that be-

tween Italy and France. As Theodore Cachey has commented, “the contrast between France and Italy [was] like a hinge [...] around which Petrarch’s career turned” (6). Critics have already analysed this “hinge” or turning point from a variety of perspectives, beginning with Petrarch’s debt to the troubadours (Petrugli; Paden) and his relationship to Avignon (Falkeid), and proceeding to studies of Petrarch’s later reception. Most wide-ranging and ambitious in this last regard is Ève Duperray’s assessment of the myths of Petrarch and Vaucluse in French literature throughout the centuries.

There is unanimity that the sixteenth century is the most rich and fertile period of Petrarchism, principally in France (Balsamo 2004; Vianey), but also in England (Kennedy), Spain (Navarrete), Portugal (Marnoto), and the colonial Americas (Greene). Yet a handful of critics (Bertoli; Hoffmeister; Zuccato) have also begun to argue for the presence of a distinct Petrarchan thread in the nineteenth century. I count myself in this latter group, having studied Petrarch’s nineteenth-century French reception in terms of both translations and rewritings (Rushworth). In what follows, this more modern Petrarchism is set in a wider temporal context, with a particular focus on how French readers and writers have understood Petrarch’s relationship to place.

Placing Petrarch is an interesting challenge, because of his associations with many different sites: birth in Arezzo; childhood in Carpentras; education at Montpellier and Bologna; adulthood in Avignon and Vaucluse; later life in various cities in northern Italy, ending with his death in Arquà. The reception of Petrarch has typically been less attentive to these plural and contradictory claims, preferring instead to reduce Petrarch to one single place-derived identity. Petrarch himself encourages such an approach by defining himself most often not in relation to any of the aforementioned places, but rather as Florentine, based on his family connections to that city before his father’s exile and occluding his lack of lived familiarity with the city. As Marco Santagata highlights:

A Firenze fa solo due rapide soste, di pochi giorni ciascuna, durante l’andata e il ritorno del pellegrinaggio compiuto a Roma in occasione del Giubileo del 1350. [...] Petrarca ama firmarsi “florentinus” e ama ricordare le sue origini “in su la riva d’Arno” (RVF 366, 82), ma è un fiorentino che quasi non ha messo piede nella sua città. (xxviii–xxix)

(He only stayed twice briefly in Florence, each time for a few days, during his journey to and from Rome on a pilgrimage undertaken on the occasion of the 1350 Jubilee. [...] Petrarch liked to put “florentinus” in his signature and liked to recall his birth “by the banks of the Arno” (RVF 366, 82), but he was a Florentine who almost never set foot in his city.)

Reflecting on this same paradoxical situation, Gianfranco Contini has suggested in a felicitous phrase that Petrarch's connection to Florence is a sort of "transcendental Florentine-ness" ("Fiorentinità [...] trascendentale", 175), based on language and affection rather than on birth or residence therein.

In the final poem of the *Canzoniere*, as Santagata recalls, Petrarch offers his readers a belated birth certificate: "i' nacqui in su la riva d'Arno" (I was born by the banks of the Arno; *RVF* 366, v. 82; citing throughout from Santagata's edition, with translation my own). This deliberately obfuscatory phrase implies Florence whilst eschewing anything more specific and therefore outright false. The example of Petrarch suggests the striking extent to which identity can be self-fashioned, rendering even typically factual biographical aspects such as birthplace open to interpretation and manipulation. Moreover, Petrarch's self-definition as Florentine has been remarkably successful in terms of its prolongation by later readers. Emblematically, the very title of Boccaccio's biography of Petrarch describes the poet as "de Florentia" (of Florence), while it is further asserted within the text that, despite Petrarch's birth in Arezzo, "postmodum apud Florentiam [...] a Musarum, ut puto, fuit uberibus educatus" (it was later in Florence [...] that, I believe, he was raised by the Muses; Boccaccio, 898, with English translation from Houston, 58). In this way Boccaccio reiterates and supplements Petrarch's claims on Florence.

The geographical placement of Petrarch by later writers both within and outside Italy is a rich topic. In this essay I explore Petrarch's placement by French writers, focussing on two different periods: on the one hand, the mid-sixteenth century; on the other hand, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The first is a well-known period of French Petrarchism, the second little known, and these two periods are chosen precisely for the purposes of contrast. Writers from each period take advantage of the ambiguous nature of Petrarch's geographical identity in order to propose markedly different spatially orientated versions of the poet and his poetry.

The Florentine Petrarch

Sixteenth-century French culture witnessed many literary and Petrarchan 'firsts': the first published sonnet in French, by Clément Marot (1538); the first translations of Petrarch's sonnets, by the same Marot (1539); the first sonnet sequence in French, Joachim Du Bellay's *L'Olive* (1549–50); the first complete translation of the *Canzoniere*, by Vasquin Philieul (1555). This obsession with Petrarch resonated well with, and indeed was partly fuelled by, the political context of the time. François I^{er} (reg. 1515–1547) was a significant patron of the arts and bestowed both his blessing and even his own poetry on key Petrarchist

events such as the claimed discovery of Laura's grave in a church in Avignon in 1533 (Millet; Giudici). His successor Henri II (reg. 1547–1559) married the Florentine Catherine de' Medici, further consolidating the Italo-philia of the time. Yet both reigns were also characterized by Italo-French wars, a political backdrop which suggests potentially aggressive and conflictual undercurrents in the French adoption of Petrarchist modes at this time. In short, sixteenth-century Petrarchism is shot through with contradictory emotions, ranging from admiration to rivalry.

Consequently, we must be attentive not only to differences between Petrarch and Petrarchism, but also to the co-presence, in this period, of anti-Petrarchism and Petrarchism (Forster, 57) as, more broadly, of *anti-italianisme* and *italianisme* (Balsamo 1992). To take but one example: in *La Deffence, et illustration de la langue françoise* (1549), Du Bellay specifically recommends Petrarch as a model and in particular imitation of his signature sonnet form: "Sonne moy ces beaux Sonnetz [...] plaisante Invention Italienne [...]. Pour le Sonnet donques tu as Petrarque, & quelques modernes Italiens" (Book 2, Ch. IV, 2003, I, 55). Nonetheless, the poetic collection accompanying this theoretical treatise begins in a polemical fashion rejecting the Petrarchan laurel — "Je ne quiers pas la fameuse couronne" — and seeking to establish in its place Du Bellay's own olive tree, which he hopes to render "Egal un jour au laurier immortel" (*L'Olive* I, vv. 1 and 14, 2003, II, 163).

These examples of rivalry with Petrarch and of anti-Petrarchism within Petrarchism might be multiplied, but what interests me specifically is how these contradictory attitudes are manifested in the way French poets situate Petrarch in relation to place. Already in the *Deffence*, in the passage cited above, Petrarch and the sonnet are stressed as Italian and therefore foreign. Yet it is more typical in the sixteenth century for French poets to refer to Petrarch in their poetry with greater specificity, that is, through mention of Florence. This place name often acts as a substitute for the poet's name, with a number of striking consequences. On the one hand, this consistency demonstrates the success of Petrarch's self-representation as Florentine; these French poets are following Petrarch's lead and perpetuating his legacy in line with his wishes. On the other hand, this placement suggests that these French poets admire Petrarch from a distance, as foreign and Italian, erasing from his past his multiple French connections. (Incidentally, another erasure at work here is Dante, a poet with a much stronger claim on Florence but who is certainly not the Florentine in question, given the lack of interest in Dante's poetry in the sixteenth century and Pietro Bembo's election of Petrarch as the supreme poetic model in the Italian vernacular.) In the following analysis I will limit my observations principally to the poetry of

Du Bellay, with brief reference also to Pierre de Ronsard's *Premier livre des Amours* (1552). In both cases it is striking how often Petrarch is referred to periphrastically by reference to specific sites; striking, too, how both poets perpetuate the myth of Petrarch as Florentine. Du Bellay and Ronsard distance Petrarch from his French connections, clearing a space for their own poetic ambitions.

In Du Bellay's poetry, mention of Petrarch is frequently made through reference to Florence. In *Le Songe* (1558), for instance, Petrarch is referred to as the "triste Florentin" (Sonnet XIII, v. 2, Du Bellay 1960, 25). When Du Bellay maps the poetic canon in *L'Olive*, Florence stands for Petrarch as naturally and self-evidently as, for instance, Mantua does for Virgil:

Qui voudra voir le plus precieux arbre,
Que l'orient ou le midy avoüe,
Vienne, où mon fleuve en ses ondes se joue :
Il y verra, l'or, l'ivoire, & le marbre.

Il y verra les perles, le cinabre,
Et le cristal : & dira que je loue
Un digne object de Florence, & Mantoue,
De Smyrne encor', de Thebes, & Calabre.

(*L'Olive* LXII, vv. 1–8, Du Bellay 2003, II, 194)

The Florentine Petrarch here becomes the first in a line of poets who are evoked through place names: Virgil/Mantua, Homer/Smyrna, Pindar/Thebes, Horace/Calabria (the list continues in the sestet with more modern and French examples). Here Petrarch is naturalized as Florentine, even though his connection to that city is, as suggested above, not a given. Moreover, if Du Bellay can be considered to be presenting an ideal poetic library in these lines, it is telling that Petrarch is "the primary interlocutor" (Mackenzie, 65), not only first among poets but also most present intertextually. The *incipit* of this sonnet is based on that of *RVF* 248 ("Chi vuol veder quantunque pò Natura / e 'l Ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei", vv. 1–2; Whosoever wants to see what Nature and Heaven can do among us, let them come gaze on her), while the lady/tree as composed of gold, pearls, and ivory recalls Petrarchan tropes (e.g. *RVF* 220, 199). Finally, that Du Bellay's beloved is worthy of great poets of the past is also a notion modelled on Petrarch's celebration of Laura as "d'Omero dignissima et d'Orpheo, / o del pastor ch'anchor Mantova honora" (most worthy of Homer and of Orpheus, or of the shepherd still honoured by Mantua; *RVF* 187, vv. 9–10).

In “La Complainte du desespéré” (published as part of *Œuvres de l’invention de l’auteur* in 1552), Du Bellay reiterates the connection between Petrarch and Florence when he recalls the Petrarchist nature of his first poetry collection, *L’Olive*, in the following terms:

Alors que parmy la France
Du beau Cygne de Florence
J’allois adorant les pas

(vv. 67–69, Du Bellay 1981, 70)

The contrast between Petrarch/Florence and Du Bellay/France is especially clear through the paired rhyme of the two place names. It is ironic that Du Bellay presents himself as following Petrarch’s footsteps (“pas”) in France, and yet erases traces of Petrarch’s life in France by presenting him here as elsewhere as indubitably Florentine. The “pas” are poetic, evoking the French circulation of Petrarch’s poems, but not (a different kind of *pas*) the poet responsible for them.

Du Bellay also situates Petrarch in relation to the river Arno, which points similarly to Florence and more broadly to Tuscany, and additionally has the precedent of the indication of birthplace given in *RVF* 366, as cited earlier (from this sonnet I omit the further parallel with Maurice Scève and the Saône, discussed in Kennedy, 129, and Mackenzie, 66–67):

L’Arne superbe adore sur sa rive
Du saint Laurier la branche tousjours vive,
[...].

Mon Loire aussi, demy dieu par mes vers,
Brulé d’amour etent les braz ouvers
Au tige heureux, qu’à ses rives je plante.

(*L’Olive CV*, vv. 9–10, 12–14, Du Bellay 2003, II, 215)

In her reading of Du Bellay’s *L’Olive*, Louisa Mackenzie highlights how innovative is the shift in focus from woman/tree to river, the former a Petrarchan convention but the latter “surprising in a collection of love sonnets” and having the advantage, over the olive tree, of being “entirely French” (57). The parallel between laurel/olive tree is extended to that between the Arno and the Loire, and these contrasts are metonyms of still broader rivalries: Petrarch vs. Du Bellay; Italian vs. French.

Yet these polarizations are problematic and unsustainable on closer analysis. Not only are the connections between Petrarch, Florence, and the Arno complicated and even potentially tenuous, but they also require an oversimplification of the geographical variety of both poets. Du Bellay fails to acknowledge that Petrarch's rivers are French as well as Italian, thanks in part to Petrarch's beloved Laura, whom Petrarch describes as "Quella per cui con Sorga ò cangiato Arno" (She for whom I exchanged the Arno for the Sorgue; *RVF* 308, v. 1). Petrarch's laurels belong in fact to the Sorgue and not to the Florentine river, both because of Laura's Provençal identity (if we accept that Petrarch's beloved was a historical individual) and because of the actual laurel trees that Petrarch planted near his house in Vaucluse (Enenkel, 61; Petrarch's gardening journal, discussed by Nolhac and Ellis-Rees, also provides evidence for laurels in gardens in Milan and Arquà, but not, of course, in Florence). By transplanting Petrarch's laurel/Laura from the Sorgue to the Arno, Du Bellay erases the traces of Petrarch in France. As Mackenzie comments:

Du Bellay eclipses the historical Petrarch's significant presence in France by situating him firmly in Italy rather than in Avignon, where Petrarch had spent part of his life and, more importantly, where he claimed to have met Laura in 1327. France, rather than Italy, is in fact the site of Petrarch's lyric love story, but for Du Bellay to admit this would lessen a lot of the work performed by his dialogue between Italian and French landscapes. (57–58)

Let us note in passing that this rooting of Petrarch in Italy (or a more specific part thereof) is a project not unique to Du Bellay but rather shared, for instance, by Ronsard, for whom Petrarch is, likewise, "Tuscan" (Sonnet VIII, v. 7, *Le Premier Livre des Amours*, 1993, 29), the author of "Thusques vers" (Sonnet LXXII, v. 10, *ibid.*, 61), and "Florentin" (Sonnet CCXIX, v. 6, *ibid.*, 139; see, on Petrarch and Ronsard, Sturm-Maddox 1999). Petrarch's self-representation as Florentine is wholeheartedly accepted by sixteenth-century French Petrarchists, but for the new purpose of establishing a contrast and rivalry between medieval Italian and modern French poetry. The ground is thereby cleared for the claims of specific sixteenth-century French poets to be "The French Petrarch" (Sturm-Maddox 2004).

Furthermore, while Petrarch is less fixed and less securely Italian than either Du Bellay or Petrarch allow, Du Bellay also proves to be more mobile than his celebration of the Loire and his self-definition as Angevin might suggest. Du Bellay spent four years by the Tiber in the service of his cousin Cardinal Jean Du Bellay, as recorded in the later sonnet sequences *Les Regrets* and *Les Antiquitez de Rome* (1558). In some respects, these years of perceived exile only

intensified Du Bellay's attachment to his home, as is famously expressed in the supremely nostalgic sonnet which begins "Heureux qui, comme Ulysse" (*Les Regrets* 31):

Plus me plaist le sejour qu'ont basty mes ayeux,
Que des palais romains le front audacieux,
Plus que le marbre dur me plaist l'ardoise fine,

Plus mon Loyre gaulois, que le Tybre latin,
Plus mon petit Lyré, que le mont Palatin,
Et plus que l'air marin la douceur angevine.

(*Les Regrets* 31, vv. 9–14, Du Bellay 1960, 56)

Here the previous contrast between the Loire and the Arno is adjusted with a new counterweight: the Tiber. Having fixed Petrarch definitively in Florence, Du Bellay is no more sensitive to Petrarch's Roman credentials (via his poetic coronation with the laurel crown in 1341) than he was to his Provençal roots.

Yet other sonnets in the same collection embrace, however reluctantly, the poet's new surroundings. Most strikingly, in *Les Regrets* 130, Du Bellay comments of his continued residence in Rome that he is "encor' Romain" (v. 12, 1960, 116), denoting most simply that he is still living in Rome, and yet implying that by living in Rome he has become Roman. Civic identity is, we might think, contagious or at least — more neutrally — formed of habit, experience, and familiarity. Such a possibility adds a further complication to the opposition between the Italian Petrarch and the French Du Bellay. Indeed, Petrarch is again a hidden, denied alter ego here, since he deviated from his Florentine claims only to glory in being Roman through his coronation, a citizenship ceremony which he himself authored and orchestrated, and which allowed him proudly to pronounce himself "*Ciuem Romanum*", a Roman citizen (Wilkins, 188). This identification is another aspect of Petrarch's story that is ignored in Du Bellay's monofocal reading of the Florentine Petrarch. It is Du Bellay, and not Petrarch, who emerges as potentially both French and Roman.

In "Nouvelle maniere de faire son profit des lettres", a translation by Du Bellay (from the Latin of Adrianus Turnebus) first published pseudonymously in 1559, the possibility of transformation through travel is suggested quite explicitly:

Mais retien ce precepte en ta memoire encore :
C'est que tu pourras bien François partir d'icy,
Mais tu retourneras Italien aussi

De gestes, et d'habits, de port, et de langage :
Bref d'un Italien tu auras le pelage,
Afin qu'entre les tiens admirable tu sois.

(vv. 64–69, Du Bellay, 1981, 146)

These lines sound as a warning to the addressee of the risks of straying far from home. From the perspective of the translator, they also seem self-confessional, especially since this text was first published on Du Bellay's return to France after his Roman sojourn. By the logic of this text, Du Bellay himself would become Italian by his Roman residence, while Petrarch would be French thanks to his many years in and around Avignon and Vaucluse. This logic is consistently suppressed by Du Bellay, but surfaces as compelling evidence in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French claims on Petrarch.

The French Petrarch

As we have seen, sixteenth-century French poets such as Du Bellay and Ronsard set Petrarch at a distance, ignoring his education and residence on what had by then become French soil. In this period, Petrarch was considered French only insofar as he was translated into French. Emblematic in this regard are Vasquin Philieul's translations of the *Canzoniere*. A first, incomplete translation was published by Philieul in 1548, under the following title: *Laure d'Avignon, au nom et adveu de la royne Catherine de Medicis, royne de France. Extraict du poete florentin François Petrarque et mis en François par Vaisquin Philieul de Carpentras*. This title repeatedly stresses the associations between person and place: Petrarch's Laura is "d'Avignon"; Petrarch himself is "florentin"; the Florentine Catherine de' Medici is by marriage "de France"; finally, the translator himself is more locally "de Carpentras", the site of Petrarch's early life and education.

Yet the title also presents a surprising homophone that threatens to challenge these categories. "François Petrarque" is "mis en François", as if the act of translation fulfills part of Petrarch's nature already inscribed within his first name. Philieul plays further with this onomastic coincidence in his prefatory dedication to the French Queen: "Aussi Pétrarque aura nouveau renom / Quand il sera François dessoubz ton nom" (4). The choice of tense here is revealing, since it suggests that Petrarch is not French despite his name, but that he will become truly himself — François/French — through translation and under the named patronage of someone who has trod the same path from Florence to France. It is clear how appropriate is Philieul's choice of dedicatee and also how much sixteenth-century French Petrarchism is bound up with contemporary politics.

While Philieul suggests that Petrarch can become French in his literary afterlife through translation, later French readers go one step further, arguing that in his life Petrarch is already French. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a marked shift occurs in Petrarch's French fortunes. Previously distanced as Florentine, Petrarch begins to be embraced as French, in a process of polemical retrospective adoption. One of the earliest and most explicit statements of Petrarch's Frenchness comes from the Abbé de Sade's three-volume *Mémoires pour la vie de François Pétrarque* (1764–67). This *magnum opus* had a hand in fuelling renewed interest in Petrarch not only in France but also in England, thanks to its abridged English translation by Susannah Dobson (1775; discussed in Zuccato and in McLaughlin). Its author, uncle to the more famous marquis de Sade, felt a particular affinity for his subject matter, for geographical and genealogical reasons. Petrarch and Sade had in common the city of Avignon, but they were also connected by Petrarch's Laura being an ancestor of the biographer himself, or so the *Mémoires* claimed with evidence from the family archive.

Alongside this proclamation of Petrarchist descent via a putative Laure de Sade, née de Noves, Sade also boldly suggested that Petrarch was not Italian but French. He made this controversial claim for the following reasons in a prefatory letter addressed to his anticipated Italian readers:

Que diriez-vous, si on osoit vous disputer Pétrarque ? Il a reçu le jour dans le sein de votre belle contrée, cela n'est pas douteux ; la Ville d'Arezzo l'a vu naître, on ne peut pas lui contester cet honneur ; mais il a fait ses études à Carpentras, à Avignon, à Montpellier. Ses meilleurs Ouvrages ont été conçus, commencés, plusieurs même achevés sur les bords de la Sorgue ; les rochers de Vaucluse ont répété mille fois les sons harmonieux de sa lyre ; dans ces belles Odes que vous admirez tant, il prend à témoin les sources, les bois, les monts & les prés de cette solitude : enfin, c'est là qu'il a conçu ce Poëme épique auquel il doit la couronne. Il s'agit à présent de sçavoir, si un homme de Lettres n'appartient pas plus au Pays où il a été élevé, formé, instruit, où il a composé ses meilleurs Ouvrages, qu'à la terre où il a reçu & quitté la vie. C'est un problème que je vous laisse à résoudre. Je me garderois bien de dire sur cela ce que je pense : je craindrois d'exciter votre courroux, en vous enlevant un des plus grands ornemens de votre patrie. (lxxi–lxxii)

This passage is highly rhetorical in its studied politesse. Sade bookends the passage with verbs in the conditional (“diriez”, “garderois”, “craindrois”), bestowing on the claim a supposedly speculative air. Yet the heart of the matter is couched in a series of past tenses (“a reçu”, “a fait”, etc.) that put forward the facts of Petrarch's associations with France in a cumulatively irrefutable tone. Meanwhile, Sade keeps a constant eye on the present moment of narration (“Il

s'agit à présent de sçavoir") and on the likely effect of his claim on his audience, evident from the sustained direct address ("Que diriez-vous", "que je vous laisse") and the reiterated possessive pronouns ("votre belle contrée", "votre courroux", "votre patrie"). Sade's own position is initially hidden behind the impersonal "on", but ends up sounding clearly in the repeated "je", despite his coyness in stating his opinion outright: "Je me garderois bien de dire sur cela ce que je pense".

Sade's arguments in favour of Petrarch as French are markedly opposed to the preceding French tradition of the Florentine Petrarch, and successfully set the tone for the nineteenth-century reception of the poet in France. Moreover, this reception, like its sixteenth-century forebear, is inflected by the wider political context. The desire to celebrate Petrarch in France, already so eloquently expressed by Sade, motivated the establishment of a local cultural organisation, the *Athénée* (later, *Académie*) de *Vaucluse*, on 20 July 1801. One of the first tasks of this society was to celebrate the fifth centenary of Petrarch's birth (1804), with, not least, the erection of a monument in Vaucluse in his memory (on these and subsequent anniversary celebrations, see especially Hendrix). The *Athénée* had been founded by none other than Napoleon, a fact which strongly suggests that claiming Petrarch as French was of a piece with claiming Italy as French (Duperray, 224). At the start of the nineteenth century, poetry and politics emerge as united in their imperial aims, rather as they had already done in the sixteenth century when the French kings were at war with Italy. Yet while the earlier Petrarchist period stressed Petrarch's foreignness and Florentineness, the later period followed Sade in promoting Petrarch as French.

Speaking in support of the project to erect a column in honour of Petrarch, one of the members of the *Athénée* reiterated that Petrarch was French, basing his argument on similarly biographical reasons:

Si Pétrarque naquit et mourut au-delà des Alpes, il n'appartient pas moins à cette terre hospitalière. A Carpentras, il trouva des instituteurs ; à Avignon, une muse ; à Vaucluse, l'enthousiasme qui fait les poètes. Sans nos écoles, sans Laure, sans nos heureux sites, il n'eût peut-être jamais fait la gloire de l'Italie, ni les délices du monde savant. Si la patrie est sur-tout aux lieux où l'esprit se forma, où se développa le cœur, Pétrarque n'est pas à d'autres qu'à nous. (Piot, 105–6)

Like Sade, Piot acknowledges Petrarch's birth and death in Italy, only to draw attention to Petrarch's connections to various sites in Provence through education, residence, and love. Yet where Sade had made his claim in the singular ("je") addressing an Italian audience ("vous"), Piot is speaking to members of the *Athénée* and so uses a collective and proprietorial third person plural ("nos

écoles”, “nos heureux sites”, “à nous”). The project of claiming Petrarch as French has, since Sade, gathered more supporters, amongst whom most illustriously Napoleon.

The connections between Petrarch and France continued to be valorized throughout the nineteenth century, with one eventual consequence being the opening of a museum devoted to the poet, purportedly on the site of his residence at Vacluse, on 7 October 1928. This museum further perpetuates the memorialization of Petrarch in Provence, instigated by the Napoleonic column and anniversary celebrations back in 1804. On the occasion of the inaugural ceremony, the French scholar Pierre de Nolhac situated Petrarch firmly on French soil by describing him as “le poète qui vécut ici et planta dans ce jardin les lauriers qui s’y renouvellent depuis six cents ans” (4). The laurel trees at Vacluse provide, according to Nolhac, historical continuity and a reminder of Petrarch’s presence in that place. There is an evident contrast here with Du Bellay’s Florentine Petrarch, whose laurels flourish by the river Arno (as cited above). The distance between Du Bellay’s view and that of Nolhac is not only temporal, between the mid-sixteenth and the early twentieth centuries, but also geographical, between Florence and Provence. In this dichotomy, Nolhac is evidently the heir of the likes of Sade and Piot. But which version of the poet laureate is, in the final analysis, more correct?

In response to this question, it is tempting to return to Sade’s (admittedly feigned) reticence: “C’est un problème que je vous laisse à résoudre” (lxxi–lxxii). The answer, after all, is inevitably inflected to a certain extent by the disposition and desires of each particular respondent. Ultimately, moreover, a satisfactory answer cannot be based solely on what has been the focus of the preceding analysis, namely negotiations between autobiographical self-representation and the diverse manipulative pressures of reception. Rather, the answer would require a shift in perspective from Petrarch’s literary legacy to Petrarch’s own poetic debts, the latter especially as manifested in his poetry through style and intertext. Here, further delicate negotiations would once more be required, this time between Petrarch’s Italian inheritance — principally his denied Florentine precursor Dante (Barański and Cachey) but also earlier poets (Suitner) — and his French or rather Provençal education, highlighted by the likes of Sade and Nolhac as by more recent critics (Perugi; Paden). In this respect Petrarch’s own genealogy in *RVF* 70 is telling, embracing as it does both French and Italian forebears in sequential fashion, by quoting the *incipit* of poems by pseudo-Arnaut Daniel (for Petrarch not pseudo), Cavalcanti, Dante, and Cino da Pistoia, before concluding with a self-citation of the *incipit* of the longest poem of the *Canzoniere*, *RVF* 23.

Thus we can hazard some general conclusions: that Petrarch is peculiarly open to competing interpretations; that birthplace is inadequate as a marker of identity; that, predictably, the afterlife of poetry is bound up with politics and patriotism; that identity and nationality are fluid, unstable categories. Less predictably, we can also subvert expectations by suggesting that, from a certain perspective, Petrarch proves to be surprisingly French thanks to his life and love and Du Bellay surprisingly Italian thanks to his Roman experience. In the final analysis, however, the Florentine and the Provençal Petrarch can be held together in a syncretic fashion, as in *RVF* 70. Indeed, in the case of Petrarch's life and afterlife, the extent of cultural exchange between France and Italy is such that it becomes difficult to consider the two as separate, clearly divisible entities (a view that is also complicated by an awareness of the history of the formation of each nation). The porosity of the geographical and literary borders between France and Italy is evident from the travels of Petrarch, Du Bellay, and their texts. In other words, these two cultures, whether understood regionally or nationally, are not only mutually formative but also inextricably intertwined.

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