

Francesco Petrarca. *Les triomphes*.

Eds. Gabriella Parussa and Elina Suomela-Härmä. Trans. Simon Bourgoïn. *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 495. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2012. 322 pp. \$86.40. ISBN: 978-2-600-01546-2.

From the outset, the editors of this curious, multifaceted volume anticipate the question certain to be on the minds of all who pause to consider its title page: why publish a contemporary critical edition of an obscure early sixteenth-century French translation of Petrarch's demanding allegorical text *I Trionfi* by a poet who has largely been relegated to oblivion? In response, they offer an admirable justification for this improbable effort that not only succeeds in captivating the reader but also presents an assiduously thorough model in modern philology to be adopted and adapted to future critical-scientific editions of literary translation.

Petrarch's *Trionfi*, which have assumed a secondary position in his oeuvre since the lyrical pleas of his *Canzoniere* were advanced as the exemplary model for imitation by Ronsard's *Pléiade* and the sonneteers of Renaissance Europe, were nonetheless the first of the Tuscan humanist's poetic works in the Italian vernacular to pique the interest of late medieval France. In fact, one of the more significant apologies in favor of the publication of this volume is the recent rediscovery of the period around 1500, with one foot in the late Middle Ages and the other in the Renaissance, of which this translation is an excellent cultural artifact for examining the literary proclivities and linguistic style of a society in flux. Within this transitional phase are also a number of poets whose importance literary tradition has minimized. Simon Bourgoïn, author of this translation, is from this discounted group of late medieval courtly *rhétoriciens*. More than a mere translator, this valet of François I, the Renaissance king whose fascination with Petrarch would peak in the 1530s, Bourgoïn treats *I Trionfi* with notable merit, gracefully rendering the allegorical poem in French using the Gallic alexandrine meter. Following the logic

of the editors, Bourgoûin's ambitious undertaking of poetically naturalizing Petrarch may even be read as a patriotic response to the latter's infamous claim that orators and poets are not to be found outside of Italy.

All the same, a reevaluation of a nascent nationalism in pre-Renaissance France and a reconstitution of the cultural milieu of a people bent on redefining themselves as a nation merely opens the door to this rich text. The few previous modern attempts to present *I Trionfi* to a Francophone public, the editors argue, were either incomplete or rendered with a modern sterility and lack of critical nuance. In presenting a carefully crafted edition from an early wave of French Petrarchism, which includes Bourgoûin's summary and poetic recreations alongside the Petrarchan original for each of his *Triumphes*, the editors seize upon a moment far more attuned to Petrarchan textual subtleties and, simultaneously, introduce today's audience to a version of the French language that was itself in a transitional period of identity building.

To this end, the various scientific-linguistic dossiers and charts that accompany the text are very helpful in grasping the structure and syntax of Bourgoûin's French *en mouvement*. Likewise, the glossary, index of proper nouns, and ample endnotes are useful in orienting the reader to the intricacies of this text. Finally, on a similar note, the histories of the various manuscripts that are collated into the final product are lively and interesting accounts that further bring the text to life.

All in all, I might still argue that as a literary text this translation has limited appeal; however, as a model of how to perceive academic lacunae and locate the most interesting — if not arcane — sources to cast new light on an obscure object in a revitalized area, this volume is exceptional. While I do not anticipate assigning the *Triumphes* in the classroom for their literary value, I can imagine including elements of the introductory material on a syllabus as I teach research methods. In the end, in spite of my expectations and prejudices, this commendable edition of a Gallic Petrarch captivated my interest from start to finish — and that may well be the best litmus test of all.

ROBERT J. HUDSON  
Brigham Young University