

as there were of types of ‘opera.’” This overarching idea is one of the most original contributions of the book, and Cohen develops it by bringing together in an engaging dialogue a number of authors, ancients and moderns, rulers and poets.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.217

Lyric in the Renaissance: From Petrarch to Montaigne. Ullrich Langer.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. viii + 218 pp. \$99.99.

Ullrich Langer’s *Lyric in the Renaissance* is at once a remarkably erudite, affectively powerful, and intellectually courageous study of the well-traveled terrain of early modern poetry, so exquisitely tied to the Florentine master’s vernacular verse. Indeed, to break genuinely new ground in this terrain is a challenge that Langer meets not only with an enlightening discussion of classical versus early modern conceptions of the lyric, but also with a series of brilliant close readings of Petrarch, Charles d’Orleans, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and Montaigne. He develops throughout the notion of what he terms a radical “effect of singularity,” as distinguished from classical notions of commonplace and universal experience, as well as from more traditional notions of first-person subjectivity often viewed as having their roots in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. Rather than centering on broader semantics, thematics, and rhetorical forms in these texts, Langer teases out specific linguistic elements that consistently point to the distinctiveness of the particular human being, the particular instant, the particular locus, the particular event—which, in eschewing the very notion of substitutability, augments the existential intensity of the verse and gestures toward an ethics in which the experience of the radically individual human being cannot be subsumed into a shared commonality.

Langer first establishes the key elements that heighten existential intensity in the *Canzoniere*. From an intertextual analysis (via Ovid and Horace) of the opening sonnet’s celebrated line 4 (“quand era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono”) as the radical rupture between the poet’s past and present catalyzed by the *innamoramento*, he goes on to examine the following cluster of related features: an insistence on the *punto*, or penetrating instant, of his irrevocable transformation through love; iterative juxtapositions of the indeterminate (*mille*) versus the particular (*una/uno*); deictic indications of locus or of persons/objects through use of the demonstrative, along with varied locutions of exclusivity (*null’altra; solo ivi con voi*); and, finally, a “lexical minimalism” or redundancy (*bello; dolce*) that reduces the semantic richness of the adjective in favor of privileging its unique source (*Tu sola mi piaci*).

From this rich Petrarchan foundation, the book moves on to explore a continuum—with variations—of these singular effects among its highlighted writers. Although Charles d’Orleans is the only one among them who probably did not

know the *Canzoniere*, Langer reveals how the late medieval poet repeatedly employs within the redundant lexicon of the *rondeau* genre a series of demonstrative deictics pointing to self and alterity, incessant self-interrogations, and exclusionary alternatives to create a minimalist world in which the melancholic speaker becomes himself a singularly lost object. Turning then to the best-known French reprisal of the *Canzoniere*, Ronsard's 1552–53 *Amours de Cassandre*, Langer develops how the afterlife of Petrarch's deictic, exclusionary, and redundant diction/sound effects creates a vastly divergent vision of lyric singularity, based on an imagined erotic reciprocity between the lover and beloved—one that serves to counter the unrelenting Petrarchan inaccessibility crisis, and to attenuate the mythological scenarios of compensatory male domination adapted in one of Ronsard's most famous erotic sonnets, "Je voudroi bien richement jaunissant." If these elements infuse Ronsard's lyric with a specifically sensual plenitude largely absent from the *Canzoniere*, what Langer argues for in his chapter on Du Bellay's *Regrets* is how they produce a stunning turnabout to an emptiness perceived in the poetic speaker's posture and a reduction of his verse to prosaic tedium. Du Bellay's particular melancholic stance, combining the sense of loss of his former self (*Ton Du Bellay n'est plus*); his explicit distancing from and implicit denigration of his fellow poets by the repeated deictic demonstrative *Ceux qui* (juxtaposed to his monotonous return to the first-person *je*, either denying high-minded artistic aspirations or validating only the banal); and, finally, a sense of abandonment wherein distilled emotion (even in the celebrated sonnet "France, mere des arts, des armes, et des loix") is undercut by judgmental commentary, all point to a singular diminishment of the lyric subject and project.

The book's final chapter moves, surprisingly—so it might seem at first—to Montaigne, but the reader learns quickly why this makes for a not only appropriate but moving culmination. By focusing in turn on two renowned alexandrine formulations of the *Essais* ("C'est ici un livre de bonne foy, lecteur" and "Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy"), and on Montaigne's own staging of lyric in two amatory episodes from Virgilian and Lucretian verse, Langer demonstrates provocatively how Montaigne evokes a kind of lyric "sublime" based on the same shared effects of presentness and singularity—of the precedence of "effect over meaning"—that he has developed throughout the study. *Lyric in the Renaissance* thereby stands as essential reading not only for early modern and classical scholars, but for all those who cherish the singular existential experiences conveyed through lyric poetry.

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doi:10.1017/rqx.2019.218