pagan *otium*, which envisioned the life of retirement as a means of reaching moral perfection, within a Christian context where it became the way of salvation" (xiv). In *De otio*, Petrarch contrasts pagan and Christian cultures, aiming to affirm the absolute condemnation of the pagans, regardless of the virtues they possessed, because of the incapacity of pagan learning "to contribute to moral reformation intrinsic to the salvific process" (xvii).

The treatise begins by praising the life of religious leisure, for only in religious leisure is the soul most receptive to God's word (3-12). After providing an extensive series of biblical quotations designed to furnish guidance and comfort to Christians (15-19), Petrarch launches into the body of the work. This he formally divides into three parts according to the three major enemies of the soul, demons (24-78), the world (81-91), and the flesh (94-112). Given that these sources of sin are so interconnected, however, there is much overlap between these three parts. The remainder of the work is devoted to a comparison of ancient pagan religion with Christianity (115-148).

Understandably the *De otio religioso*, with its all-embracing condemnation of the life in the world and a glorification of withdrawal from it, was not popular with later humanists. As well, stylistically, Petrarch's Latin is less classical than most of his other works. It is no wonder, then, as Witt points out, that the treatise has aroused little interest on the part of scholars. There is still no critical edition of it. The present translation is based on the edition by Giuseppe Rotondi (Vatican City, 1958). Susan S. Schearer has produced a very good translation of the text into modern English, the result of eight years of work. Petrarch's treatise, divided into two books, has now been further subdivided into chapters by the translator. Schearer's translation, *On Religious Leisure*, along with Witt's introduction, which provides the historical context to the treatise, will be an excellent resource for scholars and, as her stated aim, will help "amplify our understanding of Petrarch's humanism." The translation comes at a welcome time as 2004 marks the 700th anniversary of Petrarch's birth.

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This collection of essays provides critical approaches to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and careful analyses of his lyrics and comedies. Eleven scholars put the *Orlando Furioso* in dialogue with Ariosto's other texts and works by modern and contemporary authors. The contributors consider the *Furioso* against the backdrop of the cultural and political milieu of the Este court, where Ariosto worked most of his adult life, and the humanistic and classical literary tradition in which his production was deeply steeped. The arrangement of essays seems to imitate the cinematic techniques of panning and tracking, which, according to Monica Farnetti, one

of the scholars featured in the collection, Ariosto "foreshadowed" in the *Orlando Furioso*. While some studies offer a panoramic view of Ariosto's *opus* and its relation to the cultural and historical period, others provide close-up shots of particular texts and their intertextual allusions to the contemporary literary tradition.

Dennis Looney analyzes the influence Guarino Veronese's educational system on the "humanistic culture of the period" and more specifically on Ariosto (22). Ariosto "uses the classics and classical rhetoric to criticize the culture of the classicists" (24); this "idiosyncratic use of the classics", which Looney has termed elsewhere as "compromising," is the by-product of what the critic Albert Ascoli describes as an "implicit critique Ariosto makes of humanist education." (19). For Looney, "compromising" serves to place the literary model to which Ariosto alludes in a new perspective and to emphasize the importance of a literary source among the others, only to downsize the privilege of such source in the course of the narrative.

Antonio Franceschetti investigates the nature of the dialogue between the *Orlando Furioso* and Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. Boiardo's poem is Ariosto's principal model and the source "from which the spiritual world of the *Furioso*, consciously or unconsciously, was derived" (36). Franceschetti points out that Ariosto's development and imitation of certain episodes in Boiardo leads to a radical change of tone, which loses its fantastic dimension and becomes more rational. Furthermore, Ariosto's characters are shaped by the contingent situation in which they find themselves. Love, in Boiardo the main agent of Orlando's heroic deeds in pursuit of Angelica, becomes a destructive element in Ariosto. Franceschetti attributes this metamorphosis to the historical and political period that made Ariosto increasingly pessimistic and realistic.

Alberto Casadei focuses on the structural and linguistic changes Ariosto made in the three editions of the *Orlando Furioso*, in connection to the chivalric genre and the addition of the *Cinque Canti*. While Ariosto demonstrated his preference for the Tuscan dialect in the 1516 edition (which became more evident in 1521 and 1532), in the last edition, he shed the comic and ironic dimensions and geared the work toward a more classical form which reflects his move toward a "more 'national and 'imperial' view" of his poem. This change does not make the 1532 edition completely different from the others; yet it highlights the historical and cultural change that Ferrara and the rest of Italy went through between the first and last edition.

Giorgio Masi analyzes Ariosto's production in relation to his position as a seasoned courtier and employee of the Estes. With its cultural milieu, the court of Ferrara constituted Ariosto's stimulus, inspiration and privileged audience. If Ariosto never accepted "his role as one 'familiar' to the court ahead of that of the poet" (86), he kept his independence of judgment within the limits imposed by the literary genres he chose to use and the social and cultural rules he decided to respect.

In her concise contribution Monica Ferretti emphasizes the importance of the geographical landscape in *Orlando Furioso* and of the symbolic relationship Ariosto established between space and character. Daniel Javitch calls attention to the fictionality of the *Orlando Furioso*. He points to Ariosto's elaboration of traditional elements of the chivalric genre, such as invoking the authority of the fictitious Turpin or exploiting the convention of suspending the narrative action at the

beginning of each canto, which emphasize the fictionality of the text. The narrator's comments within cantos interrupt the story and underline Ariosto's total control over the characters' fictional stories; they also induce the reader to experience through the surrogate of literature "the frustration of desires and expectations" suffered by the characters. Ultimately, the declared fictionality of the text and its intertextual nature discourages the reader from appropriating the values and ideals of the text into real life. The fickle nature of the characters underlines the unreliability of "timeless models of virtue or vice".

Elissa Weaver's well-known essay is translated here for the first time in English. Through a close study of three stories of love madness that Ariosto interlaced through the traditional technique of *entreleccamento* (Orlando's, Rodomonte's and Bradamante's), Weaver argues that madness is the product of the power of word and literature. For, the narration of stories that drive the three characters to madness can be repeated indefinitely through its retelling.

Roberto Fedi, who has written extensively on the *Rime*, analyzes Ariosto's lyric poetry that he composed, revised and expanded from 1493 to 1525 in relation to the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, its themes and structure, and the genre's elaborations made by Ferrara's court poetry in the fifteenth century and by Bembo in the sixteenth century. Working within the limits of the genre, Ariosto's endless work in progress on his *Rime* testifies to both the author's attempt to shape his lyrics according to new poetic standards and his constant reworking of "his poetic beginnings" (169). Bianchi offers a concise overview of Ariosto's comedies staged between 1508 and 1528, from the *Cassaria* to *Lena*. Bianchi traces his progressive detachment from the Latin models of Plautus and Terence in his first comedies and detects a new style in *Lena*, which is 'other' vis-à-vis the classical model (187). Bianchi suggests that through comedy Ariosto showed uneasiness in keeping up with his original goal of entertaining, offering a more pessimistic and realistic view of the society in which he lived.

The last two essays deal with the metamorphosis of the *Orlando Furioso* and its structure into Luca Ronconi's theatrical production and the integration of its narratives and structural mechanisms in Calvino's style. Sandro Bernardi describes and comments on Luca Ronconi's theatrical staging of Ariosto's poem in 1969 and its later filmic rendition. Ronconi's direction emphasizes the text's narrative openness, which led him to represent fragments of the poem because "one part stands for the entire work" (197). For Lucia Re, both Calvino and Ariosto transform their condition of belatedness into a playful "principle of originality" (227). Re explains Calvino's reading of Ariosto and Ariosto's deep influence on the author's work through his use of the opposing narrative tools of *avventura*, a search for search's sake, and *inchiesta*, a search that acquires meaning through its goal. This opposition is well known to scholars of *Orlando Furioso*.

Ariosto Today. Contemporary Perspectives is a great tool for any scholar seeking a panoramic view of original approaches to Ariosto's *opus* and for college professors wanting to expose students to a view of Ariosto that goes beyond the *Orlando Furioso* to his so-called minor works.

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