

Petrarch's Civilized Barbarians

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“Mirum in terra barbarica quanta civilitas!” [It is remarkable how much culture there is in that barbaric land!], wrote Petrarch to his patron, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, allegedly on the occasion of a visit to Cologne.¹ Dated by Petrarch's biographers to August 8, 1333, *Familiars* 1.5, like the account which precedes it of a stay in Aachen on June 21, 1333, the epistle is treated as a document of his literary debut.² Such is surmised to have been their author's implication when he placed these two texts near the beginning of his first book. Yet the year is not provided by Petrarch.³ The date 1333 has been supplied from external sources to epistles which were actually composed in or around 1351, arguably but not demonstrably on the basis of previous versions.⁴ Viewed in the optic of retrospection which results from this chronology, Petrarch's works enable us to perceive how he shaped his early experiences in the mold of his later misfortunes. *Familiars* 1.4 and 1.5 offer less evidence of his youthful journeys in the north than testimony of his middle-aged travel to an empire which no longer existed.

Imperialism, cultural and political, in 1351 provided Petrarch with rhetoric to refashion setbacks endured during the previous decade, which had turned his attention back to Germany.⁵ That is why *Familiars* 1.4 and 1.5 single out, among several other places in northern Europe which he reports having visited, two German towns. Aachen and Cologne are treated at length. Paris and Ghent, Lyon and Liège are barely or briefly mentioned by this author not otherwise renowned for his reticence. Striking a series of poses, from condescension to indignation, Petrarch gives little away. Even his paradox of stereotypical disdain for Teutonic barbarity and grudging acknowledgment of German culture is neither explored nor explained.⁶ Silence lurks between the lines.

That silence reveals more about Petrarch's purpose than his autobiographical assertions.⁷ Consider, for example, the claims that his journey

had nothing to do with business and that it was undertaken out of youthful enthusiasm for sightseeing: “. . . nullo quidem negotio, ut nosti, sed visendi tantum studio et iuvenili quodam ardore peragravi.”⁸ The first statement ought to have been redundant, were the second true. In the case of Petrarch, who had a careful way with words, suspicion is aroused. It deepens at the declaration that fame, rather than merit, had won him friends in Germany: “nam et ibi amicos prius michi fama pepererat quam meritum.”⁹ Scarcely aged twenty-nine in 1333—his birthday on July 20 fell between these stays in Aachen and Cologne—the future poet laureate was then by no means an international celebrity. A chaplain and *commensalis* of Giovanni Colonna, he served the cardinal at the papal court in Avignon. That court, whose lust for lucre Petrarch pilloried in biblical terms as the Whore of Babylon, sent others by a similar route in order to collect curial revenues.¹⁰ Raising money for Pope Clement VI (1342–52), whom he named Nimrod after the Babylonian tyrant, was hardly an occupation which the recognized eminence of 1351 cared to recall. That is why the memory is erased by Petrarch’s negation “nullo . . . negotio.” It implies an antithesis to the *otium* of cultural tourism which was more in keeping with his middle-aged status. The issue irked him, however, and Petrarch added an appeal to his patron’s complicity: “nullo . . . negotio, ut nosti.”

“As you know”: Giovanni Colonna, in 1351, was an ideal witness to this fiddling with facts, because the cardinal had died on July 3, 1348. That bleak year, marked also by the death of Laura, followed the failure of Cola di Rienzo’s attempt at revolution in Rome, which Petrarch had at first supported enthusiastically.¹¹ His zeal in Cola’s cause led to a parting of the ways with Colonna, whose aristocratic family fanned unrest in the eternal city which this tribune of the people sought to subdue. And Petrarch’s hopes that the papacy might return to Rome suffered a blow on June 9, 1348, when Clement VI bought the town of Avignon from Queen Giovanna of Naples, soon to be the subject of ridicule.¹² As Nimrod began to extend the Palais des Papes, Babylon must have seemed settled on the banks of the Rhône.

Such were the setbacks that contributed to the evasions of *Familiaries* 1.4 and 1.5. Nimrod prospered in plenty; the tribune had been toppled; and the cardinal’s cordiality was no more. What remained in 1351 was the idea, or the illusion, of Rome.¹³ Neither papal and French, nor imperial and German, nor Italian and discredited like Rienzo, it was nurtured by the same nostalgia with which Petrarch preferred to recall his broken bond with Giovanni Colonna. Hence the intimacy of address to him in *Familiaries* 1.4 and 1.5. These display none of the subordinate’s deference to a superior

required by epistolary convention in the learned language. What in 1333 would have amounted to a solecism was recognizable in 1351 as a version of the decorous informality with which Petrarch wrote Latin letters to Cicero or Seneca. As unable to answer back as these *familiares*, Colonna is addressed as an equal and a compatriot.

Compatriotism “of Italic origin” serves to smooth over his differences with Petrarch in the past and to provide a common cause. *Familiares* 1.4 begins less with an exordium than with an outburst on the subject of Italians’ superiority to Greeks.¹⁴ What has this to do with Aachen, the place from which Petrarch supposedly writes? And why does that small town in Germany take up more space than Paris, still a center of European learning? An oral account of his Parisian impressions, lending immediacy to this dialogue with the dead, is deferred by Petrarch to a future which will never arrive.

The present burden of the work is borne not by a description of Aachen but by what he calls a *fabella*. That term, with its connotations of fiction and gossip, introduces an anecdote aimed at cutting Charlemagne down to size. In Aachen, where the tomb of “King Charles” is venerated by “barbarians,” they “presume” [audent] to call him great, as if to equate him with Pompey or Alexander.¹⁵ These giants of antiquity, Petrarch hints heavily, are not to be compared with a dwarf of the dark ages; and to prove his point he launches into tittle-tattle about how the foolish Frank, consumed by passion for a deceased concubine who had hidden a magical ring under her tongue, built his residence on a stinking swamp at Aachen, into which that bewitching object had been thrown.¹⁶ Versions of this anecdote had circulated since the late thirteenth century.¹⁷ Petrarch’s purpose in elaborating on it is not the rejection of Carolingian rule traditional in Italian sources since the early Middle Ages.¹⁸ His aim, stated in the last lines of *Familiares* 1.4, is to belittle Charlemagne and to deride Aachen, where his successors continue to be crowned “. . . quod hodieque servatur, servabiturque quandiu Romani frena imperii Theutonica manus aget” [as long as the Teutons hold in their grasp the reins of the Roman empire].¹⁹

This is an image of usurpation, a metaphor of tyranny. Not for the first time, the detractor of medieval culture draws on its resources.²⁰ In the long tradition of Latin polemic, a distinction had been established between “Teutonic” and “German.” Voiced most vehemently during the Investiture Crisis of the eleventh century, it was employed by Pope Gregory VII (1073–85) to contest the claims of “Teutonic” kings to empire.²¹ Precisely in this Gregorian sense of the term, Petrarch applies it to the place where the vitality of the tradition he deplores had been demonstrated in the recent

past. So it was that, skirting Paris as a detour from the goal he pursued in 1351, he chose to linger at Aachen. There, on July 25, 1349, the first German emperor to be called Charles since the early Middle Ages was crowned.

An earlier coronation of Charles, better known as Karl IV (1346–78) had been held at Bonn in 1346, because the forces of his enemy, Ludwig the Bavarian (1328–47), then occupied Aachen. Its sacrality and associations with Charlemagne, emphasized by repetition of the ceremony, served to support the theory of *translatio imperii* which Petrarch's anecdote attempts to undermine.²² The tale, otherwise trivial, acquired a certain piquancy in the context of a fictive epistle to Giovanni Colonna. Both of them knew, and neither liked, the leading authority on learned rulership, who had pronounced on just this issue.²³ In his consistorial address approving Karl IV's election to the German kingship on November 26, 1346, Clement VI had likened him to Charlemagne and described a direct transfer of empire from the Greeks to the Franks with scant reference to troublesome Romans, past or present.²⁴

The only Roman then present in the Sacred College was Giovanni Colonna.²⁵ Aware that his influence at Avignon was waning, the aggrieved cardinal sided with critics of the pope's perceived high-handedness.²⁶ No lover of the empire, Colonna was apt to forget that he enjoyed one of the richest pickings in the imperial church, the provostship of Mainz, with an annual income of 1,200 florins. More concerned with his material and political interests at home, which intervention by Karl IV might threaten, Colonna was in a position to relay to Petrarch, before their breach in 1347, how the Teutonic title to empire had been sanctioned, at the price of Roman prestige, by Clement VI (1342–52).²⁷

Hence polemic against the idea, rather than the papal exponent, of *translatio imperii* in *Familiars* 1.4. Nimrod is unnamed in order to avoid biting the hand that fed Petrarch. Had he not been favored by Clement VI with a benefice in 1346, followed by another in 1348, to say nothing about offers of a post as apostolic secretary and of a bishopric?²⁸ Did wagging tongues not allege that Petrarch's sights were set on a red hat? If he had reasons to remain silent about the pope's elision of the Roman link with empire, the terms in which *translatio imperii* had been affirmed by Clement VI are treated less circumspectly. With the Greeks dismissed as inferior to the Italians and Charlemagne denigrated at his residence in Aachen, antiquity might be extolled, for it provided an alibi of common cause. It is the Rome of Pompey, not Cola di Rienzo, that Petrarch recalls, drawing a veil over the differences between chaplain and cardinal. At a stage of their relationship in

1333 remote from the rupture of the next decade, Colonna and his protégé are portrayed as united against “Teutonic” tyrants. Their imagined harmony depended, however, on much being left unsaid. No hint is given that, at or around the same time when he composed a fictive epistle which mocked Charlemagne, Petrarch was writing a real letter to one of his successors. Karl IV, he urged on February 24, 1351, should restore the Roman Empire.

The distance between this letter to Karl IV, the first in the tenth book of the *Familiars*, and the fourth letter of book 1 is deliberate. It serves to conceal their chronological proximity and to separate strands in Petrarch’s rhetoric of empire which had become entangled in 1351. Then, the polemic of *Familiars* 1.4 assailed the legitimacy of alien rule in Italy, while the persuasion of *Familiars* 10.1 sought to motivate Karl IV to act as an arbiter in peninsular affairs.²⁹ Taken together, they raise doubts about Petrarch’s candor, which is why he removed them from one another and distributed them in different books, counting on the credulity of those who still maintain that the *Familiars* are arranged in the order of their composition.³⁰ This maneuver was made simpler by the disparateness of the two texts. Although they share the theme of imperial authority, they differ in function and in genre. The one is a private exercise in the epistolary art, accessible to few before its posthumous release; the other amounts to a semipublic manifesto about the mission of Karl IV. Held at arm’s length, their contradictions are hidden. No one was to know that both works were conceived at a time of retrospection and frustration, nor was anyone to guess that in 1351, when Petrarch was voicing such divergent views of the empire, a tension had developed between the overt and the covert sides of himself.

This tension between repudiating a Teutonic ruler and fawning on him at the same time was relieved, on the official level, by a sophism. Contrary to almost all the evidence, Petrarch argued that Karl IV should be considered an Italian.³¹ The plausibility of this position might have been enhanced through knowledge of the medieval history which Petrarch preferred to scorn: double identity (and more) had been attributed to the Italphile Emperor Otto III (996–1002), admittedly an eccentric example of a foreigner who had gone native.³² Instead, Petrarch extols Karl IV’s boyhood exploits in Italy, about which the object of his admiration took a dimmer view as an adult. His autobiography portrays the period from 1331—when, aged fifteen, Karl represented his father, King John of Bohemia, in Lombardy—to 1333 as a trial of struggle and strife.³³ For Italy, the emperor never evinced the tender feelings of patriotism ascribed to him by Petrarch; it remained a

pawn in the diplomatic game which he played against popes.³⁴ Territorial expansion interested Karl IV not in the south but in the north of Europe; and a prime objective of his policy was the consolidation of his kingdoms in Germany and Bohemia.³⁵ What empire signified to this opportunistic head of the Luxembourg house was made plain by his exchange and alienation of imperial property to establish by means of hereditary possessions the dominance of his dynasty over its homelands.³⁶ To Karl IV, who looked up to the Charlemagne brought down by Petrarch, Prague rising in the splendor of his patronage meant more than Rome in its fallen state.³⁷

Rome, decrepit and down-at-the-heels, is personified by Petrarch in order to deliver an appeal for Karl IV's intervention, which is replete with classical references.³⁸ They are likely to have been lost on the emperor, whose education at the court of France had developed his taste for devotional literature.³⁹ Such oratory by letter appealed instead to John of Neumarkt (Jan ze Středy), the chancellor and a leading figure among scholars at Prague, who became one of Petrarch's correspondents.⁴⁰ John's job entailed mediating letters in Latin to what Otto of Freising had amusingly called "auribus imperialibus" [imperial ears].⁴¹ That meant reducing the rhetorical artifice of *Familiars* 10.1 to vernacular simplicity, reading the translation aloud and, in normal circumstances, composing a reply in the learned language. But circumstances at Prague were not normal because, between the summer of 1350 and the spring of 1351, Cola di Rienzo stayed there, initially as the emperor's guest, then as a prisoner of the city's first archbishop, Arnošt z Pardubic.⁴² Karl IV's reply to Petrarch is attributed to Cola by more than one manuscript.⁴³ And the ascription makes sense, for he was then the only intellectual at Prague to share Petrarch's fixation on Rome. Or so Cola thought, unaware that his former supporter had begun to distinguish between the Roman cause and its discredited champion.

The *fortissimo* of Petrarch's praise of the tribune in the late 1340s becomes, after his fall, a *basso* of dissociation during the early 1350s. Only one of Petrarch's works, *Sine nomine*, pleads on Cola's behalf, and it does so anonymously.⁴⁴ Few of the *Familiars* mention him by name. The most significant of them, 13.6, is dated to August 10, 1352, a week and half after Rienzo's arrival at papal Avignon on the first day of that month to stand trial for heresy. Away in Vaucluse, but clearly informed about the plight of the prisoner, who had asked after him, Petrarch was less clearly disposed to help. He considered Cola's capitulation a disgrace. Suicide was to be preferred to surrender by a true Roman, Petrarch opines, before poking fun at those who attempted to save Rienzo's skin by representing him as a poet. To a laureate

jealous of his own fame, this topic was touchy, which is why he mentions, only to dismiss, a precedent for the defense of a poet set by Cicero in his *Pro Archia poeta*, a speech discovered by Petrarch at Liège in 1333.⁴⁵

So it was that, in this subtle, devious, and associative mind, a connection was made between Cola di Rienzo and Petrarch's travel to the north. The link is reinforced by an echo, in almost identical terms, of *Familiares* 1.4, the first epistle about that journey: ". . . loca illa visendi ardore iuveniliter peragrarem."⁴⁶ And it is from the second of them, *Familiares* 1.5, that we may deduce how Petrarch was prompted to form these associations. He stated a revealing truth when he declared that nowhere had he learned to appreciate his fatherland more than in Germany: "Ita michi accidit ut patriam nunquam clarius quam in peregrinatione cognoscerem, et ad summam quam pulchra esset Italia in Germania perdidici."⁴⁷ For it was there, posing as a ventriloquist by the Rhine, that he imagined Rome without Rienzo.

At Cologne, Petrarch noted briefly the beauty of the city, the dignified bearing of the men and the cleanliness of married women—the sole criteria offered to define *civilitas* in others—before turning to himself as an embodiment of that quality. Directed to the river by friends made through his celebrity, or so he asserts, Petrarch then admits that he did not know German.⁴⁸ Charmed by the chatter of women whom he witnessed bathing their hands and arms in the Rhine, he was unable to understand what they were saying—which by no means inhibited him from holding forth. The linguistic defect could be offset by displaying literary knowledge, and this humanist cited Cicero on deafness and dumbness in such circumstances (*Tusculans* 5.40.116). Ignorance of the vernacular, Petrarch implies, is a trifle before the bravura of classical quotation. Having no words of his own, he then borrowed from Juvenal (*Satires* 15.111) on the (not entirely pertinent) subject of Gallic eloquence training British lawyers and capped the reference with an (unidentified, because improvised) self-citation about his hosts' learning.

Who was meant to be impressed by this show of linguistic incompetence and literary credentials? Was it the humanist's guides, put to the test of their patience by the Virgilian verses (*Aeneid* 6.318–19) in which he proceeded to ask why the women had gathered by the Rhine. To the reply that an annual ritual was being performed in order to avert misfortune in the coming year, Petrarch quipped that the woes of Italy could not be washed away by the slower flow of the Tiber and the Po.⁴⁹ This, he explains, was a jest. All are said to have laughed, but some may have wondered at the witticism. For once, it was not expressed by quotation. Devoid of secondhand authority, the ventriloquist was reduced to cracking his own joke.

That Petrarch himself judged this to be funny, at a time of crisis in Italy, may be doubted. Neither humor nor pedantry could conceal the sorry state of his homeland. But he betrays a grudging acknowledgment that his disadvantage, in the opinion of “barbarians” shrewd enough to see through his hauteur, was not only linguistic but also political. Hence, the humanist’s nostalgia for empire. His gaze fixed on the remains of Roman antiquity, Petrarch hardly registered Cologne, the largest and richest city of fourteenth-century Germany.⁵⁰ The imposing cathedral then under construction is mentioned cursorily; only a glance is spared for the relics of the Magi, a major goal of pilgrimage north of the Alps. Their removal from Milan during a period of turmoil in the twelfth century, which might have been compared with Petrarch’s own, was a thought that seems not to have occurred to him.⁵¹ What affinity could there be between Caesar Augustus and Caesar Barbarossa? Aloof and apart, Rome survived at Cologne in such monuments as “the capitol, *our* building,” because founded by Marcus Agrippa, just as northern rivers flow “into *our* sea.”⁵² This amounts to more than a synonym for the Mediterranean; the repetition of the possessive pronoun is emphatic. Its message is magnified by all that Petrarch does not say. Silence surrounds Cola di Rienzo, whose rallying cry had been the glory of the Roman past.

The fallen ideologue of empire was being replaced by none other than Petrarch in 1351. This is the date about which his readers are discouraged from reflecting, because an unstated but implied 1333 suited his purpose of insinuating that he had espoused the Roman cause long before the rise of Rienzo. The deafening silence about him has more significance here than the perfunctory description of Cologne, which is why efforts to extract from *Familiars* 1.5 information about Petrarch’s sightseeing have been so barren.⁵³ This letter, like 1.4, was composed less to record his journeys in the north than to mark his distance from Cola. And Petrarch traveled further down the road of dissociation on November 23, 1353, when he addressed the third of his appeals to Karl IV, urging him yet again to be crowned at Rome. Now the bookish tone was tempered, and Petrarch alluded to what he had seen rather than what he had read: “. . . non legimus ista, sed vidimus.”⁵⁴

A witness to the excitement once roused by Rienzo, whose name is not mentioned, the self-appointed adviser to the emperor invited him to consider how much more a Caesar might achieve than a mere tribune.⁵⁵ Hardly the kindest of references to a prisoner freed as recently as September of that year, Petrarch’s attempt to write Cola off as a has-been came at just the moment when he was attempting a political comeback. But he was

not the only object of this Olympian animus. The tribune disposed of, the emperor was the next to be dressed down. On April 5, 1355, Karl IV, by agreement with the pope, spent a single day at Rome in order to be crowned, before withdrawing without delay to the north. Promptly, in June, a thunderbolt was hurled from the Petrarchan Olympus. That lily-livered Caesar had deserted the empire and scuttled back to his “barbarica regna” [barbaric kingdoms].⁵⁶

No matter that this was the monarch who spent more time in Italy than any other of the late Middle Ages, the sponsor of scholarship who, in 1348, had founded the first university in Eastern Europe at Prague.⁵⁷ There Petrarch traveled on an embassy in July 1356 and was made to eat his undiplomatic words by Archbishop Arnošt, who voiced ironical sympathy for his stay among “barbarians.” There is no record of the humanist’s wince of embarrassment at his own term of abuse, but it may be inferred from his effort to turn a taunt into a compliment. Never, Petrarch assured Arnošt, had he seen anything less barbaric and more humane than the emperor and his entourage: “Recolo quam suaviter michi illud identidem inculcabas: ‘compatior tibi, amice, qui ad barbaros venisti.’ Ego vero nichil barbarum minus, nichil humanum magis profiteor me vidisse quam Caesarem et aliquot circa eum summos viros.”⁵⁸ Eulogy, however, was not to be mistaken for apology. If the tone altered, the categories remained the same: those polished gentlemen at Prague might have been born in Attic Athens: “. . . abunde mites et affabiles, etiam si Athenis athicis nati essent.”⁵⁹ Unlike Charlemagne, whom their ruler revered, they satisfied Petrarch’s standards of classical comparison.

It is here, at Prague in 1356 rather than at Cologne in 1333, that the civilized barbarians of Petrarch’s paradox are to be found.⁶⁰ It was conceived and developed not in his youth but during a critical period of his middle age, when he had achieved public recognition and sought political influence. All of the *Familiaries* considered in this study were composed after the fall of Cola di Rienzo, and each of them betrays, often obliquely, a wish to replace him as the ideologue of the Roman Empire. But none of them shows Petrarch assigning priority to what he had seen over what he had read.

The bookishness of his approach to reality cannot be fathomed in simple terms of antiquarianism.⁶¹ Nor are his mentality and motivation explained by that slogan of style, classicism. Petrarch persisted in employing ancient categories of thought which were inadequate to encompass experience in the Trecento, as he acknowledged twice. “Barbarian,” a cliché of alienation, was one of them; the other, “Roman Empire,” had dwindled down

to the mumbo jumbo of myth in a political order which barely acknowledged its existence.⁶² Worthless as tools of analysis, they voiced nostalgia for the simpler certainties of an imperial past. Then the cause whose champion Petrarch styled himself was ascendant, unlike the present in which Rienzo remained an awkward eminence on the scene he desired to dominate. The paradox of civilized barbarians is both an expression of that nostalgia and a concession to what Petrarch reluctantly perceived. Brief and grudging in *Familiars* 1.5, he conceded more in 21.1, but only because he had been worsted on his own terms.

Those terms, not notable for their empathy, are maintained in the teeth of the evidence. Let us acknowledge, however, that Petrarch's obduracy was tempered by a degree of charm. The poseur on the banks of the Rhine looked back with humor and dignity at his deflation by the archbishop of Prague. And if Petrarch's sightseeing was superficial because he chose to gaze at the image of his protean self, would it not be unjust to expect observation of the places to which he had traveled from one who confused Cestius's pyramid with Romulus's tomb, amplifying the irony in his epigram: "Nusquam minus Roma cognoscitur quam Romae" [Nowhere is Rome less understood than at Rome]?⁶³ New insights into German culture were not to emerge among Italian humanists until, in the next generation, Poggio Bracciolini and Enea Silvio Piccolomini wrote their innovative works. To their engagement with the living realities at Baden and Vienna Petrarch preferred evocation of a lost empire and dialogue with a cardinal who was dead.



Notes

This article by Peter Godman (1955–2018), Distinguished Professor of Intellectual History and Latin Literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance at the Sapienza University of Rome, is published posthumously. An obituary by Constant J. Mews appears in the *Journal of Medieval Latin* 29 (2019): xxiii–xxv. Dr. Cornelia Manegold, Affiliated Researcher, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Munich, edited the manuscript before its submission to *JMEMS*. Godman wished to thank Jill Kraye, Rodney Lokaj, Cornelia Manegold, and Patrick Zutshi for advice and criticism. Along with this article, another posthumously published article, "Empathy with Aliens: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli," *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch: Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature* 21 (2019): 69–94, was conceived by Godman within the larger context of a research project he was at work on, "German 'Barbarism' and Italian Humanism between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance."

1 Petrarch, *Le familiari* 1.5, in Francesco Petrarca, *Le familiari*, ed. Vittorio Rossi, 4

- vols. (1968, repr. Firenze: Casa Editrice le Lettere, 1997), 1:28, lines 5–6. Further citations to *Familiares* supply book and letter numbers, followed in parentheses by volume, page, and line numbers. All translations from Latin into English are by the author. On Giovanni Colonna, see Agostino Paravicini Bagliani's entry in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, ed. Alberto M. Ghisalberti, vol. 27 (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1982), 333–37, at *Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani*, [treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-colonna_res-072a7790-87eb-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-colonna_res-072a7790-87eb-11dc-8e9d-0016357eee51_(Dizionario-Biografico)). Early Italian humanists tended to term “barbarians” those Northerners who claimed the imperial crown at Rome or presided from the papal throne at Avignon. Clichés about German barbarism pepper Petrarch's well-known letter about his trip to Aachen. Unlike Petrarch, Poggio Bracciolini expressed admiration for the Teutons. A more nuanced and perceptive approach to cultural difference is discernable in Poggio's later account of thermal bathing at Baden. See Peter Godman, “Empathy with Aliens: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli,” *Neulateinisches Jahrbuch: Journal of Neo-Latin Language and Literature* 21 (2019): 69–94.
- 2 Ugo Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca* (Roma: Laterza, 1987), 24–30; and see Francisco Rico, *I venerdì del Petrarca* (Milano: Adelphi, 2016).
 - 3 He simply states, at the end of *Familiares* 1.5, “Lugduni, v Idus Augustas,” and at the conclusion of 1.4, “Aquis, XI Kal. Iulias” (1:31 and 27 respectively).
 - 4 See Giuseppe Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato, I: Lo scrittoio del Petrarca* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947), 50–55; Ernst Hatch Wilkins, *The Making of the “Canzoniere” and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951), 314–17.
 - 5 Robert Folz, *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Sheila Ogilvie (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 146 ff.; and Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* (London: Penguin, 2017), 282.
 - 6 There is a substantial body of literature devoted to Petrarch's cultural politics, such as *Petrarca e Roma: Atti del convegno di studi; Roma, 2–4 Dicembre 2004*, ed. Maria Grazia Blasio and Anna Morisi (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2006); and Francesco Furlan and Stefano Pittaluga, *Petrarca politico* (Milano: Ledizioni, 2016). Among a number of other relevant studies are Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993); Dolora A. Wojciehowski, *Old Masters, New Subjects, Early Modern and Structuralist Theories of Will* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 37 ff.; *Petrarca, l'umanesimo e la civiltà europea: Atti del convegno internazionale: Firenze, 5–10 Dicembre 2004*, ed. Donatella Coppini and Michele Feo, 2 vols. (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2004); Enrico Fenzi, *Petrarca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); Albert Russell Ascoli, “*Favola fui*”: *Petrarch Writes His Readers* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, SUNY Binghamton, 2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. Albert Russel Ascoli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), provides an indispensable reference tool for all Petrarchan studies.
 - 7 On the *Familiares* as autobiography, see Roberta Antognini, *Il progetto autobiografico delle “Familiares” di Petrarca* (Milano: LED, 2008).

- 8 *Familiars* 1.4 (1:24, 3–4).
- 9 *Familiars* 1.5 (1:28, 9–10).
- 10 Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato*, 52 n. 1.
- 11 See Amanda Collins, *Greater than Emperor: Cola di Rienzo (ca. 1313–54) and the World of Fourteenth-Century Rome* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 69–71, 150, 152; and Andreas Rehberg and Anna Modigliani, *Cola di Rienzo e il Comune di Roma* (Roma: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2004).
- 12 For Petrarch on the return of the papacy to Rome, see *Familiars* 6.3 (2:76); and on Clement’s purchase of Avignon, see Rodney Lokaj, “La Cleopatra napoletana: Giovanna d’Angiò nelle *Familiars* di Petrarca,” *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 177, no. 580 (2000): 481–521.
- 13 For a different perspective, see Giuliana Crevatin, “L’idea di Roma,” in *Motivi e forme delle “Familiari” di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. Claudia Berra (Milano: Cisalpini, 2003), 229–48.
- 14 *Familiars* 1.4 (1:24, 10–25 and 51).
- 15 *Familiars* 1.4 (1:25, 44–54).
- 16 Theodor E. Mommsen, “Petrarch’s Conception of the ‘Dark Ages,’” in Mommsen, *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Eugene Franklin Rice, Jr. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), 106–29; *Familiars* 1.4 (1:25, 54–27 and 117).
- 17 See Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l’Empire germanique médiéval* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950), 321–26; Andrew J. Romig, “Charlemagne the Sinner: Charles the Great as Avatar of the Modern in Petrarch’s *Familiars* 1.4,” in *The Charlemagne Legend in Medieval Latin Texts*, ed. William J. Purkis and Matthew Gabriele (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), 182–201.
- 18 See Gina Fasoli, “Carlo Magno nelle tradizioni storico leggendarie italiane,” in *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, vol. 4, *Das Nachleben*, ed. Wolfgang Braunsfeld and Percy Ernst Schramm (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1967), 348–63.
- 19 *Familiars* 1.4 (1:27, 117–18).
- 20 See G. Velli, “Petrarca e la grande poesia latina del XII secolo,” *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 28 (1985): 295–310.
- 21 Peter Godman, *The Archpoet and Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 62 and n. 57.
- 22 See Werner Goetz, *Translatio imperii: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958); and Karlheinz Stierle, “Die Illegitimität der *translatio*: Petrarca und das ‘dunkle’ Mittelalter,” in Stierle’s *Petrarca-Studien* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2012), 268–90.
- 23 Étienne Anheim, *Clément VI au travail: Lire, écrire, prêcher au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014), 353–56.
- 24 See Hans Patze, “Die Konsistorialrede Papst Clemens VI. anlässlich der Wahl Karls IV.,” in *Kaiser Karl IV., 1316–1378: Forschungen über Kaiser und Reich*, ed. Patze (Neustadt an der Aisch, Ger.: Schmidt, 1978), 1–37; [*Acta Regni Karoli IV, 1345–1348*], *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges, Sectio IV, Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, vol. 8, ed. Karl Zeumer and Richard Salomon (Hanover: Hahn, 1910–26), no. 100, 146, lines 20–21, and 159, lines 27–30.

- 25 Two other Italians had participated in the conclave of 1342: Annibaldo di Ceccano, archbishop of Naples, and Gozzo di Rimini, cardinal-priest of S. Prisca. See John Eveleth Wrigley, "The Conclave and the Electors of 1342," *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 10 (1982): 51–81. Clement VI, on Sept. 20 of that year, added Andrea Ghilini Malpigli to their number. No further Italian cardinals were created until Dec. 17, 1350. For the context, see Diana Wood, *Clement VI: The Pontificate and Ideas of an Avignon Pope* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 107–21.
- 26 See John E. Wrigley, "A Papal Secret Known to Petrarch," *Speculum* 39, no. 4 (1964): 613–34; and Ralf Lützelshwab, *Flectat cardinales ad velle suum? Clemens VI. und sein Kardinalskolleg; Ein Beitrag zur kurialen Politik in der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (München: Oldenbourg, 2007).
- 27 On Colonna's concerns at home, see Andreas Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht im römischen Trecento: Die Colonna und ihre Klientel auf dem kurialen Pfründemarkt (1278–78)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 69–74, 120–27, 292–316.
- 28 Still valuable is Carlo Cipolla, "Note Petrarcesche desunte dall' Archivio Vaticano," in *Francesco Petrarca e le sue relazioni colla corte Avignonese al tempo di Clemente VI: Ricerche varie* (Torino: Vincenzo Bona, 1909), 21–32.
- 29 Godman, "Empathy with Aliens: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli," 69.
- 30 Dotti treats the *Familiars* as a chronological source of Petrarch's biography: "Bisognava selezionarli, reverderli, disporli secondo opportunità cronologiche e ideali" (*Vita di Petrarca*, 213); perhaps wisely, he does not explain what "opportunità . . . ideali" means.
- 31 *Familiars* 10.1 (2:279, 43 ff.).
- 32 See Knut Görich, *Otto III. Romanus Saxonicus et Italicus: Kaiserliche Rompolitik und sächsische Historiographie* (Sigmaringen, Ger.: Thorbecke, 1993).
- 33 See *Vie de Charles IV de Luxembourg*, ed. and trans. Pierre Monnet and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2010), 30–56.
- 34 Roland Pauler, *Die Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Kaiser Karl IV. und den Päpsten: Italien als Schachbrett der Diplomatie; Politik im Mittelalter* (Neuried, Ger.: Ars una Verlagsgesellschaft, 1996), 45–58.
- 35 Peter Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung: Das Reich im Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1989), 240 ff.
- 36 Peter Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire: A Thousand Years of Europe's History* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), 389–421.
- 37 I. Rosario, *Art and Propaganda: Charles IV of Bohemia 1346–1378* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000), 29 ff.; Paul Crossley and Zoë Opačić, "Die Krone des böhmischen Königiums (Katalog 68–80)," and Barbara Drake Boehm, "Die goldene Stadt: Zentrum des Luxushandwerks (Katalog 81–95)," in *Karl IV., Kaiser von Gottes Gnaden: Kunst und Repräsentation des Hauses Luxemburg, 1310–1437*, ed. Jiří Fajt (München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2006), 196–217 and 236–61.
- 38 *Familiars* 10.1 (2:281, 98–284, 196).
- 39 Barbara Drake Boehm, "Der gläubige Herrscher (Katalog 38–57)," in *Karl IV., Kaiser von Gottes Gnaden*, ed. Fajt, 136–71.
- 40 See *Literatur im Umkreis des Prager Hofes der Luxemburger: Schweinfurter Kolloquium 1992*, ed. Joachim Heinzle et al. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1994); Werner Höver,

- “Johann von Neumarkt,” in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 4, ed. Christine Stöllinger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), 686–95; Joseph Klapper, *Johann von Neumarkt: Bischof und Hofkanzler; Religiöse Frührenaissance in Böhmen zur Zeit Kaiser Karls IV.* (Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1964).
- 41 Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Adolf Hofmeister, 2nd ed., Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, vol. 45 (Hanover: Hahn, 1912), 4, lines 3–9, and 5, lines 10–12; and see Godman, *Archpoet and Medieval Culture*, 17–30.
- 42 See Ronald G. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome: Cola di Rienzo and the Politics of the New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 230–68.
- 43 *Petrarcas Briefwechsel mit deutschen Zeitgenossen*, ed. Paul Piur (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933), 12–15.
- 44 Petrarch, *Liber sine nomine*, ed. Giovanni Cascio (Firenze: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 2015), letter 4, 58–76.
- 45 *Familiars* 13.6 (3:76, 146 ff.).
- 46 *Familiars* 13.6 (3:76, 149–50); and see 1.4 (1:24, 3–4): “visendi tantum studio et iuvenili quodam ardore peragravi.”
- 47 *Familiars* 19.15 (3:339, 5–9). If this is an inversion of Tacitus, *Germania* 2.1: “quis . . . Italia relicta Germaniam peteret . . . nisi si patria sit?,” it appears not to have been noticed.
- 48 *Familiars* 1.5 (1:28, 9–24). For his reticence to learn foreign languages, especially French, Petrarch might have taken on the Davidic consideration of the language of one’s enemies as inherently wicked. See, e.g., Psalm 57:5 and 59:8.
- 49 *Familiars* 1.5 (1:29, 37–51).
- 50 *Familiars* 1.5 (1:29, 53 ff.).
- 51 See Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 243–56.
- 52 *Familiars* 1.5 (1:30, 65, 31, and 99 respectively); and see Godman, “Empathy with Aliens: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli,” 77 and 79, explaining that “nostalgia for an imperial past averted Petrarch’s gaze from the German present,” but arrested Poggio Bracciolini’s attention.
- 53 See Klaus Voigt, *Italienische Berichte aus dem spätmittelalterlichen Deutschland: Von Francesco Petrarca zu Andrea de’ Franceschi (1333–1492)* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1973), 24–33; Klaus Heitmann, *Das italienische Deutschlandbild in seiner Geschichte*, vol. 1, *Von den Anfängen bis 1800* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003).
- 54 *Familiars* 18.1 (3:268, 108).
- 55 *Familiars* 18.1 (3:268, 114–16).
- 56 *Familiars* 19.12 (3:336, 13–14).
- 57 See Ellen Widder, *Itinerar und Politik: Studien zu Reiseherrschaft Karls IV. südlich der Alpen* (Köln: Böhlau 1993), 358 ff.; František Smahel, *Die Prager Universität im Mittelalter: Gesammelte Aufsätze / The Charles University in the Middle Ages: Selected Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 3–50.
- 58 *Familiars* 21.1 (4:52, 28–32).
- 59 *Familiars* 21.1 (4:52, 34–35).
- 60 Godman, “Empathy with Aliens: Poggio Bracciolini and Niccolò Niccoli,” 70–71.

- 61 See Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, vol. 1, *Deutsche Geschichte vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000), 5 ff.; Philipp Jacks, *The Antiquarian and the Myth of Antiquity: The Origins of Rome in Renaissance Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 68 ff.
- 62 Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 1:5 ff.
- 63 *Familiares* 6.2 (2:58, 117).