Fame and the Solitary Life: Rethinking the Liberal Arts through the Paradoxes of Petrarchan Humanism

Steve Baker
Columbia University

"When we are free from necessary business and other concerns
we are eager to see or to hear or to learn."[1]
– Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, 13 (trans. M. T. Griffin)

Much has been made of Petrarch's momentous discovery of Cicero's collection of familiar letters to his friend Atticus, the so-called *Ad Atticum*.[2] Uncovered in 1345 in Verona, it marked a decisive turning point in the development of Petrarch's work.[3] Yet, relatively little has been made of Petrarch's analogous discovery in 1333 of Cicero's *Pro Archia*.[4] Its importance

[1] "Cum sumus necessariis negotiis, curisque vacui, tum avemus aliquid videre, audire, discere."

[2] On Petrarch's discovery of *Ad Atticum* in 1345, see Kirkham, "A Life's Work" in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, p. 21 ff.: "As a 'born-again' ancient, Petrarch made his greatest manuscript discovery in the Verona cathedral library, the sixteen books of Cicero's *Ad Atticum* along with two minor collections, to the Roman orator's brother Quintus and to Brutus. From these, which the classics detective excitedly transcribed over several weeks in the spring of 1345 (a period when he also came to know Dante's son Pietro Alighieri), Petrarch took the tremendous idea of collecting his own letters." See also Billanovich, "Dall'*Epystolarum mearum ad diversos liber* ai *Rerum familiarium libri XXIV*," pp. 1-55.

[3] On the influence of the *Ad Atticum* on Petrarch and Renaissance letters, see Witt, "Medieval *Ars Dictaminis* and the Beginnings of Humanism: A New Construction of the Problem"; Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, pp. 49 ff.; and Fantazzi, "General Introduction" in Vives, *De conscribendis epistolis*.

[4] On Petrarch's discovery of the *Pro Archia*, see *Seniles* XVI, 1. During a grand northern European tour he took under the aegis of his Colonna patronage in 1333, Petrarch made a detour to visit a monastery in Liege (Belgium) reputed to be rich in manuscripts. It was there that he found and quickly copied two hitherto unknown Ciceronian orations, the *Pro Archia* and the apocryphal *Ad milites romanae*, one of which he quickly copied and had a friend copy the other. Since Petrarch's travel expenses were covered by the Colonna, Wilkins (*Studies in the Life and Work of Petrarch*, pp. 5-8) assumes that he probably also served in some kind of official way, either as messenger or cultural attaché or diplomat. Regarding Petrarch's service as "capellanus continuus commensalis" to the Colonna family, see Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca*, pp. 28-47.

cannot be overstated.[5] Stumbling upon the neglected manuscript in a monastery library in Liège, the twenty-nine-year-old recent law school drop-out struck on not only an impassioned validation of his decision to pursue a life in letters but also a platform from which to launch the cultural revolution that would become Renaissance humanism.[6]

In just the first few pages of the Roman orator's defense of the poet Archias, Petrarch found what would become the blueprint for much of his long and illustrious career.[7] With its themes of the "elevating influence of poetry" (III, 6), the role of friendship and patronage in the professional poet's life (III, 6), the question of pan-Italian Roman citizenship under the *Lex Iulia* (IV, 6-7), and its praise of literary studies (VI, 12-14), the *Pro Archia* resonates in far-ranging ways through Petrarch's humanistic project: from his literary works to his epistolary politics, from his neo-Latin epic, the *Africa*, to his support for Cola di Rienzo's quixotic attempt to resurrect the Roman republic and unify Italy.

[5] See Pastore Stocchi, *Petrarca e i potenti della terra*, pp. 49-50; Pastore Stocchi, *Introduzione* in Petrarca, *Opere latine*, pp. 15-17; and Guglielminetti, *Petrarca e il petrarchismo*, pp. 33.

[6] See Cicero, *Pro Archia*, II, 4: "Nam ut primum ex pueris excessit Archias atque ab eis artibus quibus aetas puerilis ad humanitatem informari solet, se ad scribendi studium contulit." ("As soon as Archias had left behind him his boyhood, and those influences which mould and elevate his boyish mind, he applied himself to the pursuit of a literary career.") All translations of the *Pro Archia* are from the Loeb edition translated by Watts. On the origins of humanism, see also Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism"; Weiss, *The Dawn of Italian Humanism*; Witt, "Medieval Italian Cutlure and the Origins of Humanism as a Stylistic Ideal," pp. 29-70.

[7] The symphonic opening sentence of the oration validates the value of literary pursuits in the legal profession (Cicero, *Pro Archia*, I, 1): "Si quid est in me ingeni, iudices, quod sentio quam sit exiguum, aut si qua exercitatio dicendi, in qua me non infitior mediocriter esse versatum, aut si huiusce rei ratio aliqua ab optimarum artium studiis ac disciplina profecta, a qua ego nullum confiteor aetatis meae tempus abhorruisse, earum rerum omnium vel in primis hic A. Licinius fructum a me repetere prope suo iure debet" ("Whatever talent I possess (and I realize its limitations), whatever be my oratorical experience (and I do not deny that my practice herein has been not inconsiderable), whatever knowledge of the theoretical side of my profession I may have derived from a devoted literary apprenticeship (and I admit that at no period of my life has the acquisition of such knowledge been repellent to me), – to any advantage that may be derived from all these my friend Aulus Licinius has a pre-eminent claim, which belongs to him almost of right").

The *Pro Archia* is not so much a defense of an individual poet as it is a panegyric on the importance of the liberal arts and those who cultivate them.[8] The value of humanistic studies, according to Cicero,[9] lies in their usefulness in matters of state and the expansion of its sphere of influence: "literature exalts the nation whose high deeds it sings."[10] In praising poets for the benefit they bring to the life of the republic and its citizens by incentivizing them with the promise of immortality for their noteworthy deeds, Cicero's *Pro Archia* presents the deep

[8] Cicero, *Pro Archia*, I, 2: "Etenim omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent habent quoddam commune vinculum et quasi cognatione quadam inter se continentur." ("Indeed, the subtle bond of a mutual relationship links together all arts which have any bearing upon the common life of mankind.") The way Cicero phrases the common bond that all arts have with each other is richer than Watts' English translation here suggests. In the original: "quasi cognatione quadam," in English literally means: "as though by a kind of kindred relationship," or "by a sort of, as it were, blood relationship." Cicero qualifies *cognatione* with both *quasi* and *quadam* because he is using the term, which technically describes a familial, blood relationship, metaphorically (see, also, *quoddam commune* above and *quasi divino quodam spiritu*, further down in the passage). These are the exaggerated signposts he is deploying in order to make it clear that he is asking his audience to indulge him as he uses in his defense a new style of speaking ("*novum genus dicendi*"), one suited more to the nature of his client, a poet, than to a court of law. On the usefulness of literary studies, see also, Cicero, *Pro Archia*, VI, 13: "[...] ex his studiis haec quoque crescit oratio et facultas, quae quantacumque in me est, numquam amicorum periculis defuit" ("[...] my devotion to letters strengthens my oratorical powers, and these, such as they are, have never failed my friends in their hour of peril").

[9] Cicero, *Pro Archia*, VI, 12: "Ego vero fateor me his studiis esse deditum: ceteros pudeat, si qui se ita litteris abdiderunt ut nihil possint ex eis neque ad communem adferre fructum, neque in aspectum lucemque proferre" ("I am a votary of literature, and make the confession unashamed; shame belongs rather to the bookish recluse, who knows not how to apply his reading to the good of his fellows, or to manifest its fruits to the eyes of all").

[10] See Cicero, *Pro Archia*, X, 23: "Propterea quod Graeca leguntur in omnibus fere gentibus, Latina suis finibus, exiguis sane, continentur. Qua re si res eae quas gessimus orbis terrae regionibus definiuntur, cupere debemus, quo manuum nostrarum tela pervenerint, eodem gloriam famamque penetrare: quod cum ipsis populis de quorum rebus scribitur, haec ampla sunt, tum eis certe, qui de vita gloriae causa dimicant, hoc maximum et periculorum incitamentum est et laborum" ("Greek literature is read in nearly every nation under heaven, while the vogue of Latin is confined to its own boundaries, and they are, we must grant, narrow. Seeing therefore, that the activities of our race know no barrier save the limits of the round earth, we ought to be ambitious that whithersoever our arms have penetrated there also our fame and glory should extend; literature exalts the nation whose high deeds it sings, and at the same time there can be no doubt that those who stake their lives to fight in honor's cause find therein a lofty incentive to peril and endeavor").

affiliation between politics and literary or artistic production.[11] Petrarch's encounter with the poet Archias through Cicero will forever assure a place for poetry at the center of the vocation of the humanist. It played, for example, a decisive role at this early stage in his life seeing that it also inspired the address he delivered eight years later when he was crowned poet laureate on the Capitoline Hill in Rome on Easter Sunday in 1341.[12]

Deemed the "first manifesto of the Renaissance" by Ernest Hatch Wilkins, Petrarch's *Coronation Oration* is a classically inspired treatise that valorizes the role of the poet in society.[13] Like Cicero in the *Pro Archia*,[14] and as Ennius did before him, Petrarch places poets in

[11] See Pastore Stocchi, *Petrarca e i potenti della terra*, pp. 49-50: "Ma un'esaltazione della poesia come quella che il Petrarca scoperse e divulgò, a partire dal 1333, con l'orazione ciceroniana *Pro Archia*, ammetteva appunto un'accezione più ampia, per la quale la persona stessa del poeta era esaltata e consacrata come augusta e influente. D'altro canto, le biografie di Orazio o di Virgilio, ma anche, per esempio, di Aristotele, rilette in questa luce, apparivano confermare una speciale attitudine del poeta e del filosofo a definirsi quale *amicus principis* per eccellenza, potenzialmente affiancabile ai potenti terreni in una sorta di diarchia: illusione carezzata ancora, fino alla morte di Lorenzo de Medici, dal Poliziano e da altri intellettuali della cerchia medicea. Ma se mai questa illusione egemonica, che a un certo numero di umanisti affermati non accordò mai se non qualche cancellierato e molte cadute in disgrazia, poté sembrare vicina a realizzarsi per davvero, questo avvenne con il Petrarca: primo e probabilmente unico letterato moderno cui sia stato così universalmente riconosciuto un primato anche sociale, non per la 'gratia Dei' che incoraggiava Dante a parlare, ma per il carisma della sua intelligenza e del suo sapere."

[12] See *Fam.* IV, 8 to Barbato da Sulmona: "Idibus Aprilis, anno etatis huius ultime millesimo trecentesimo quadragesimo primo, in Capitolio Romano, magna populi frequentia et ingenti gaudio, peractum est quod nudiustertius de me rex apud Neapolim decreverat: Ursus Anguillarie, comes ac senator, prealti vir ingenii, regio iudicio probatum laureis frondibus insignivit" ("On the Ides of April, and in the 1,341st year of this age, on the Roman Capitoline, in the presence of a large multitude and with great joy, there occurred what the King of Naples had decreed for me the day before yesterday; Orso dell'Anguillara, a friend and senator, a man of lofty talents, honored me with the laurel crown as approved by the King's judgment"). A majority of book IV of the *Familiares* is dedicated to recounting the vicissitudes surrounding the coronation though he never describes many of the specific details of the event itself.

[13] For the manifesto pronouncement, see Wilkins, "Petrarch's *Coronation Oration*," p. 300. For a reconstruction of the events surrounding the coronation, see Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca: The First Modern Man of Letters (His Life and Correspondence: A Study of the Early Fourteenth Century 1304-1347)*, II, pp. 104-52; Wilkins, "The Coronation of Petrarch." See also Pastore Stocchi, *Petrarca e i potenti della terra*, pp. 50: "Il riconoscimento, cioè, dell'umanista quale titolare di uno *status* eccezionale, che delle sue competenze trae vantaggio per collocarlo ai vertici del corpo sociale. Era, certo, un'utopia effimera, nutrita a sua volta di altre più antiche utopie accreditate dalla tradizione classica con argomenti più or meno speciosi."

league with princes – not least of all because the same laurel wreath adorns both poets, when crowned with literary glory, and princes, in a triumphal military procession.[15] The prince needs the poet in order to ensure that the glory of his deeds will endure long into the collective memory of posterity.[16] The poet needs the prince for such favors and privileges patronage can provide, namely, the protection of the very *otium* or leisure necessary to produce such timeless works of commemorative art.[17]

---

[14] The *Pro Archia* is first mentioned by name in Petrarch's "The Coronation Oration," p. 301: "Take not my word for this, but Cicero's, who in his oration for Aulus Licinius Archias has this to say of poets: 'We have it upon the authority of the most learned men that whereas the poet attains through his very nature, is moved by the energy that is within his mind, and is as it were inspired by a divine inbreathing – so that Ennius fairly calls poets sacred in their own right, since they appear to be commended to us by the possession of a divine gift.'" And again toward the end at Petrarch, "The Coronation Oration," p. 308: "Certain illustrious men, foreseeing such a possibility, have kept poets with them and held them in high honor, so that there might be someone who would hand down their praises to posterity – a matter carefully set forth by Cicero in his oration for Aulus Licinius Archias, to which I have already referred." See Petrarch, "The Coronation Oration," p. 309, where the full Ciceronian passage with the anecdote itself is quoted verbatim.

[15] On Petrarch's linking of poets to princes by means of the honor of the laurel crown, see Wilkins, "The Coronation of Petrarch," pp. 155-97; for an analysis of his oration, see especially pp. 172-9. See also Petrarca, *Rvf*. 321 and 322 and the companion piece by Giacomo Colonna congratulating him on the coronation cited in the notes of most editions of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (*Rvf*. 322), "Se le parti del mio destrutte." See also Petrarca, *Collatio inter Scipionem Alexandrum Hanibalem et Pyrrum* in Martellotti, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, pp. 321-46.

[16] Petrarch, "The Coronation Oration," p. 308: "Many mighty men and warriors, and others who have deserved eternal memory have passed into oblivion simply because they had not the good fortune to be recorded by capable authors, as Horace says so well in his *Odes*: "Many mighty men lived before Agamemnon, but all are buried in a tearless night," and the reason follows: "since they lack an inspired bard" (Horace, IV 9, 25-28). *Certain illustrious men, foreseeing such a possibility, have kept poets with them and held them in high honor*, so that there might be someone who would hand down their praises to posterity – a matter carefully set forth by Cicero in his oration for Aulus Licinius Archias, to which I have already referred."

[17] As Luisa Secchi Tarugi rightly emphasizes, Petrarch wavers between *otium* and *negotium*, between withdrawn study and political and social passion, fully aware of the fundamental role of the intellectual in society. The idealized image of his humanist hero is a paradoxical mix of seemingly contradictory qualities, action and contemplation, public virtue and private diligence. Just such a figure makes an appearance in texts as early as his coronation oration of 1341. See Secchi Tarugi, *Petrarca e l'umanesimo.*

Yet the value of solitude is not reserved for the poet in this ancient formulation of the equation. Solitude was seen as a precious resource even for the statesman. The very first exemplum from classical antiquity Petrarch places under the first subheading of the first book of his *Rerum memorandarum libri*, the one dedicated to the virtue of solitude, is none other than the great "solitudinis amator," Scipio Africanus, who is not necessarily the first person you would associate to a life of withdrawal and studious leisure. The great general and man of action who worked to defeat Hannibal in the time of the Carthaginian threat was remembered even in antiquity as someone who cherished every precious moment he could spend some time alone with his thoughts as well as with his most trusted friends.[18] This is what made him great. This is what makes him the paragon of Petrarch's ideal humanist hero: someone who strikes the kind of balance between the active and the contemplative, the private and the public, that nevertheless leads him to great achievement on the stage of history.

As it turns out, contrary to popular belief, Petrarch was much more than a sylvan love poet, the self-proclaimed solitary singer of Laura whose authorship of a tract on the virtues of the life of solitude is more nuanced and complex than a superficial reading might suggest. In fact, if we take a closer look at what Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* is all about I think we'll see just how idiosyncratic his early modern brand of humanism really is. Book II of the work opens with a long list of hermits. He tells us just enough about each of them to find out that they all have something paradoxical in common. Despite their withdrawal from the world of human affairs, they all earned great recognition and even fame in society. Some are more "famous" than others, but he ends his list with a slightly longer description of St. Anthony,[19] the religious recluse par

[18] Valerius Maximus, Chap. VIII, 8: "Since leisure appears to be diametrically opposed to diligence and study, it has the best claim to be subjoined to them, not leisure by which efficiency loses strength but by which it is revived. For the former is to be avoided even by the lazy, the latter is sometimes to be sought even by the energetic, so that as to the first they do not lead a life of perpetual inactivity, and as to the second that by timely intermission of work they may come the brisker to its resumption. / That illustrious pair of true friends, Scipio and Laelius, joined one to another by the bond of affection and also by partnership in all virtues, just as they followed the path of active life with equal tread, so did they find relief together in mental relaxations. For it is agreed that they used to pick up shells and pebbles wandering on the beaches of Caieta and Laurentum, and P. Crassus often declared that he had learned this from his his father-in-law Scaevola, who was Laelius' son-in-law."

[19] Granted, some are more "famous" than others, but he ends his list with a longer biographical sketch of one of the most famous hermits of all Antonio, about whom he writes to Boccaccio in Sen. XVII, 2 in a

excellence who cultivated such a reputation for wisdom and restraint – earning for himself so much admiration and respect –, that he was even sought out by the emperors of Rome and invited into relationships of "*amicitia*" with them for the sage advice he could lavish on them.

To anyone familiar with Petrarch's career not only as the solitary singer of Laura, but also as public intellectual, court advisor and diplomat, this might ring a bell. So much of this mini-hagiography resonates with Petrarch's own biography right down to the word choice and focus on his relations with those in positions of power. In fact, he even goes on to emphasize the fact that Anthony found himself in such intimate interaction with the emperor that he exchanged "familiar" letters with them on a regular basis, as Petrarch himself did with dozens of the powerful figures not only in the papal court at Avignon, but also in the centers of power throughout Italy and across Europe.[20]

And so, as early as this late medieval moment of cultural transition and intellectual rebirth, the study of eloquence and philosophy – in short, the foundations of a liberal education – was intended for the betterment of society. The binary of contemplative and active was not a mutually exclusive one. And as we can see from his choice of examples, even the religious was not excluded from the realm of human concerns.

It is no mystery then that Petrarch's cultivation of the solitary life was never meant to be taken as an end in itself. As it was in antiquity and would be in the later tradition of Renaissance humanism, the *studia humanitatis* were always meant to bolster an individual's participation and accomplishment in other areas of life. Time outside the fray spent learning in quiet contemplation, cultivating the self, is what gives the Petrarchan humanist the personal fortitude necessary for productive engagement with the world of human affairs. Petrarchan humanism synthesized the contemplative and the active lives.

---

comparison between their humble friendship and the one cultivated between Anthony and St. Paul of Thebes (Paul the Theban). Theirs is another exemplary case of intimacy between hermits, humble men dedicated to learning and letters, with little in the way of earthly goods to their name. As if the two had anything to do with each other: riches and friendship.

[20] Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, II, i, chapter 2, p. 192: "I might go on to tell [...] how Roman Emperors, attracted by the miracle of his fame, addressed letters to him with the reverence due to a father and were immensely delighted when they were accorded the honor of a reply."

Petrarch's panegyric *On the Solitary Life* opens with an exhortation to the reader to cultivate their soul at least as much as they might busy themselves with a myriad other trifles in their daily lives. But what is the solitary life good for?[21] First on the list is to serve God, which he deems the only truly free and happy occupation of our souls; next is to cultivate our *ingegno*, namely, our intellect, our creativity, our mind; lastly, it is for meditation and writing, for planning and creating something to leave behind for posterity to remember us by, and thus to stop the fleeing of time and lengthen our all too brief lives through creative output. And so he prescribes a venue for this brand of solitude that is conducive not only to introspection but also to culture. It should be a place friendly to books, since literary concerns should also be at the forefront of ones leisurely activities.

He also makes it clear that by solitude he does not necessarily mean being always strictly alone, that kind of extreme solitude he calls inhuman. Further layering paradox upon paradox, for Petrarch, one should populate their solitude with choice company.[22]

> "Besides," he says, "I never persuaded those for whom I said solitude was advantageous that in their desire for solitude they should despise the laws of friendship. I bade them fly from crowds and not from friends. [...] Let his leisure be modest and gentle, not rude; let his solitude be tranquil, not savage; in short, let it be solitude and not barbarism."[23]

Inhuman solitude is missing its "participe," its companion, its friend.

> "It will never be my view," he continues, "that solitude is disturbed by the presence of a friend, but that it is enriched. […] I would share my solitude like everything else with my friends, believing that Seneca spoke with true humanity when he said that 'no good thing is pleasant to possess without friends to share it' (Epistles, 6). Solitude is a great and sweet possession."[24]

---

[21] Petrarch, *De vita solitaria*, p. 327

[22] Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, p. 24: "As is well known the ancients thought friends indispensable to human life, indeed that a life without friends was not really worth living. In holding this view they gave little consideration to the idea that we need the help of friends in misfortune; on the contrary, they rather thought that there can be no happiness or good fortune for anyone unless a friend shares in the joy of it."

[23] Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, I, v, chapter 4, 162.

[24] Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, I, v, chapter 4, 163-5.

What is solitude with friends, this state of being "alone together," but another of the classic oxymorons of Petrarchan poetics like the famous "icy fire," "sugared grief" and "sour delight" of his love lyrics. The difference between extreme and inhuman solitude that desires only pure withdrawal and the more humane version that seeks not only to be alone but also to be in company, that wants to learn but also teach, to listen as well as speak, represents in the broadest sense one of the differences between Epicureanism and Stoicism. It's a two-way road and which is where Seneca's "humanius dictum," his most human saying comes in: there is nothing worth having unless you have a friend (to enjoy it with you).

By now it should be apparent that Petrarch has a very specific genealogy in mind when he extols the virtues of a life of solitary leisure. Never does it imply complete withdrawal from the activities of civic life. Instead, it implies the balanced approach one should take to the affairs of the society of man.[25]

Petrarch transforms retired leisure into a valuable life devoted to liberal studies and friendship. He says that he has yet to see any of his contemporaries (322, 326, 328) make a successful contribution to the public welfare. Those who devote themselves exclusively to public service risk losing control of their own lives, passions and minds. Hence his praise for Scipio Afrianus, the statesman who perfectly embodies, in Petrarch's view, the right balance of the active and the contemplative. With Petrarch the ethos of *otium* begins to transform the goal of everyday life into one involving self-knowledge and the cultivation of individual talents, a life populated by good friends and good books.

[25] Sen. XVII, 3; Bernardo, p. 655: "[…] et occupatio mea maior et tempus angustum erat, idque ipsum, ut nosti, bellicis undique motibus inquietum, a quibus etsi animo procul absim, nequeo tamen fluctuante republica non moveri." (Sen. XVII, 3, 1). He puts it rather poignantly in one of the *Seniles* he addresses to Boccaccio towards the end of his life. He sums up his attitude towards the balance between withdrawal and involvement thus: "[…] and at that, as you know, I was disturbed by war breaking our on all sides. Though I am far from sympathizing with it, I still cannot avoid being disturbed by the ups and downs of the republic." Moments like this – and there are many, particularly as one delves deeper into his corpus of letters – show any picture of a happily withdrawn hermit Petrarch, quietly whittling away his days over his studies and at peace, to be overly optimistic. Instead, he was subject to all the fluctuations, upheavals and disorder that plagued Italy in the mid-fourteenth century. The contingencies of the historical moment in which he lived incessantly impinged on his living, no matter how much in his writings he is able to transcend to the timelessness that so much of what his writing has achieved, which is what made those precious moments of solitary peace and quiet all the more valuable. It is perhaps also fitting that these remarks regarding the patience required in order to maintain one's soul at peace even in the face of adversity, in this case threats of violence and destruction with the outbreak of war menacing from all sides, are found in the prefatory remarks to the letter in which Petrarch's Latin translation of Boccaccio's *Griselda* is found. In some ways it could also give us some clues as to how Petrarch read the story of the steadfastness of Boccaccio's "insigna uxor."

> "Whoever invades him in this retreat should have occasion to marvel that humanity, which is exiled from the cities, inhabits the wilderness and that while he has found bears and lions in populous places, in solitude he has discovered angelic man. Such is my feeling in the matter, and this I hold to be the middle of the road between the two extremes."[26]

In the oasis of our universities these are the kind of qualities that we as liberal arts educators instill in our students, they are what will ultimately make our students more responsible citizens, pave the way to them becoming empowered leaders and lead them to live more rewarding richer lives. And so with Petrarch I say, "read the classics and be free." It is the imaginative venture of Petrarchan leisure to allow private individuals, who are not necessarily religious contemplatives or philosophers, time to cultivate the virtues of a higher life of the mind and spirit. And that's what a liberal education is for: a socially mandated four years of retreat from the tempest of the world to do just this, so that no matter what they go on to do in life they will have the tools succeed when the tempest comes a calling as it always inevitably does.

[26] Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, I, v, chapter 4, 162.