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Petrarchan Passions: Affects and Community-Formation in the Renaissance World

Bernhard Huss / Timothy Kircher / Gur Zak (Hgg.)

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Introduction

This volume is the result of the international workshop "Affects and Community-Formation in the Petrarchan world", which was hosted online by the *Italienzentrum of Freie Universität Berlin* on March 11-12, 2021. The workshop was held by the generous support of the Cluster of Excellence *Temporal Communities: Doing Literature in a Global Perspective* (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, EXC 2020 – Project ID 3900608380) as well as that of the *Italienzentrum of Freie Universität Berlin*; research for this volume was also supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant number 1587/19). The workshop and the articles presented here all form part of the project "Petrarchan Worlds", directed by Bernhard Huss in Research Area 1, "Competing Communities", of the above-mentioned Cluster of Excellence.

"Affects", "passions", or "emotions" are omnipresent in Petrarch's writings.[1] For many, Petrarch is in fact responsible, more than any other poet, for fashioning the very modern conception of love, teaching countless subsequent lovers and poets how to feel towards their beloveds – or at least how to express those feelings in writing. But love is not the only passion that is frequently expressed in Petrarch's writings. Sorrow, compassion, anger, envy (despite his repeated claims not to have been affected by this particular passion), are repeatedly represented and discussed in his voluminous works and play a crucial role in his interactions with friends, patrons, favorite authors, and readers.

In recent years, scholars have been ever more interested in the history of the emotions as well as in the way the experience and representation of passions serve to fashion communities. Sharing in passions – whether joyful or sorrowful – is perceived as a crucial means of bringing together the members of a community and establish a sense of belonging. Affective bonds are literally the ties that bind. As the historians Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy write:

> Experiencing an emotion can trigger a chain reaction: the affected individual shares their emotional experience with others, who in turn pass on the sensation. When members of a social group experience an emotional event together, they interact in an intense manner. These interactions can revitalize or confirm their sense of belonging to the group; conversely, they can also bring about new groupings.[2]

Drawing upon this recent "affective turn" in the scholarship and the general interest in the relationship between affects and community-formation, the essays in this volume seek to examine the ways in which Petrarch's elaborate and complex engagements with the passions served to fashion "new groupings" and create different types of emotional, intellectual, and political communities in early modern Europe. Analyzing Petrarch's vernacular as well as Latin works – which are all-too-often examined separately in the scholarship – the following essays give particular attention to the rhetorical and literary strategies through which Petrarch consciously sought to fashion new communities of readers. At the same time, the following articles also probe the reception of Petrarch's writings in the early modern period and thus the actual nature of the communities that his works fostered.

The affective formation of communities, as scholars have pointed out, also has a tendency to exclude and marginalize. To quote Bouquet and Nagy again: "by creating or reaffirming the identity of a group, emotion also creates rejection, marginalization, exclusion, and opposition" (BOUQUET/NAGY 2018: 217). Taking such assertions into consideration, the following essays are attuned to the exclusivist and elitist dimensions of Petrarch's community-building, yet they recognize these dimensions without losing sight of

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[1] A note on terminology: the term "emotions" came into common use in English only in the nineteenth century, superseding a variety of English terms, including "passions" and "affects". In medieval Latin as well as the emerging vernacular languages of the Middle Ages, the terms "passio", "affectus", and "perturbatio" were commonly employed, including by Petrarch. In this volume we tried to follow as closely as possible Petrarch's own terminology, yet we also employed at times the modern term "emotions" for the sake of clarity and variation. On the history of the term "emotion", see COPELAND 2021: 15 and DIXON 2006. For a detailed review of the issue and the various emotion words employed during the Middle Ages, see ROSENWEIN 2016.

[2] BOUQUET/NAGY 2018: 217. See also the discussion in Jennifer Rushworth's article in this volume.

the universal aspirations of his moral and literary vision. One of the strengths of this volume, we believe, resides in the way the individual essays – and the dialogues among them – bring to light the tensions over community-formation that are central to Petrarch's own writings. In the remainder of this preface, we would like to offer a brief summary of the articles of the volume, in a manner that will highlight the threads that bind them.

In the opening article, Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski draws upon current "place attachment" theory to analyze Petrarch's strong and complex attachment to the Vaucluse. As Wojciehowski shows, Petrarch's elaborate portrayals of the place – often suffused with his desire for Laura – fashioned an "affective community" of devout followers who became themselves strongly attached to the Vaucluse and the memories of the poet inscribed there – an emotional phenomenon that remarkably continues to this very day.

Concentrating on the *Canzoniere* as well as on *Bucolicum carmen* 11, Jennifer Rushworth goes on in the following article to analyze Petrarch's experience of grief and mourning. Rushworth elucidates what she sees as Petrarch's oscillation between "commune dolor" and "dolore unico". Although he recognized the healing power of communal grief, of the sharing in sorrow, Petrarch, according to Rushworth, often asserts the uniqueness of his sorrow and relishes the individuality it provides him with. He thereby remains, in Rushworth's suggestive term (taken from Sarah Ahmed), "affect alien".

The following intervention, by Timothy Kircher, seeks to bridge the gap between the vernacular poet of the *Canzoniere* and the humanist moral philosopher of the *Familiares* by discussing the poetic conscience that governs both works. This conscience, according to Kircher, is defined by Petrarch's affective engagement with time, community, and death. In canzone 129 as much as in the letters he addressed to Francesco Nelli, Kircher shows, Petrarch's reflections on the passage of time fashion a community of readers and writers who are bound together by their common humanity – above all their awareness of the inevitability of death and the need to "take time", as it were, so as to confront the inescapable fact of its passing.

The ensuing three articles turn to explore the relationship between passions, rhetorical strategies, and community-formation in Petrarch's Latin writings. In the first article in the series, Igor Candido discusses Petrarch's construction of a textual community of friends in and through his treatise *De vita solitaria*. This construction, as Candido argues, is based as much on exclusion as on inclusion, as Petrarch directs his praise of solitude to the group of elite readers who are tied to him through the bond of friendship and who are able to fathom what he describes as his unpopular and subversive ideals of solitude.

In the following article, Bernhard Huss analyzes Petrarch's massive compendium of moral dialogues, the *De remediis utriusque fortune*, and highlights how Petrarch sought to address in the work the existential anxieties of the entire *genus humanum*. According to Huss, the dialogues between the figure of *Ratio* and the affects in the *De remediis* do not present a dualistic and hierarchical approach to the human soul but rather a monistic one, which stresses the interdependence and co-existence of reason and passions within the soul. Discussing the key dialogue 2.113, Huss shows how the affective figure of *Dolor* utilizes reason in her arguments, while that of *Ratio* resorts to affective contentions. It is precisely this a-hierarchical commixture of reason and affects, Huss contends, that allowed the *De remediis* to speak so intimately to a massive audience in early modern Europe, creating thereby a truly universal community of readers.

In the subsequent article of the series, Romana Brovia also analyzes the *De remediis*, alongside another of Petrarch's moral dialogues – the *Secretum*. Brovia directs our attention to the distinct intellectual and affective communities that Petrarch sought to address in each work. The *Secretum*, Brovia argues, is replete with intertextual allusions and philological subtleties, which call for a particularly learned audience that could decipher its meaning. The *De remediis*, by contrast, is more straightforward in its approach in her view and is addressed to an elite, yet less learned, community of readers – primarily those who populated the courts of power of Petrarch's day. Not coincidentally, as Brovia demonstrates, while the *Secretum* was read mainly in monastic and religious circles in early modern Europe, the *De remediis* enjoyed a wide readership within the courts.

The final two articles turn to Petrarch's engagement with particular passions – namely compassion and sorrow – and the literary and philosophical reception of his views by later humanists. Drawing upon Barbara

Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities", Gur Zak examines the understanding and role of compassion in selected works of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Leonardo Bruni. Zak shows how Petrarch and his humanist followers constituted an emotional community that secularized in significant ways late medieval understandings of compassion. At the same time, Zak also highlights the tensions over the use of compassion within the humanist emotional community: while Petrarch conceived of compassion as the foundation of a global and elite community of friends, Boccaccio and Bruni saw it as the basis of a local, and more inclusive, civic community.

In the following article, which closes the volume, Aileen Feng examines the question of gendered mourning in Petrarch's letters, showing how he differentiated between an "effeminate" capitulation to sorrow and a "manly" overcoming of grief. Feng then explores how the humanist Isotta Nogarola adopted – and at the same time problematized – Petrarchan tropes and examples in her own elaborate letter of consolation to Marcello upon the death of his son. Nogarola, as Feng shows, foregrounds her own personal sorrow and the need to acknowledge human vulnerability as an inherent part of the consolatory process. In this respect, Feng, like Zak, demonstrates the rifts and oscillations that characterized the humanist emotional community, this time with respect to its attitude to sorrow and consolation.

The workshop was originally supposed to take place in Berlin in the fall of 2020. However, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic led first to its postponement and ultimately to the decision to hold it virtually. While we were disappointed not to be able to meet in person, we were happy to discover that the transition to an on-line format did not prevent the workshop from becoming a truly stimulating and rewarding scholarly exchange, one which fashioned for a space of two days another instance of a Petrarchan affective and intellectual community. We can only hope that the energies that dominated the workshop and this volume will help foster many new groupings.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the team of FU's Italienzentrum, namely to Sabine Greiner, for the organization of the workshop as well as to Emily Oberkönig, Jana Renkert, Sara Scrinzi and our colleague Selene Maria Vatteroni for their help with the preparation of this volume.

Berlin/Greensboro, NC/Jerusalem, July 2022

Bernhard Huss   Timothy Kircher   Gur Zak

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Petrarch and the Vaucluse: Building a Virtual Community through Place Attachment

Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski (University of Texas at Austin)

1. "Locus aptissimus"

In 1337 Francis Petrarch moved from Avignon to the Vaucluse. He had acquired a small property on the right bank of the Sorgue, near the crystalline spring bearing the same name. He would live in this exceptionally beautiful and sparsely populated place on and off until 1353, for a total of about ten years. In this isolated location, a perfect writer's retreat, Petrarch was highly productive, composing poetry in Italian and Latin, a large number of letters, and several of his longer philosophical and poetic works.

The Vaucluse was a place that he had visited during childhood, as he described in a late-life letter to his friend Guido Sette, Archbishop of Genoa. In that letter he recalled a trip on horseback that the two of them had taken to the headwaters of the Sorgue with Sette's uncle and servants. The young Petrarch was so struck by the beauty of the place that he thought to himself, "En nature mee locus aptissimus, quemque, si dabitur aliquando, magnis urbibus prelaturus sim!" "Here is the perfect place for me; someday, given the chance, I shall choose this over the great cities" (PETRARCA *Sen.* 10.2).[1] Years later Petrarch would realize this dream, leaving behind the chaos and corruption of the Papal Court for the tranquility and seclusion of the Vaucluse, which was close enough to Avignon that the poet could travel back and forth periodically in order to fulfill his obligations to his patron, Cardinal Giovanni Colonna.

Petrarch's relocation to the Vaucluse was, he tells us, regarded as odd and eccentric by many in the papal court who knew him or knew of him.[2] We might compare it to Henry David Thoreau's remove to Walden Pond, away from the safety and community of mid-19th century Concord. Across a wide range of texts, Petrarch invited his readers to imagine his choice, to understand it, and, if they wanted, to identify with it.

In this essay I shall explore Petrarch's attachment to the place that was his home for many years. It was not just its natural beauty that allowed Petrarch to fall in love with the Vaucluse, but also its associations with his beloved Laura; with solitude; and with writing and the creative process. How Petrarch ultimately decided to leave that home is an important part of his story, as well, and an interesting historical example of place 'detachment' that illustrates how and why someone might choose to abandon a once-beloved home in order to pursue a different and potentially better life somewhere else.

I shall also describe a secondary phenomenon – the creation of a community of readers who came to share an attachment to the Vaucluse, which was closely associated with Petrarch's written descriptions of his life there. Finally, I shall describe the continuation and evolution of readers' attachments to the Vaucluse as a preeminent Petrarchan place, long after the poet's death.

Particularly during his first years in residence there, Petrarch's relation to the Vaucluse was closely associated with the woman he loved. Often when he described Laura and the emotions he felt about her, he described the landscape, as well, sometimes imagining her in that landscape. In this essay I will argue that Petrarch's friends and his community of readers shared an imagined bond with the poet that was mediated through his perceptions of a landscape infused with a wide range of feelings, especially desire. These vicariously experienced feelings that Petrarch produced in generations of readers often served as the basis for others' attachments to the Vaucluse and the Sorgue – imagined attachments that could be enhanced by pilgrimage-like visits to the site. In order to make this case, I will rely on a body of theory originating in the field of environmental psychology. 'Place attachment', simply defined, is the emotional bond between an individual or group and a particular location, real or imagined. In the case of the Vaucluse, place attachment

[1] PETRARCA 1955: 104; PETRARCH 2005b, 2: 364.

[2] Petrarch reports the negative reactions of others to his relocation to the Vaucluse in several texts, including *Met.* 1.6, to Giacomo Colonna (1338) and *Variae* 13 to Guglielmo da Pastrengo (1338).

is both real and imagined, and Petrarch built an affective community out of that place. Remarkably, that community still exists today.

In a 1338 letter to his dear friend Giacomo Colonna, Bishop of Lombez and the brother of his patron, Petrarch described his austere life near the headwaters of the Sorgue. Giacomo was the same friend who had humorously suggested that Laura, the poet's beloved, was a figment of the poet's imagination.[3] In his response, one of the metrical epistles, Petrarch described how Laura pursued him in his thoughts and dreams – not as a figment, but as a ghost or succubus. Passing through the thrice-barred door to "claim her rights" over him ("reposcens | mancipium secura suum"), she caused him to awake in terror (PETRARCA *Met.* 1.6, vv. 130-131).

The poet described waking up in tears before dawn. He escaped his house and fled into the woods, only to see her face in the bushes, rocks and stream. Here Petrarch describes a not particularly pleasant experience of the landscape of the Vaucluse – one that was not likely to make anyone want to join Petrarch there. The poet's haunting experience was predicated on solitude and his voluntary confinement in a lonely place.

> Vix mora nostra quidem, licet annua, bis ve semel ve
> congregat optatos Clausa sub Valle sodales.
> Sic pietas est victa locis; at crebra revisit
> littera (. . .)
>
> [Tis much if once or twice a year
> Old friends of mine enter this vale enclosed:
> Distance o'ercomes affection. But their letters
> Visit me constantly (. . .)]
>
> (*Met.* 1.6, vv. 167-170)[4]

Indeed, Petrarch was already building a virtual community through his prolific writings. That community was a geographically dispersed one, connected through letters and occasionally through physical interactions. Petrarch was at the center of that community, and his relationship to a special place – the substitute for a relationship with a special woman – would over time become an element or theme of a communal bond. Petrarch's attachment to the Vaucluse became a stand-in for his desired yet unrealized relationship with Laura – not only in his mind, but in the minds of his readers.

2. Place Attachment Theory

In order to understand the role of the Vaucluse in Petrarch's lifelong construction of an imagined community, I turn to an emerging body of scholarship devoted to understanding our emotional attachments to specific places.[5] Here I define 'place', following social psychologists Irwin Altman and Setha Low, as "space that has been given meaning by individual and group processes" (ALTMAN/LOW 1992: 5). A place can vary in scale or size from small to vast: it can be a room, a house, a neighborhood, a town or city, a landscape, a region or country, or even a continent (LEWICKA 2011: 211). Places are never just places, however. In the words of Theodore Sarbin, places are not "inert geographic entities". Rather, "they can be significant influences in the development and enactment of dramatic encounters the residues of which are the stuff of one's social identity" (SARBIN 2005: 204). The architect and geographer David Seamon explains the concept of place this way:

> Phenomenologically place is not the physical environment separate from people associated with it but, rather, the indivisible, normally unnoticed phenomenon of person-or-people-experiencing-place. This phenomenon is

[3] Petrarch replied to Giovanni Colonna in *Fam.* 2.9, assuring him that Laura was indeed real.
[4] *Met.* 1.6, in PETRARCA 1951: 734; WILKINS 1958: 8.
[5] On the evolution of place studies and place attachment theory, see LEWICKA 2011.

> typically multivalent, complex, and dynamic. It incorporates generative processes through which a place and its experiences and meanings, including place attachment, shift or remain the same. (SEAMON 2014: 11)

In Seamon's view, our attachments to specific places depend on several factors, including our sense of rootedness and our degrees of personal and social involvement, the geographical and cultural qualities of places, the quality of life there, environmental aesthetics, and the individual and group identities we assume in those places (SEAMON 2014: 12). Place attachment theorists understand place relationally and interactively. It is crucial to recognize that our attachments to places are not necessarily about the places themselves, but about the experiences we have there[6] – or the experiences that *someone else* has there – in this case, Petrarch, much of whose literary output was defined by his relation to the Vaucluse: the Laura place, as well as the *Not-Laura* place.

Because attachments to places unfold and change over time, theorists have developed the notion of "place-in-process" in order to highlight "the characteristics of dynamism and volatility" that define our experiences of place, along with the "movement, interactivity, and continuous birth" associated with it.[7] Place-in-process might be understood, then, as a binding, unbinding, or rebinding of attachment that occurs continuously in the life of each person and group. Place-in-process is a succession of thoughts and feelings, remembered or forgotten, that, taken together, constitute our experience of a place. As cognitive literary theorist Nancy Easterlin clarifies, "Positive and negative perceptions of place are greatly affected by feedback between social relationships, physical location, and self-identity. This dynamic, in short, constitutes place-in-process" (EASTERLIN 2016: 230).

The most prototypical of places, and the perfect example of place-as-process, is the home. The geographer J. D. Porteous has called home "a major fixed reference point for the structuring of reality" (PORTEOUS 1976: 386). In an ideal world, home is associated with safety, happiness, belonging and comfort. But if our home – i.e., our physical space, as well as our life therein – is disturbed for any reason, whether through small-scale conflicts in and around the home, or through traumatic events such as war, environmental catastrophe, degradation by human or other forces, population growth or decline, etc., we lose our bearings, in ways that are sometimes disastrous for our psychological, physical, and financial wellbeing.[8]

What psychologists call attachment styles[9] can also be applied to our attachment to places – especially our homes. The quality of our social attachments also conditions our attachments to places. Meanwhile, our place attachments influence our feelings about the people in them, ourselves included. Easterlin, following Paul Morgan (2010), argues that "attachment to persons and locations encourages the positive self-image and feeling of security that enable extended interpersonal and spatial relationships" (EASTERLIN 2016: 232).

3. Desire-in-Place

When Petrarch made his home in the Vaucluse in 1337, he was distancing himself from Avignon, his previous home, and the Papal Court, which he had come to regard with contempt and scorn. Avignon was the 'bad place' from which he sought to distance himself as much as possible, while still retaining ties to his patron,

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[6] "Place attachment", Seamon writes, "is part of a broader lived synergy in which the various human and environmental dimensions of place reciprocally impel and sustain each other" (SEAMON 2014: 12).

[7] The phrase "place-in-process" was introduced by THRIFT 2008: 95. It has been widely discussed by others, most notably by CRISTOFORETTI et al. 2011: 225-226.

[8] A large body of scholarship on place attachment and disaster recovery focuses on the loss, as well as the potential restoration, of place attachments after a catastrophe. For a sampling, see FULLILOVE 1996, POLLACK 2003, FARRAR 2009, and CHIN/TALPELLI 2015.

[9] The psychologist John Bowlby developed a system for classifying optimal and suboptimal ways that an infant attaches to its mother or primary caregiver. A child's style of attachment (secure, anxious, or avoidant) generally carries over into adulthood and inflects later relationships. Disorganized attachment, a fourth style, was conceptualized later. See BOWLBY 1969-1982 and AMMANITI/GALLESE 2014.

Cardinal Giovanni Colonna. Soon the Vaucluse became the good place. Though lonely and largely devoid of people, it was a beautiful setting where Petrarch could enjoy deep solitude, devote himself to writing, and think about Laura, who, if she existed, was presumably back in Avignon. As Ernest Hatch Wilkins puts it, Vaucluse "would mean to him the realization of a boyhood dream, solitude, peace, simplicity, the fascination of the river, woods to wander in, and beauty everywhere. Most of all it would mean freedom: freedom to think, to study, and to write. (. . .) [I]t soon became for him the dearest spot on earth" (WILKINS 1961: 17).

It is not clear how alone Petrarch really was there; in that same year, 1337, Petrarch's son Giovanni was born to an unidentified woman (WILKINS 1961: 18).[10] At some point Petrarch assumed the care of Giovanni and also his sister Francesca, who was born four years later. Petrarch retained some kind of network of family relations, especially in the early lives of his children. Petrarch kept them hidden, and instead cultivated an image of himself as a chaste and lonely lover wandering through woods and sitting by the waters of the Sorgue, contemplating his unrequited love for Laura.

In the poetry collection that would later be known as the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch presents a nexus of affects that I call 'desire-in-place'. That desire is sexual or erotic, sensual, bittersweet because it is unfulfilled, yet also in a strange way gratifying to experience. Let us look at two of his poems, starting with Sonnet 116, to analyze how desire-in-place works:

Pien di quella ineffabile dolcezza
che del bel viso trassen gli occhi miei
nel dì che volentier chiusi gli avrei
per non mirar giamai minor bellezza,

lassai quel ch' i' più bramo; et ò sì avezza
la mente a contemplar sola costei
ch'altro non vede, et ciò che non è lei
già per antica usanza odia et disprezza.

In una valle chiusa d'ogn' intorno,
ch'è refrigerio de' sospir miei lassi,
giunsi sol con Amor, pensoso et tardo;

ivi non donne ma fontane et sassi
et l'imagine trovo di quel giorno
che 'l pensier mio figura, ovunque io sguardo.[11]

(PETRARCA, *Canz.* 116)

The poet has been filled with "quella ineffabile dolcezza" that comes from Laura herself. No one or nothing else measures up, and so he hates and scorns whatever is not Laura. Yet the "valle chiusa" cools his weary sighs. There are no women there; only springs and rocks, plus "imagine di quel giorno" wherever he looks. He does not hate the landscape, however, because it *becomes* Laura in his mind. It is the place where he can focus on her absent presence and experience his unfulfilled desire most fully.

Moving water becomes the primary figure for ardent passion in need of cooling, perhaps most expressly described in Canzone 126, *Chiare, fresche et dolci acque*:

[10] The Vaucluse was not devoid of people. In *Sen.* 10.2, Petrarch describes plowmen singing in the valley, fishermen in the Sorgue, and other inhabitants and visitors who were friendly to him.

[11] [Full of that ineffable sweetness which my eyes drew from her lovely face on that day when I would gladly have closed them so as never to look on any lesser beauties, | I departed from what I most desire; and I have so accustomed my mind to contemplate her alone that it sees nothing else, and whatever is not she, already by ancient habit it hates and scorns. | In a valley closed on all sides, which cools my weary sighs, I arrived alone with Love, full of care, and late; | there I find not ladies but fountains and rocks and the image of that day which my thoughts image forth wherever I may glance.] (PETRARCH 1974: 224-225).
All quotations from the *Canzoniere*, Italian and English, have been drawn from the DURLING edition (PETRARCH 1974).

Chiare fresche et dolci acque
ove le belle membra
pose colei che sola a me par donna,
gentil ramo ove piacque
(con sospir mi rimembra)
a lei di fare al bel fiancho colonna,
erba et fior che la gonna
leggiadra ricoverse
co l'angelico seno,
aere sacro sereno
ove Amor co' begli occhi il cor m'aperse:
date udienzia insieme
a le dolenti mie parole estreme.[12]

(PETRARCA, *Canz.* 126, vv. 1-13)

This was the place where Laura swam or sat dipping her legs and hands into the water; in that same place Petrarch imagines dying happy, where his "alma ignuda" could return to its "proprio albergo", its own dwelling:

S'egli è pur mio destino,
e 'l cielo in ciò s'adopra,
ch' Amor quest'occhi lagrimando chiuda,
qualche grazia il meschino
corpo fra voi ricopra,
e torni l'alma al proprio albergo ignuda;
la morte fia men cruda
se questa spene porto
a quel dubbioso passo,
ché lo spirito lasso
non poria mai in più riposato porto
né in più tranquilla fossa
fuggir la carne travagliata et l'ossa.[13]

(PETRARCA, *Canz.* 126, vv. 14-26)

Finding that dwelling, his final resting place where the poet can finally feel at home, will only happen after his death. Meanwhile, he attaches to the place where Laura sat. He imagines a time when she will come back to look for him, yet she will find him "gia terra in fra le pietre", already earth under the stone. By sighing sweetly she beseeches heaven on his behalf, with some sexual innuendo implicit in "merce m'impetre".

Tempo verrà ancor forse
ch' a l'usato soggiorno
torni la fera bella et mansueta
et là 'v'ella mi scorse
nel benedetto giorno
volga la vista disiosa et lieta,

---

[12] [Clear, fresh, sweet waters, where she who alone seems lady to me rested her lovely body, gentle branch where it pleased her (with sighing I remember) to make a column for her lovely side, | grass and flowers that her rich garment covered along with her angelic breast, sacred bright air where Love opened my heart with her lovely eyes: listen all together to my sorrowful dying words.] (PETRARCH 1974: 244-247).

[13] [If it is indeed by destiny and Heaven exerts itself that Love close these eyes while they are still weeping, | let some grace bury my poor body among you and let my soul return naked to this its own dwelling; | death will be less harsh if I bear this hope to the fearful pass, for my weary spirit could never in a more restful port or a more tranquil grave flee my laboring flesh and my bones.] (PETRARCH 1974: 244-247).

cercandomi, et--o pieta--
già terra in fra le pietre
vedendo, Amor l'inspiri
in guisa che sospiri
sì dolcemente che mercé m'impetre,
et faccia forza al cielo,
asciugandosi gli occhi col bel velo.[14]

(PETRARCA, *Canz.* 126, vv. 27-39)

It is a delicious fantasy of permanently deferred consummation, which, as poet Anne Carson argues in another context, is the quintessentially erotic situation, precisely because it is blocked. Carson explains:

> For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components – lover, beloved and that which comes between them. (. . .) The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. When the circuit-points connect, perception leaps. (CARSON 1986: 16)

In Petrarch's fantasy, the landscape triangulates their relationship. Only once did they inhabit it at the same time. Now he is here, and she is there. When she returns, he will be there, too, but permanently unavailable. The poet imagines that he will metamorphose into the earth of the Vaucluse, lying under its stone. The phrase "mercé m'impetre," or "mercy beseeches heaven for me," can be read as a double-entendre: "mercy turns me to stone." Laura's loving sighs for the dead Petrarch advance his soul homeward, but also summon his hard, erotic energy, now become one with the land.

"Qui regna Amore" ("Here reigns Love"), a falling flower seems to announce at the end of Stanza 4 (l. 52). Who would not want to visit such a landscape, a 'locus amoenus', for we are invited to empathize with the feelings of the desiring poet, as well as the desired Laura. Readers experience the landscape of the Vaucluse and the Sorgue[15] as witnesses to an intensely erotic experience – one remembered and recreated in memory, and projected into the future.

4. The Phenomenon of Place Detachment

The story of why Petrarch left the Vaucluse in 1347 is a complicated one. I will touch upon it only briefly here in order to suggest that the ways that we sometimes detach from places is just as important as the ways we attach to them. In the previous year, 1346, Petrarch had been offered a canonry in Parma, Italy. His friend Azzo da Correggio, Lord of Parma, had asked him to join his court. More significantly, Petrarch had lent his support to Cola di Rienzo, a revolutionary leader who aimed to overthrow the Colonna and Orsini families, *de facto* rulers of Rome, and become emperor. During the period leading up to his departure from the Vaucluse, Petrarch turned against his patron and his extended family, who had supported Petrarch in various ways for almost twenty years. Why he turned against them is a fascinating story – one that has been told elsewhere (COSENZA 1986; WOJCIEHOWSKI 1995: 37-88). Here I will discuss how Petrarch's turning against the Colonna in Rome and in Avignon also entailed detaching from the Vaucluse, and envisioning his once-beloved refuge as a bad place.

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[14] [There will come a time perhaps when to her accustomed sojourn the lovely, gentle wild one will return | and, seeking me, turn her desirous and happy eyes toward where she saw me on that blessed day, | and oh the pity! seeing me already dust amid the stones, | Love will inspire her to sigh so sweetly that she will win mercy | for me and force Heaven, drying her eyes with her lovely veil.] (PETRARCH 1974: 244-247).

[15] It is only in some of the later poems in the sequence – 259, 281, 305, and 308 – that Petrarch actually mentions the Sorgue by name. He is no longer there at that point, but he returns to it in memory and, in a sense, gives the place to his readers, where before it had been a secret or something understood by close friends.

In Eclogue VIII of the *Bucolicum Carmen*, entitled "Divortium", Petrarch stages a dialogue between two shepherds – stand-ins for himself and his patron Cardinal Colonna. Ganymede, the older shepherd, asks a younger shepherd why he is leaving. Amyclas explains, "Macie turpique veterno | Terga pecus confecta gerit: squalentia sentes | Vellera dilacerant." [[My flock's] Coats growing shabby with age, the matted and tangled fleeces | Torn by the cruel briers] (PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 8, vv. 15-16).[16]

However, Gillias, a new shepherd, has appeared on the scene,[17] and has pointed Amyclas to "new valleys" ("vallesque novas") to the east. Amyclas asserts his desire for liberty, and for a return to the land of his birth.

> Agnosco validum patrie revocantis amorem;
> Illic et viole melius per roscida pallent,
> Per dumeta rose melius redolentque rubentque,
> Purior ac patrius illic michi prata pererrat
> Rivus, et ausonie sapor est iam dulcior herbe.[18]
>
> (PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 8, vv. 56-60)

The grass to the East is, if not literally greener, then "dulcior" ("sweeter"), and the roses redder and more fragrant.

Amyclas clarifies a few lines later:

> tenuit me pestifer usus
> Luctantem, me vester amor, me forma puelle
> Blandior illecebris. Sed iam cum tempore sensim
> Omnia mutantur; studium iuvenile senecte
> Displicet, et variant cure variante capillo.[19]
>
> (PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 8, vv. 74-79)

In order to leave France, Petrarch had to detach from Cardinal Colonna, from Laura (or the fantasy of Laura), and from everyone he knew in the Vaucluse and Avignon. All or part of these attachments are figured in the poem as "pestifer usus", a "vicious habit", that Amyclas needs to break. The poem's title, "Divorce", refers not only to the ruptured relationship with Colonna, but also to the breaking of Petrarch's emotional bonds with his home in the Vaucluse, where he had lived on and off for a decade, and his adopted country.[20]

Petrarch left Provence on the 20th of November, 1347, and made his way to Parma, possibly intending to join Cola di Rienzo in Rome. But Cola's revolution failed, and the self-installed emperor abdicated on December 15th. Soon the Black Death would consume Europe, and Laura and Cardinal Colonna would be dead within a few months. Petrarch's past life was gone, and the future he had envisioned as poet and advisor to the Emperor of Rome had evaporated just as the pandemic struck.

In 1351, Petrarch went back to the Vaucluse, hoping to reboot his former life there. In the spring of that year he sent a short poem to his close friend and protector, Philippe de Cabassoles, Bishop of Cavaillon. In it, he describes the phases of his life in the Vaucluse: boyhood, manhood, old age and impending death:

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[16] PETRARCH 1974: 114-115. All citations of the *Bucolicum carmen* in Latin and English have been drawn from this edition.
[17] Identified as Azzo da Correggio by BERGIN in PETRARCH 1974: 233.
[18] [Yonder I feel the love of my country calling me homeward;
Fairer by far than here the shy violet blooms on the dewy
Lea and the rose on the bush more sweetly blushes, more fragrant.
Clearer the rills of my homeland wind through the flowering meadows,
Sweeter than elsewhere on earth grows the very grass of Ausonia.] (PETRARCH 1974: 120-121).
[19] [(. . .) The strength of a vicious habit
Bound me, although unwilling; your friendship too and the charming
Form of a girl and her graces. However, little by little
Over the years all things change; what tender youth finds appealing
Age puts aside. As our locks, so too do our interests alter.] (PETRARCH 1974: 122-123).
[20] Petrarch leaves other clues to his dissatisfaction with his home in the Vaucluse. See, e.g., *Met.* 3.11 and 3.4.

Valle locus Clausa toto michi nullus in orbe
gratior aut studiis aptior ora meis.
Valle puer Clausa fueram iuvenemque reversum
fovit in aprico vallis amena sinu.
Valle vir in Clausa meliores dulciter annos
exegi et vite candida fila mee.
Valle senex Clausa supremum ducere tempus
et Clausa cupio, te duce, Valle mori.[21]

Interestingly, it is not Laura whom Petrarch imagines coming back to, but rather his old friend de Cabassoles, who will be there as a guide to the poet ("te duce") through to his death.

The maxim "you can never go home again" proved true for Petrarch. After surviving the horrendous devastation wrought by the Black Death and the mayhem it induced, Petrarch did not rediscover his personal paradise in the Vaucluse. The Papal Court was, in his view, more corrupt and enraging than ever. As he wrote to his friend Laelius in 1352, "[P]ars mundi mihi nulla placet: quocumque fessum latus verto, vepricosa omnia et dura reperio." [There is no place in the world that pleases me: wherever I turn my weary body I find only thorns and hardness] (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 15.8), and he weighed the possibility of moving back to Italy.[22]

Try as he might, Petrarch could not reattach to the Vaucluse or overcome his ambivalence toward it. He departed for good in 1353 – much to the distress of de Cabassoles (WILKINS 1958: 179-181; 205-207). Yet for the rest of his life, Petrarch would look back with nostalgia on his youth and middle years in the Vaucluse, which had long been central to his personal mythology.[23] As Eva Duperray has argued, "Vaucluse was everything at once for Petrarch: the primordial encounter of childhood; the vale of tears and joy; the 'garden of delights'; with Laura, a symbol of the goddess of Nature; an antique archetype in the manner of Seneca, and finally an Augustinian arcadia" (DUPERRAY 1995: 12).[24] Petrarch's complex representations of the Vaucluse, with its attendant meanings and associations, gave his once-and-future readers not one, but many Vaucluses to which they could attach. Never just a place, the Vaucluse became in Petrarch's hands a veritable archive of feelings, sensations and meanings to be contemplated and enjoyed by an audience of readers, commentators and publishers who could imagine connecting to Petrarch, Laura, and each other through that special place.

5. The Pilgrimage Place

Place attachment and detachment are complicated, dynamic phenomena for the individual who experiences them. Equally complicated are the ways in which those attachments are communicated to other people so that they may understand them and even come to share them. In order to identify with young Petrarch, solitary lover of the idealized Laura, readers must imagine the places where his experiences took place, to imagine the poet's investments not only in Laura "herself", but also in the landscape he describes in powerfully idealizing if often vague or general terms. In the final portion of this essay, I will discuss how Petrarch's own attachment to the Vaucluse, initially communicated to a small group of friends and interlocutors, gradually gave rise to an ever-widening community of readers who became attached to Petrarch, to his writings and to the places where he wrote – especially the Vaucluse.

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[21] [No place in the whole world is dearer to me than the Vale Enclosed, and none more favorable for my toils. | In my boyhood I visited the Vale Enclosed, and in my youth, when I returned, the lovely valley cherished me in its sunny bosom. | In my manhood I spent my best years sweetly in the Vale Enclosed, while the threads of my life were white. | In my old age I desire to live out in the Vale Enclosed my allotted time, and in the Enclosed Vale, under thy guidance, to die.]
Just before his fourth and final return to the Vaucluse in 1351, Petrarch sent this poem, together with *Fam.* 11.4, to de Cabassoles. For the text, see PETRARCA 1951: 852; WILKINS 1958: 80.

[22] ROSSI 1997, 3: 153; WILKINS 1958: 104.

[23] In 1360 Petrarch wrote a letter to de Cabassoles (*Fam.* 22.5) in which he imagined returning once more to the Vaucluse.

[24] My translation.

As Petrarch stated to Cola di Rienzo in 1347, in a letter written just prior to his departure from his idyllic mountain retreat, "de quo plura dicerem, nisi quia ille locus preter raras nature sue dotes iampridem longe lateque meis carminibus notus est". [I could say more [about the Vaucluse], were it not that because of the rare gifts bestowed by nature on this place it is already known far and wide through my verses] (PETRARCA, *Var.* 42).[25] In this letter and in other writings,[26] Petrarch indicates that his poems have already been widely distributed, even though he was still creating the collection that would become the *Canzoniere*. How were the poems distributed, and how do we measure the Vaucluse effect – an attachment to the place transmitted by Petrarch to his readers during his lifetime and thereafter?

Ernest Hatch Wilkins attempted to establish a chronology for the creation of the *Canzoniere*, which Petrarch accomplished in several stages over the course of many decades. Wilkins contended that Petrarch began organizing his poems into a collection in 1342; however, he claims, "we have no reason to suppose that he released any copy of the growing collection before 1358" (WILKINS 1948a: 1, and 1948b: 433-435). By the later date, Petrarch was in Milan, having left the Vaucluse for good five years earlier. Before that time Petrarch disseminated his poems by sending them to individual friends and/or fellow poets, some of whom responded with their own poems. At times the poems were gifts or obituary tributes. Petrarch also distributed sets of his poems, as Wilkins concludes from surviving worksheets that contain notations regarding the recipients of those sets.[27]

How did these circulating texts translate into place attachment on the part of Petrarch's readers, as this essay argues, and what is the evidence for such a claim? In his edited collection on writers' houses as pilgrimage sites, Harald Hendrix describes the shift from individual to collective memory after the death of an author, and the importance of 'lieux de mémoire' in that process. He writes, "When individual memory starts to fade, the need to fix in matter what is considered valuable grows." The places where writers lived and worked offer material sites that sometimes attract cult followings, because collective memories can be attached to them. These sites serve many purposes, such as fostering local and national pride, gratifying the romantic interest in genius, and providing visitors the sense of a direct and physical connection with history (HENDRIX 2008: 6-7). Fans may become attached to physical places connected with their favorite authors, although they may have a range of motivations behind those attachments, as Hendrix suggests. Physically visiting a writer's house or environs is not absolutely necessary in order to attach to that place; we can imagine it through descriptions by the author or others. As we shall see, however, an actual visit certainly helps to move an attachment outside the realm of imagined experience into what feels like a concrete, lived connection with the world of the writer.

In his study of the reception history of Petrarch's poetry and other writings in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, William Kennedy discusses early Florentine biographies of the poet penned by Filippo Villani (1381), Pier Paolo Vergerio (1397), Leonardo Bruni (1436) and Giannozzo Manetti (1440s). These works highlighted Petrarch's Florentine ancestry and depicted him as sympathetic to the republican ethos of civic humanism. The biographers also focused on Petrarch's earliest and later life in Italy (KENNEDY 1994: 36). In claiming Petrarch as an Italian, they were filtering Petrarch's life through their own place attachments – specifically, their attachments to Florence.

We see a similar pattern in northern Italian 15th century commentaries on Petrarch's writings. Kennedy observes, "The earliest ones appeared in Padua, Milan and Venice not as products of historical scholarship or republican fervor, but as constructions of an aristocratic humanism initiated at ducal courts, or of a commercial enterprise managed within the orbit of Ghibelline monarchism and Venetian oligarchy"

[25] PETRARCA 1994: 96; WILKINS 1958: 70.

[26] In *Fam.* 8.3, to Mainardo Accursio (?), and in *Sen.* 10.2, to Guido Sette, Petrarch makes a similar claim that his long residence in the Vaucluse and his poetry have contributed to its being better known.

[27] In addition, Wilkins notes, Petrarch was asked to donate poems to so-called 'giullari', who were poetry performers, often impoverished, who needed material to perform. Wilkins theorizes that people made their own collections of Petrarch's poems during his lifetime, just as some people did with his letters. These sets of writings seem to have been shared, circulated and copied.

(KENNEDY 1994: 37).[28] We might further note that these commentaries, which emphasized Petrarch's life and travels in those northern cities and regions, together with his embracing of their political and cultural values, also reflected the local place attachments of their authors.

By the 16th century, interest began to shift more strongly in the direction of Petrarch's vernacular poetry, a shift inaugurated by the publication of *Le cose volgari* (later known as the *Canzoniere*) by Aldus Manutius in 1501.[29] Hendrix contends that Petrarch's reputation began to be redefined as "something like the universal lover, the man whose passion for his Laura would inspire generations of poets to come, all over Europe" (HENDRIX 2008: 19). This more universal Petrarch came to the fore with the love story highlighted by later commentators and biographers, and the Vaucluse began to play a different role for readers attracted to that narrative.

One of the principal promoters of this new version of Petrarch was the Lucchese writer Alessandro Vellutello. In 1525, Vellutello published his own edition of the poems, *Le volgari opera del Petrarcha*, which also included new biographies of Petrarch and Laura, and Vellutello's own exegeses of the poems. In order to go beyond previous biographies, Vellutello actually visited Avignon and the Vaucluse, talked to the locals, and tracked down additional information about his subjects. He identified Petrarch's beloved as one Lauretta di Chiabau of Cabrières, a small town near the Vaucluse (challenging the claim that she was the wife of Hughes de Sade).[30] Vellutello proposed the following scenario regarding the "place of the enamorment" (WILKINS 1932: 276): Laura and Petrarch met near St. Veran, the small church near Petrarch's house in the Vaucluse, on Good Friday, 1327:

> Era adunque M.L. la notte uenendo il Venerdi santo (come di quelli di Cabrieres habbiamo ueduto essere il costume) da Cabrieres partita, et uisitato havea a Valclusa la chiesa di San Varan, et per andare a l'Illa essendo fra questi due rami de la Sorga giunta, e forse un poco per lo caminare stanca, s'era per riposarsi e rinfrescarsi sotto ad un fiorito arbore a riua d'uno de detti riuoli, nella forma che 'n quella Canz. Chiare fresche e dolci acque uedremo, a seder posta, quando dal Poeta il quale da Valclusa ancora egli, per la medesima cagione a l'Illa andando, fu in questo luogo la prima uolta ueduta, et a principio del suo amo acceso, ma poi tutto quell giorno seguitandola, come in alcuni luoghi dell'opera uedremo, ardentissimamente infiammato.[31] (PETRARCA 1525: 1r)

Vellutello included a 2-page map of the Vaucluse (fig. 1) for his readers so that they, too, would have a topographic key to the literary works and could find their way there if need be. For him, the most salient information about Petrarch's poems was the identity of Laura, as well as the location of the exact spot where Petrarch fell in love with her. Readers seem to have approved of his focus on the love story behind the poetry. *Le volgari opere* was reissued twenty-nine times over the course of the 16th century (KENNEDY 1994: 52). Meanwhile, versions of Vellutello's map appeared in twenty of the hundred-plus editions of the *Canzoniere* published over the century that followed its initial publication (WILKINS 1932: 277).

Vellutello's biographical and topographic approach engendered more editions and commentaries along the lines of his own (e.g., those of Fausto da Longiano [1532] and Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo [1533], for which

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[28] These were commentaries on the *Rime sparse* penned by Antonio de Tempo in Padua in 1440, and published in 1477 in Venice; Francesco Filelfo at Milan between 1445-1447, and published in Bologna in 1476; and Hieronimo Squarzafico in Venice after 1476, and published there in 1484.

[29] The edition was funded by a subvention from Carlo Bembo, and edited by Pietro Bembo from Petrarch's last exemplar. On the fascinating history of this edition, see KENNEDY 1994: 84-86. The Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas possesses a copy of this rare octavo edition, part of the Uzielli Collection of Aldine books.

[30] On the pull of the Sadean Laura on later generations of the de Sade family, including the notorious Marquis, see SADE 2006.

[31] [Evening was approaching on Good Friday when M.L. [Madonna Laura] had left Cabrières (as people from that town were accustomed to do) and had visited the church of Saint Veran in Vaucluse, and in order to cross onto the island between these two branches of the Sorgue, and perhaps a bit tired from the journey, she sat down to rest and refresh herself under a flowering tree on the bank of one of said river branches, in the form that we will see in that canzone "Chiare, fresche e dolci acque," where she was seen for the first time by the poet who was going to the island for the same reason, and from the beginning the sparking of his love, but then for that whole day following her around, most ardently inflamed, as we will see in several places in his works.] My translation.

the authors made research trips to Avignon and the Vaucluse). Meanwhile, in 1533 the poet Maurice Scève found what he believed was the grave of Laura in the Church of St. Francis in Avignon. This discovery, heralded at the time by King François I, the poet Clément Marot, and many others, attested, in the words of Harald Hendrix, "to the great impact of the newly construed link between literature, memory and place" (HENDRIX 2008: 20).

Throughout the 15th and into the early 16th centuries, visual images of Petrarch and Laura, generally set against a stylized landscape, proliferated as illuminated miniatures heading manuscripts and printed editions of the *Canzoniere* or the *Trionfi* (TRAPP 2001: 66-98). While such images often include geographic features like a river, a spring, rocks and/or mountains (figs. 2-3), they were created by artists who most likely had not visited the Vaucluse (TRAPP 2006: 4). Nevertheless, it could be argued, that these and other illustrations, paintings, maps, carvings, etc., helped to cement associations between the poet, his beloved, and a set of places that readers could imagine and even visit, were they so inclined. As the cult of Petrarch and Laura grew, Trapp relates, "more searchers after evidences of the pair concentrated their efforts on the valley itself, identifying there and in the vicinity many Petrarchan sites, especially those which could be connected with Laura and including the area along the river which became known as Petrarch" (TRAPP 2006: 4). A satirical tour guide to Petrarchan sites, which made fun of visitors' obsessive attachments to them, was published in Venice in 1539 by Niccolò Franco (TRAPP 2006: 2-3; HENDRIX 2008: 20-21).

What specifically were early modern Petrarchists looking for when they visited the Vaucluse, or other Petrarchan places such as his house and tomb in Arquà? Hendrix offers the following explanation of the larger phenomenon:

> The transformation into monuments and museums marks a second process of memory-making characteristic of writers' houses. They attract readers that feel the need to go beyond their intellectual exchanges with texts and long for some kind of material contact with the author of those texts or the places where these originate. (HENDRIX 2008: 1)

One pilgrim lucky enough to visit the Sorgue and leave a visual record was the Portuguese artist Francisco de Holanda. His drawing (fig. 4), now housed in the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial, dating from 1538, bears the inscription: "Il sasso dove Sorga nasce, dove Petrarcha scrisi. Loco beato" [The rock where the Sorgue rises, where Petrarch wrote. A blessed place]. This was the kind of place that de Holanda was glad to visit, and that others would be, too, should they be so lucky. But anyone can form an attachment to a place without having gone there, provided that something memorable happened there. As noted earlier, it is enough to know that it exists. Yet images help – be they visual or verbal.

Physical experience helps, too. In 1558 the humanist Gabriele Simeoni published a description of his memorable visit to the Vaucluse and to Petrarch's house. This was the place, he noted, where Petrarch philosophized and wrote about his love for Madame Laura. In *Les illustres observations antiques*, he wrote:

> C'est la vallee la plus delectable & de meilleure grace, & sont les plus belles & claires sources d'eaue que je vais onques de ma vie, tellement que si je n'eusse esté accompagné & entreprins le voyage de Romme, je cory que je fusse demeuré là. Car la petite colline, ou est assise la maisonnette de Petrarque, la solitude du lieu, les petis boscages de tous temps verdoyans, les haults rochers, & le doux son des eaues coulantes, me representoient naturellement deuvant les yeux le mont Parnassus, & la fontaine des neuf Muses. (SIMEONI 1558: 28).[32]

So that his readers would believe his report, he included an image (fig. 5), based on the one that was forever impressed on his brain since that visit, "tousiours empreinte en mon cerveau". It was its astonishing beauty, in tandem with its Petrarchan associations, that made the Vaucluse an unforgettable place for Simeoni – one to which he immediately attached, despite the fact that Petrarch's house was "demi ruïnee" [half-ruined] and

[32] [This is the most delightful and charming valley, and the clearest, most beautiful springs that I have ever seen in my life, so much so that if I had not been accompanied and had not undertaken the journey from Rome, I believe that I would have stayed there. For the little hill on which Petrarch's little house sits, the solitude of the place, the little woods that are always green, the high rocks, and the sweet sound of flowing water naturally summoned before my eyes Mount Parnassus, and the fountain of the nine Muses.] My translation.

a "receptacle des brebis" [a shelter for sheep] (SIMEONI 1558: 29). Disheartened by its state of disrepair, Simeoni did what many tourists of the period, as well as our own, would do. He took out a knife and carved a message on one of the stones of the house – "Francisci et Laurae manibus, Gabriel Symeonus" [To the shades of Francesco and Laura, Gabriele Simeoni] (SIMEONI 1558: 31) – thereby making Petrarch's place his own.

It is important to note the tenor of de Holanda's and Simeoni's affective responses to Petrarch's Vaucluse: "loco beato" and "la plus delectable & de meilleure grace." I would argue that then and now, Petrarch's fandom is organized around strongly positive emotions associated with his and our own attachments to a memorable and extremely beautiful place on earth, which we imagine that we share with Petrarch, Laura, a large cast of other historical figures, and each other.

6. Conclusions

The myth of Petrarch in the Vaucluse has waxed and waned over the course of the last seven centuries. At times that myth seemed to fade away during periods of silence, while at other times, it would be revived with great intensity (DUPERRAY 1995: 9). Although there is not space enough in this essay to discuss the later history of Petrarch's reception in the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries,[33] I shall conclude with six general principles that we might keep in mind about Petrarchan place attachment through the ages.

1. For Petrarch's readers, the Vaucluse comes into focus over time. It goes from being an abstraction – a generic or allegorized place of "chiare, fresche, dolci acque" – to being a place on the map, an actual pilgrimage site, a locus of national and international cultural interest and, in later centuries, of anniversary commemorations and other Petrarch-related events.

2. One reason that the Vaucluse became a Petrarchan pilgrimage destination is that we know so much about the poet. We possess an unusual quantity of information, some quite intimate, about Petrarch's friends, his patrons, his would-be lover, his adversaries, and also the animal and plant life of the area. Petrarch invites us to reconstruct his social network (WOJCIEHOWSKI 2015: 26-34), and to join that transgenerational group (just as he imagined 'friending' Cicero and other classical writers).

3. Today technology and travel help us join that network. Maps, books, postcards, paintings, planes, trains and automobiles, the internet and virtual travel make it easier than ever to visit the Vaucluse and other Petrarchan sites, and/or to learn about them on the web.

4. The Vaucluse is a splendid destination, whether one knows about Petrarch or not; there were tourists visiting the Fontaine de Vaucluse even in Petrarch's day, as he himself mentions in his letters, and well before.

5. The way that we attach to Petrarchan places such as the Vaucluse will vary according to the Petrarchan texts that we have read. This essay has focused primarily on the *Canzoniere*, but other texts by the poet and humanist, especially his letters, might prompt us to perceive and connect to his places in other ways, and with a wider range of emotions than I have discussed in this essay.

6. Attaching to a Petrarchan place – here, the landscape of the Vaucluse – does multiple things for the reader/traveler. When we visualize the spaces where he lived and wrote, we are placing Petrarch in a space. In doing so, we give him a context and a framework that helps us to stage his embodied situations and lived experiences in our imaginations. These imaginings may explain or further clarify his texts as we try to place him in a world that no longer exists exactly as it did then, but that continues in some form today and that provides us with a sense of the 'authentic' poet. Petrarch and Laura, the Colonna brothers, Guido Sette and Philippe de Cabassoles have been dead for over seven centuries, but it is easier to imagine their lives when we visit their places, and when we feel a connection to them through those places. It is not necessary to visit in person in order to attach to Petrarchan places, but it can be gratifying to do so.

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[33] On the reception of Petrarch in more recent centuries, and literary and visual engagements with his works, see, e.g., TRAPP 2006, DUPERRAY 1995, and RUSHWORTH 2017.

Petrarch's writings are incredibly interesting to study from a place-attachment perspective, because his feelings about where he was and where he had been fluctuated over the course of his life – fluctuations that he documented in great detail. But regardless of whatever he was feeling at a given moment, his descriptions of place-in-process and desire-in-process attract us like the stone of Heraclea described by Socrates in the *Ion*. This stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to those rings the ability to attract other rings (PLATO 1961: 219). This magnetic bond serves as a superb metaphor for how place attachment is transferred from person to person across the centuries. We still feel it, those of us who are in the community of Petrarch scholars and aficionados, or who may feel called to join it: virtual lovers charged with positive feelings for all things Petrarch, including his solitude, his melancholy and his fits of pique and passion. Positive affect circulates within our community. In this essay I have highlighted the role of place attachment in forming our own imagined community and its continuity over seven centuries. *Qui regna amore*.

Fig. 1. Map of the Vaucluse and Environs. From VELLUTELLO, Alessandro: *Il Petrarcha con l'espositione d'Allessandro Vellvtello e con molte altre vtilissime cose in diversi lvoghi di qvella nvovamente da lvi aggivnte*, Venice 1528, Courtesy of the Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

Fig. 2. Laura crowning Petrarch on the banks of the Sorgue. Master of the Vitae imperatorum, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS Barb. Lat. 3943, fol. 17r, detail of the opening page of a ms. of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Lombardy, c. 1440. "© 2021 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana". Reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.

CHiare freſche & dolci acque
oue le belle membra
poſe colei che ſola a me par donna
gentil ramo oue piacque
con ſoſpir mi rimembra
allei di fare al bel fianco colonna
herba & fior che lagonna
leggiadra ricouerſe
con langelico ſeno
aer ſacro ſereno
oue amor cho begliocchi il cor maperſe
date udienza inſeme
a ledolenti mie parole extreme
S eglie pur mio deſtino
el cielo incio ſadopra
chamor quſti occhi lagrimando chiuda
qual che gratia ilmeſchino
corpo fra uoi ricopra
& torni lalma al pprio albergo ignuda
la morte fia men cruda
ſe queſta ſpeme porto
a quel dubioſo paſſo
che lo ſpirito laſſo
non poria mai in piu ripoſato porto
nen piu tranquilla foſſa
fuggir la carne trauagliata e loſſa
T empo uerra ancor forſe
cha luſato ſoggiorno
torni laſera bella & manſueta
& la ouella mi ſcorſe

Fig. 3. Laura bathing in the Sorgue. Illustration by Antonio Grifo of Canzone 126, “Chiare fresche & dolci acque.” A handwritten inscription reads “Parla ale Aque doue M.L. se soleva bagnar” [He speaks of the waters where Madonna Laura was accustomed to bathe]. In Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere e Trionfi* (printed in Venice in 1470). Incunabulum Queriniano G V 15. 1496-1498. Courtesy of the Biblioteca Queriniana, Brescia.

Fig. 4. DE HOLANDA, Francisco: "The rock where the Sorgue rises and Petrarch wrote," in: *Os Disenhos das Antigualhas*, c. 1545. Reproduced by permission of the Patrimonio Nacional, Biblioteca del Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial MS 28-I-20, fol. 49v.

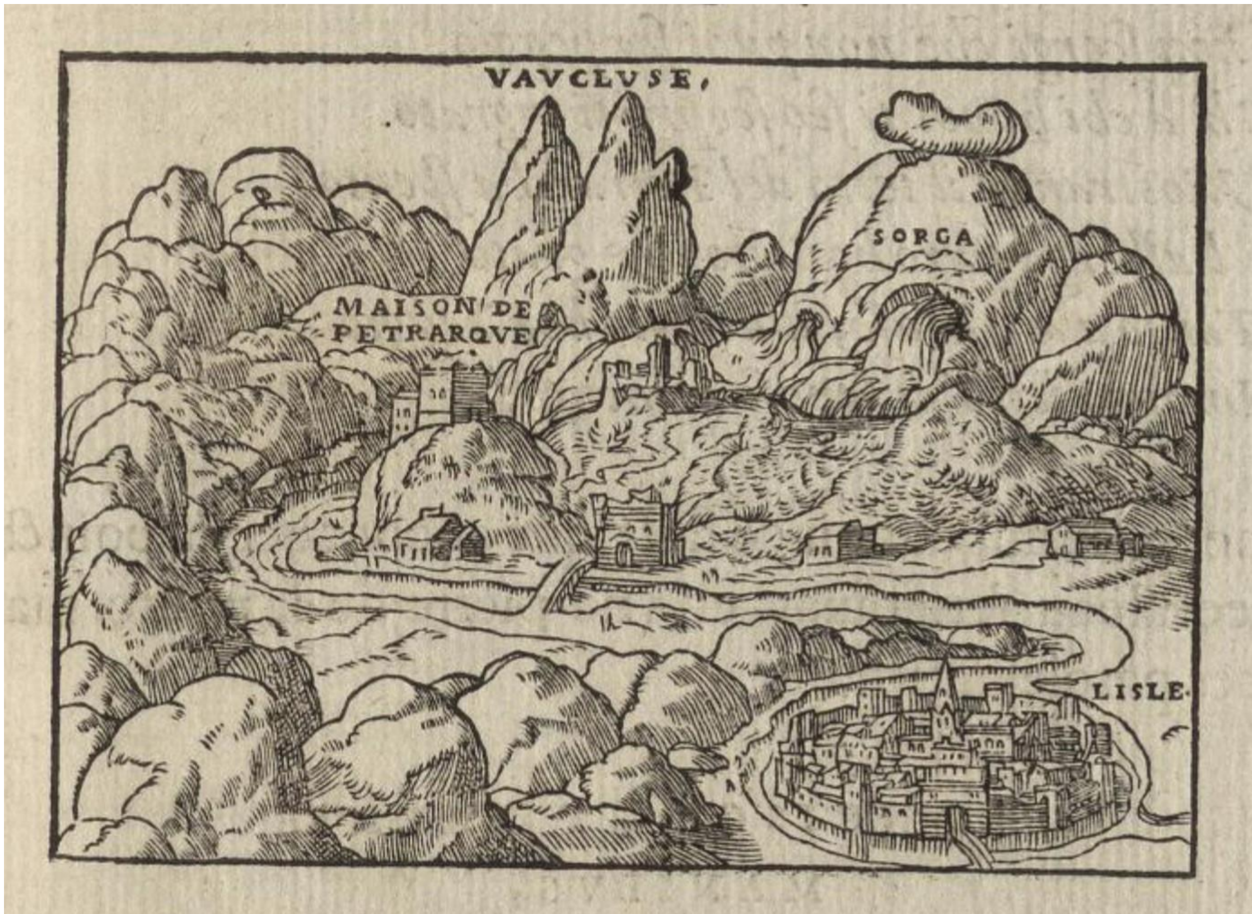

Fig. 5. Petrarch's house appears on this map of the Vaucluse by or after George Reverdy, printed in Gabriele Simeoni's *Les Illustres Observations antiques*, Lyon: G. van Tournes 1558: 29. Courtesy of the Getty Research Institute and the Internet Archive.

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Commune dolor or *dolore unico*? Petrarch, Mourning, and Community

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What does it mean to share a grief or to share in grief?[1] This is a question which has become sadly topical in recent years, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. How do we share in a collective grief that is, astonishingly and terrifyingly, global? When I first proposed this paper, for a workshop originally planned for March 2020, I had no idea that mourning and community would be anything other than primarily an academic question. For the rescheduled workshop (held online on March 11–12, 2021) and the present volume, in contrast, it seems impossible not to think about our own current circumstances and experiences – not instead of historical context, but alongside that original context. As Jacques Derrida reminds us (in a text from 1992 on the death of the philosopher Louis Marin), mourning is always personal:

> On ne peut pas tenir un discours *sur* le "travail du deuil" sans y prendre part [...]. Il n'y a donc pas de métalangage quant au langage où s'engage un travail du deuil. (DERRIDA 2003: 177–178)

> [One cannot hold a discourse *on* the "work of mourning" without taking part in it [...]. There is thus no metalanguage for the language in which a work of mourning is at work. (DERRIDA 2001: 142–143)]

It is this lack of a metalanguage and one's own inevitable participation in mourning that makes writing about grief difficult and private, on the one hand, and yet potentially creative and rewarding, on the other.

As is well known, Petrarch wrote extensively about grief, and mourned for many friends and family members, in Latin and in Italian, in verse and in prose. He lived through the famously horrendous plague year of 1348, and the flyleaf of his copy of Virgil, held in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, offers for us what Luca Marcozzi has called a "cemetery in parchment" (MARCOZZI 2022: 53), that is, a record of those Petrarch loved and lost, including details of his beloved Laura's life and death. Focussing on three quite different experiences of grief – mourning for the crucified Christ on Good Friday, mourning for the poet Cino da Pistoia, and mourning for Laura – this essay proposes and explores a tension in Petrarch between "commune dolore" and "dolore unico". The former term is taken from *RVF* 3, and the latter is calqued on that term, as a possible opposite or at least alternative.

Firstly, I consider evidence for a "commune dolore" against which the lyric subject of the *Canzoniere* situates himself, with a particular focus on *RVF* 3 and *RVF* 92 (the latter on the death of Cino da Pistoia). Secondly, I reflect theoretically on the connection between affect and community, drawing on the work of historians of emotions Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy (BOQUET/NAGY 2018), as well as on that of the queer, feminist cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (AHMED 2010). The third and final part of this essay considers parts of *RVF* 268 and the eleventh eclogue of the *Bucolicum carmen*, in order to meditate further on various mournful communities addressed and envisaged by Petrarch.

My reading of Petrarch is indebted to several different critics, including Sabrina Stroppa's very comprehensive book *Petrarca e la morte* (STROPPA 2014). Most recently, I have also learnt much from a chapter by Luca Marcozzi on "Mourning in and around Petrarch", for the volume *Dwelling on Grief: Narratives of Mourning across Time and Forms*, which I have co-edited (MARCOZZI 2022). In essence, in that chapter Marcozzi argues for two different attitudes towards mourning on the part of Petrarch: firstly, a time of weeping, laments, and sighs, which characterizes much of the *Canzoniere*; secondly, a renunciation of mourning as effeminate, un-Christian, and anti-Stoical, as witnessed in Petrarch's Latin writings, especially certain letters (although, for Marcozzi, also in the *Canzoniere* itself). Marcozzi even suggests a specific watershed between these two attitudes, the year 1350. Marcozzi's readings and evidence are, naturally, very convincing. Yet I also confess to a lingering attachment to the earlier Petrarch and to a kind of grief that is

[1] For conversations and advice relating to this essay, I would like to thank Catherine Keen, Matthew Salisbury, and Francesca Southerden. I am also grateful to Timothy Kircher, Gur Zak, and Bernhard Huss for the invitation to participate in their Petrarchan project on "Affects and Community-Formation in the Petrarchan World."

unresolved because it is unresolvable – and in this respect I particularly appreciate Gur Zak's writings on the indeterminacy of consolation in both the *Bucolicum carmen* (ZAK 2016, to which I return later in this essay) and Petrarch's Latin letters (ZAK 2021).

Part 1: "Commune dolor" in *RVF* 3 and 92

The term "commune dolor" is put forward in the final line of the octet of *RVF* 3, a sonnet which narrates the poet's experience of love at first sight with Laura (an event that Petrarch elsewhere dates to April 6, 1327[2]):

> Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro
> per la pietà del suo Factore i rai,
> quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai,
> ché i be' vostr'occhi, donna, mi legaro.
>
> Tempo non mi parea da far riparo
> contra' colpi d'Amor: però m'andai
> secur, senza sospetto; onde i miei guai
> nel commune dolor s'incominciaro.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 3, vv. 1–8)

The poet's *innamoramento* is set against the backdrop of Good Friday, with its universal suffering that involves not only humanity but even nature too, with the darkened sun mentioned at the start of the sonnet in sibilant, almost stuttering tones ("al sol si scoloraro").[3] Petrarch establishes a contrast between the personal and the universal here: "i miei guai" versus the "commune dolor", juxtaposed across the enjambement thanks to the delayed verb "s'incominciaro". The contrast is constructed not only through the possessive "miei" against the adjective "commune", but also through the contrast between plural and singular nouns, highlighting the unifying communality of the shared "dolor" in contrast to the multiplicity of the poet's own troubles ("guai", a term that, like "senza sospetto" earlier in the same line, recalls the story of the fatal love of Paolo and Francesca in *Inferno* V,[4] further casting the event in a sinful light). The contrast between "miei guai" and "commune dolor" is, then, highly conflictual, establishing a clear tension between love for Laura and love for God that recurs at intervals throughout the *Canzoniere*, and culminates in the final declaration (though perhaps it is only provisional, or projected?) of a rejection of Laura in favour of the Virgin Mary in *RVF* 366. The poet concludes *RVF* 3 by accusing Love of dishonour in ensnaring him when he was unarmed: "al mio parer, non il fu honore | ferir me de saetta in quello stato" (PETRARCA, *RVF* 3, vv. 12–13). Yet the lack of honour also falls upon the poet for being so easily distracted in church, especially on such an important day in the church's year. In introducing the personified figure of "Amor" into this sonnet, Petrarch creates a

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[2] The fact that Good Friday that year fell in fact on April 10, 1327 need not detain us here, although as Santagata notes this discrepancy has given rise to "una secolare discussione" (PETRARCA 2010: 18).

[3] This solar detail is consonant with Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion. Santagata notes as the most likely source Luke 23: 44–45 (PETRARCA 2010: 19), that is, in the English of the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate, "And it was almost the sixth hour; and there was darkness [*tenebrae*] over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened [*obscuratus est sol*]". The same connection is made in PICONE 2006: 37 and by others. As Manlio Pastore Stocchi has commented, the darkness of the Crucifixion contrasts with Laura as herself a sun, as she is presented in the very next sonnet: "ed or di picciol borgo un sol n'à dato" (PETRARCA, *RVF* 4, v. 12; PASTORE STOCCHI 1981: 17–18). On the different suns in the *Canzoniere* (Apollo, Laura, God, the star), see also NOFERI 2001: 78–81.

[4] See Dante ALIGHIERI, *Inf.* V, v. 48 (for "traendo guai", although this same phrase can also be found in the canzone on Beatrice's death in the *Vita nova*, *Gli occhi dolenti*, v. 6 [see Dante ALIGHIERI 1996: 177]) and *Inf.* V, v. 129 ("soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto"). This infernal connection is noted by many commentators (including in PETRARCA 2010: 20). The bibliography on Dante and Petrarch is extensive; see especially SANTAGATA 1990 and TROVATO 1979.

strange syncretism encompassing the foundational Christian story and the pagan god of Love, the latter a character who is already introduced in the previous sonnet, *RVF* 2.[5]

Although the import of "commune dolor" in *RVF* 3 is a Christian community, the textual precedent for the phrase "commune dolor" is given by Marco Santagata (PETRARCA 2010: 20) and others as deriving from a secular rather than from a sacred context, namely Guittone d'Arezzo's *planctus* on the death of Jacopo da Leona, which begins in chiastic fashion: "Comune perta fa comun dolore, | e comuno dolore comun pianto"[6]. Petrarch's lyric subject stands apart from the kind of communality of grief described by Guittone, whether in the sacred context of *RVF* 3 or in Petrarch's own reworking of the topos of poetry on the death of a poet – not Jacopo da Leona but Cino da Pistoia, lamented in *RVF* 92.

> Piangete, donne, et con voi pianga Amore;
> piangete, amanti, per ciascun paese,
> poi ch'è morto collui che tutto intese
> in farvi, mentre visse, al mondo honore.
>
> Io per me prego il mio acerbo dolore,
> non sian da lui le lagrime contese,
> et mi sia di sospir' tanto cortese,
> quanto bisogna a disfogare il core.
>
> Piangan le rime anchor, piangano i versi,
> perché 'l nostro amoroso messer Cino
> novellamente s'è da noi partito.
>
> Pianga Pistoia, e i citadin perversi
> che perduto ànno sì dolce vicino;
> et rallegresi il cielo, ov'ello è gito.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 92)

RVF 92 is clearly and famously structured around the dramatic anaphoric apostrophe of "piangere". "[D]onne", "Amore", "amanti", "rime", "versi", "Pistoia, e i citadin", are all called upon to weep. As Rosanna Bettarini points out in her commentary, this structure "ricorda i vecchi *planctus* di tradizione innologica e francescana", as well as the sonnet *Piangete, amanti, poi che piange Amore*, from Dante's *Vita nova* (PETRARCA 2005: I, 443). The community of mourners here is extensive, with the mourners found "per ciascun paese", in a mirroring of the widespread circulation of Cino's poetry (capable of granting honour to its subjects, "al mondo honore").

The second stanza of this sonnet is the odd one out, where the poem becomes introspective, and the poet addresses his own "dolore". The emphasis on the singular self is stark, especially amidst the other plural addressees ("donne", "amanti", "i citadin"): "Io per me prego il mio acerbo dolore" (v. 5). This is a Cavalcantian moment where the poet is fractured internally into different parts, grief has physiological effects, and tears and sighs are understood in a technical sense as a means of relieving the heart ("disfogare il core"[7]). In this stanza, the poet grants himself space for addressing his own grief. The third stanza is then devoted to an attempt at integrating the poet's personal grief into the broader narrative, through the emphasis on the first-person plural. The poem effectively progresses from the second-person plural address

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[5] Reading *RVF* 2 and 3 together, Natascia Tonelli similarly remarks on the ambiguity introduced by the juxtaposition of the Classical and Christian worlds across these two sonnets: "Condizione di ambiguità rispetto alla quale non sarà mai operata una irrevocabile scelta e che dunque appropriatamente è proposta come doppia stella a governare le sorti della poesia che seguirà" (TONELLI 2000: 179). For Adelia Noferi, *RVF* 3 alone "si trova così inscritto in una doppia (e opposta) dimensione temporale: quella del non-tempo, astratto, del mito, e quella del concreto tempo storico", to which she subsequently adds a third time, that of calendrical or memorial time (NOFERI 2001: 67, 70).

[6] For the text of Guittone's poem, see CONTINI 1960: I, 232–234.

[7] This phrase also echoes a phrase from Dante's *Gli occhi dolenti*, v. 4: "Ora, s'i' voglio sfogar lo dolore" (ALIGHIERI 1996: 177).

in stanza one, to the first-person singular introspection of stanza two, to an attempted reconciliation between the two in the third stanza through the first-person plural ("l *nostro* amoroso messer Cino"; "s'è da *noi* partito" [my emphases]). From this perspective, the "rime" and "versi" of the first tercet call for the creation of a community of mourners instituted by and through poetry. The final tercet, however, falls back into the earlier more separate, distant mode of second person address ("Pianga Pistoia"), and even into a third-person plural ("i citadin [...] che perduto ànno"). In other words, the sense of communality present in stanza three is only temporary. Finally, the very last line offers a moment of sudden transcendence of worldly matters and geography, turning instead to heaven. From this unexpected and only very briefly invoked heavenly perspective, weeping is turned into joy ("rallegresi il cielo"). The poem thus takes the form of a mini-comedy, with a difficult start and a happy end.[8]

Notwithstanding this apparently happy *dénouement*, I read this sonnet as a series of unresolved conflicts: in particular, between self (stanza two) and community (stanzas one and three), between earth ("paese", "mondo", "Pistoia") and heaven (v. 14), and more particularly between earthly mourning and heavenly joy. There is a kind of incomprehensibility and incommensurability between earth and heaven in this respect. Heavenly joy is contrasted with but does not replace or resolve earthly grief, much as this may be a frequently invoked ideal Christian response to loss. Finally, what strikes me most of all is how Petrarch imagines himself as both inside and outside the community that is created in the mourning of Cino's death. Petrarch invites a kind of choral expression of mourning (the plural "rime" and "versi" of the first tercet), yet this sonnet remains the voice of an individual and fragmented "Io" in dialogue with his own "acerbo dolore". This isolated grief is all the more surprising when we consider that Cino and Petrarch may never even have met one another.[9] Petrarch's grief is, then, above all a rhetorical performance which is deliberately cultivated as a contribution to a poetic "commune dolore" from which he himself nonetheless remains apart.

Part 2: Theories of Emotion, Affect, and Community

Bringing *RVF* 3 and *RVF* 92 together more explicitly, what we find is that in both cases mourning for one same loss creates a community of mourners but that Petrarch's position in relation to this community is rather uneasy. The broader connection between community and emotion has been much theorized; as already intimated, I have been especially inspired by the work of Boquet and Nagy and of Ahmed. What these three writers have in common is a sense of shared emotion as creating community both by who is included and who excluded. As Boquet and Nagy point out:

> When members of a social group experience an emotional event together, they interact in an intense manner. These interactions can revitalize or confirm their sense of belonging to the group; conversely, they can also bring about new groupings. Such emotions can thus serve both to order and exclude: by creating or reaffirming the identity of a group, emotion also creates rejection, marginalization, exclusion, and opposition. (BOQUET/NAGY 2018: 217)

This observation resonates with Ahmed's thinking about affective communities in her book *The Promise of Happiness* (AHMED 2010), where Ahmed is especially keen to highlight those whose experiences are

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[8] Echoing here the definition of comedy put forward in the Letter to Cangrande that has been often attributed (though never definitively so) to Dante: "Et per hoc patet quod comoedia dicitur praesens opus. Nam si ad materiam respiciamus, a principio horribilis et foetida est, quia *Infernus*; in fine prospera, desiderabilis et grata, quia *Paradisus*". [And from this it is clear that the present work is to be described as a comedy. For if we consider the subject-matter, at the beginning it is horrible and foul, as being *Hell*; but at the close it is happy, desirable, and pleasing, as being *Paradise*] (TOYNBEE 1966: 161, 177).

[9] In the words of Georges Güntert, in an essay on *RVF* 90–99, "Con tutto ciò, il rapporto fra i due autori fu meno intimo di quanto non si sia a lungo creduto: la maggior parte degli studiosi oggi parte dal presupposto che i due non si siano mai incontrati" (GÜNTERT 2006: 246). Nonetheless, John Took has neatly described Cino's poetic style as "a Petrarchism in waiting" (TOOK 2000: 188; TOOK 2007: 127).

marginalized and excluded by a problematic pressure to be happy (with happiness typically defined and understood in very limited, heteronormative, sexist, racist, and politically conservative ways).

Ahmed cites Socrates from Plato's *Republic* on "'the sharing of feelings'" as that "'which binds a community together'":

> "Isn't it the sharing of feelings of pleasure and distress which binds a community together – when (in so far as it is feasible) the whole citizen body feels more or less the same pleasure or distress at the same gains and losses?" (PLATO 1998: 176, cited in AHMED 2010: 38)

Ahmed summarises "*that we tend to like those who like the things we like*. [...] To be affected in a good way by objects that are already evaluated as good is a way of belonging to an affective community" (AHMED 2010: 38). The same is true of being affected in a less good way, such as by grief. As Ahmed goes on to explain: "In communities of feeling, we share feelings because we share the same object of feeling (so we might feel sorrow at the loss of someone whom we both love; our sorrow would be directed toward an object that is shared)" (AHMED 2010: 56). As she later elaborates:

> Membership in an affective community can require not only that you share an orientation toward certain objects as being good, what I have called simply happy objects, but also that you recognize the same objects as being lost. So if an affective community is produced by sharing objects of loss, which means letting objects go in the right way, then the melancholics would be affect aliens in how they love: their love becomes a failure to get over loss, which keeps them facing the wrong way. (AHMED 2010: 141)

I do not follow Ahmed's Freudian reading here of mourning ("letting objects go in the right way") versus melancholia ("a failure to get over loss"), a binary that in any case was subsequently complicated by Freud himself and has also been further critiqued by others subsequently (see AHMED 2010: 139). Rather, I think that mourning and melancholia (not to mention the various permutations in between these two poles), understood in this way, can form different affective communities. What I find useful in this quotation, then, is both the idea of an affective community as constituted by a shared definition and understanding of loss ("you recognize the same objects as being lost") and, concomitantly, the identification of those who fall outside this community as "affect aliens in how they love". The same pattern is visible in *RVF* 3 and 92: an affective community is created by recognizing the same objects as being lost (in *RVF* 3, Christ; in *RVF* 92, Cino da Pistoia). This is what Petrarch calls "commune dolor". And yet the poet himself remains an "affect alien" in how he loves: first, in *RVF* 3, by falling in love with Laura rather than mourning Christ; later, by placing his own "acerbo dolore" at the death of Cino as a dissonant, bodily, personal note within the broader community of mourners invoked in *RVF* 92.

Part 3: Mourning Laura in *RVF* 268 and the *Bucolicum carmen*

Petrarch's position as an "affect alien" (to insist upon Ahmed's term) is reiterated in the *Canzoniere* through a series of oppositions between self and community, with particularly famous instances being: the poet as laughing-stock of the "popol tutto" in the proemial sonnet (PETRARCA, *RVF* 1, v. 9); the poet as "Solo et pensoso", fleeing "ove vestigio human la rena stampi" (PETRARCA, *RVF* 35, vv. 1 and 4); the poet's later description of himself as "fatto singular da l'altra gente" (PETRARCA, *RVF* 292, v. 3). We might take the final tercet of *RVF* 18 as similarly emblematic of the connection between solitude and grief:

> Tacito vo, ché le parole morte
> farian pianger la gente; e i' desio
> che le lagrime mie si spargan sole.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 18, vv. 12–14)

Glossing these lines, Santagata points to a passage from Augustine's *Confessions*[10] on the appropriateness of solitude for weeping, and adds: "la suggestione agostiniana rende preferibile questa interpretazione all'altra possible: 'desidero che le mie lacrime siano le sole a essere sparse'" (PETRARCA 2010: 78). Yet I admit to liking the second, less Augustinian reading, which is obviously useful in my argument for Petrarch's desire for a "dolore unico". This second reading is supported by Giacomo Leopardi, who glosses the line as "senza compagnia di lagrime d'altri" (PETRARCA 1851: 28), while Bettarini (who cites Leopardi) explains "sole" here as meaning "in solitudine, senza compianto" (PETRARCA 2005: I, 83). In either case, there is an added irony of claiming to be silent ("Tacito vo") in poetry, which may indeed suggest by negation the possibility of Petrarch's "parole morte" moving their audience to tears. To consider this question, I turn finally to Petrarch's mourning for Laura.

Though undoubtedly the pre-eminent example of mourning in the *Canzoniere*, Petrarch's mourning for Laura is a difficult case since it is involved in questions of the historical existence or otherwise of Laura that I wish to eschew here. There is clearly a difference between mourning for a public figure such as Cino da Pistoia and mourning for a woman named Laura who may or may not have existed; mourning may be communal, as we have seen, in the case of the former, but is less likely to be so in the case of the latter, for reasons of gender and status if not of verifiable existence. Another difficulty in the case of Petrarch's mourning for Laura is what we might term the aesthetic and emotional utility of Laura's death. Here, I find Giorgio Agamben's interpretation very convincing but also, therefore, very unsettling – that loss is a form of possession and appropriation. In his words, what happens is that "ciò che non poteva essere perduto perché non era mai stato posseduto appare come perduto e ciò che non poteva essere posseduto perché, forse, non era mai stato reale, può essere appropriato in quanto oggetto perduto" (AGAMBEN 1993: 26). If we agree with Agamben, Petrarch's mourning for Laura becomes much more complex: a form of sustained relationality and something to be lamented only to the extent that lament provides the subject matter for further poems. As a consequence, it seems to me that Petrarch's *Canzoniere* is motivated (amongst other matters) by a twin impulse: on the one hand, the wish to validate mourning for Laura by making it somehow communal, by sharing it with his readers; on the other hand, the wish to guard jealously his love and therefore his mourning as something that is his and only his (because to acknowledge a loss is, as Agamben shows, to stake a claim of possession).

Let us consider, by way of example, that most important canzone on the death of Laura: *RVF* 268. From this dense and much commented poem, I wish to extract just a few lines, from the second stanza and from the congedo. The primary interlocutor of this canzone is Amor, named at the end of the first line explicitly, and addressed likewise at the start of the second stanza:

> Amor, tu 'l senti, ond'io teco mi doglio,
> quant'è 'l damno aspro et grave;
> e so che del mio mal ti pesa et dole,
> anzi del nostro, perch'ad uno scoglio
> avem rotto la nave,
> et in un punto n'è scurato il sole.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 268, vv. 12–22)

The religious imagery from the incipit of *RVF* 3 concerning the eclipse of the sun at the Crucifixion returns here ("n'è scurato il sole", v. 17). Yet the poet seeks to construct a different and more limited form of mournful community here: no longer the "commune dolor" of the Christian community on Good Friday, but rather the "dolor" of the grief shared by the poet and Amor alone, presented first as "mio mal" and then "anzi del nostro", in that beautiful conjunction that intensifies and redirects the poet's reflections at the start of the

[10] Namely the following passage from *Confessions* book VIII, chapter XII: "solitudo mihi ad negotium flendi aptior suggerebatur" [I conceived that solitariness was more fit for a business of weeping] (AUGUSTINE 2006: I, 462–463).

next line.[11] This shared grief is further highlighted by the mirroring of "ond'io teco mi doglio" and "del mio mal ti […] dole", phrasing which recalls the solitude accompanied by Love of the final lines of *RVF* 35:

> Ma pur sì aspre vie né sì selvage
> cercar non so, ch'Amor non venga sempre
> ragionando con meco, et io co•llui.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 35, vv. 12–14)

In the *congedo* of *RVF* 268, the poet sends his poem out into the world, visibly marked by the conventions of grief (mourning weeds) and in search of a mournful community:

> Fuggi 'l sereno e 'l verde,
> non t'appressare ove sia riso o canto,
> canzon mia no, ma pianto:
> non fa per te di star fra gente allegra,
> vedova sconsolata in vesta negra.
>
> (PETRARCA, *RVF* 268, vv. 78–82)

Petrarch explicitly rejects a certain type of audience for his *planctus*: that of "gente allegra". What kind of community, then, might the "vedova sconsolata" that is *RVF* 268 seek or find?

To answer this question, I want to turn to my final text: the eleventh eclogue of the *Bucolicum carmen*, a text written around the same time[12] as *RVF* 268 and – as Gur Zak has noted in an important article from 2016 – with "unmistakable thematic parallels between these two poems" (ZAK 2016: 57). Overall, Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* has been aptly presented by Zak as a series of "dialogues" which "dramatize a conflict over the proper way to assuage grief" and "as an ideal medium in which to explore [Petrarch's] conflicted views of the offering of consolation" (ZAK 2016: 38). Greater integration and comparative analysis of Petrarch's Latin and vernacular works certainly remain a desideratum (as Zak also suggests elsewhere; see ZAK 2010: 20–21), and this eclogue is a prime example of how Petrarch's mourning for Laura, typically expressed in the vernacular, spills over into his Latin writings. In short, reading *RVF* 268 alongside this eclogue suggests that any possible community of mourners would be divided rather than united.[13]

This eclogue presents us with a dialogue between three speakers, Niobe, Fusca, and Fulgida, about and around the grave of Galatea (a figure for Petrarch's Laura). These speakers share the same object of grief yet disagree in their attitude towards death and mourning. The first speaker, Niobe, seeks Galatea's grave in order to mourn there with plentiful sighs and tears, and begs Fusca to lead her to the gravesite (see PETRARCA, *Bucolicum carmen* XI, v. 1). Fusca acquiesces, and Niobe proceeds to embrace and kiss Galatea's grave, lamenting:

> Hic pallens, Galathea, iaces; iam terra cinisque,
> Iam nichil!

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[11] A similar instance of "anzi" as a way to redirect reflection can be found in *RVF* 333, vv. 9–10: "sol di lei ragionando viva et morta, | anzi pur viva, et or fatta immortale". See also *RVF* 275, vv. 1–2: "Occhi miei, oscurato è 'l nostro sole; | anzi è salito al cielo, et ivi splende". Stroppa reads the latter example teleologically as a form of "successione perfetta […] una correzione che riorienta i pensieri e gli sguardi" (STROPPA 2014: 268). In contrast, I favour Bettarini's reading, challenged explicitly by Stroppa, and according to which *RVF* 275 is a "Sonetto dove esplode la contraddizione tra cielo e terra, tra vita e morte" (see PETRARCA 2005: II, 1247). What is interesting in Stroppa's reading of "anzi", nonetheless, is that she points to a poem by Cino as a possible example of this stylistic feature for Petrarch, namely Cino's poem on the death of Henry VII, *Da poi che la Natura ha fine posto*, vv. 12–13: "E' non è morto (lasso, c'ho io detto?), | anzi vive beato in gran dolcezza" (see STROPPA 2014: 268 n. 125, and CONTINI 1960: I, 678–679 for the text of Cino's poem, with the quoted lines on 678). It is tempting to think that the "anzi" in Petrarch's poem on the death of Cino may borrow from Cino's own poetry, too.

[12] Marco Santagata dates *RVF* 268 to between May 19, 1348 and September 1, 1348 (PETRARCA 2010: 1081). Gur Zak notes via Nicholas Mann that the *Bucolicum carmen* dates to the second half of the 1340s: see ZAK 2016: 38 and MANN 1977.

[13] The following reading of Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* draws upon RUSHWORTH 2016: 55–56.

[Here, Galatea, you lie in your pallor, ah, slowing becoming,
Dust and cold ashes then nothing at all.]

(PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 9, vv. 28–29)

In this way, Niobe is associated with obsession with the past and with earthly matters (including the body of Galatea), even in opposition to religious doctrine (in particular, the resurrection of the body).

Having witnessed Niobe's outpouring of grief, Fusca voices her own advice, which as Zak notes (ZAK 2016: 53) is of a *carpe diem*, Epicurean flavour:

Placeant presentia; frustra
Preteritum expectes; tuta est oblivio amanti.

[Content yourself with the present.
Vainly we look to the past. To forget is a lover's sole solace.]

(PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 11, vv. 45–46)

In contrast to Niobe's painful attachment to memory and to the past, Fusca suggests that forgetting is the appropriate response to grief. Yet a third speaker, Fulgida interrupts the tête-à-tête between Niobe and Fusca, and chastises both for their failure to seek consolation in religious hope and the future. Fulgida recommends patience and suggests that grief is pointless, asking "Quid gemitis?" [Why do you mourn[14]?] (PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 11, v. 62). She seeks to direct Niobe and Fusca away from Galatea's grave and towards Heaven, Galatea's new and eternal home:

Vos desinite, ac meliora tenentem
Suscipite, et celum terris optate relictis.

[Therefore, have done with your tears and raise up your eyes to the better
Place where she dwells; hope for Heaven when this world is left behind you.]

(PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 9, vv. 67–68)

What is particularly interesting about this poem is that Fulgida's persuasive, Christian advice does not sway either Fusca or Niobe. As at the end of *RVF* 92, heavenly joy in the afterlife is not a solution to earthly mourning, but merely a contrast. Each of the three speakers remains rooted in their own commitment to past, present, or future. Fusca, in particular, responds with the shocking admonition "Fabula!" [Tales, idle tales!] and with a rejection of the possibility of bodily resurrection: "Quis alis celum terrestria prendent?" [On what pinions can things of earth rise to Heaven?] (PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 11, v. 69). Niobe is less confrontational and refuses to take sides:

Ambages veteres et inenodabile verum
Mittite, et integram venturis tradite litem.

[Now put aside these old puzzles and thorny problems defying
Easy solution and leave this whole debate to the future.]

(PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 11, vv. 74–75)

Yet in the final lines Niobe reasserts her fidelity to the memory of Galatea, revealing that she has been unchanged either by Fusca's advice or Fulgida's sermonizing:

Exemplarque pudicitie formamque decoris
Corde sub hoc semper memori pietate feremus.

[14] Thomas G. Bergin translates this phrase more poetically as "Know you not your grieving is idle?" (PETRARCA 1974: 191).

[Deep in my heart I shall bear with ever mindful devotion
Memory of that fair model of modesty and rare beauty.]

(PETRARCA, *Buc. car.* 11, vv. 96–97)

These three speakers are isolated from one another in their grief; their mournful community falls apart. Of course, this eclogue is schematic and allegorical, but its insight about grief resonates uncomfortably. It suggests that affective communities are formed by exclusion as well as inclusion; each speaker is an "affect alien" from the perspective of the other. As Zak highlights across the *Bucolicum carmen*, what we find is that "Petrarch's views and practice of consolation" are ultimately defined by "indeterminacy" (ZAK 2016: 39). Of these three possible responses to grief, the lyric subject of the *Canzoniere* mostly alternates between the positions of Niobe and Fulgida: between past and future, between grief and religion, between memory and renunciation. And I think that it is important to keep this oscillation between two opposing positions in motion. I am ultimately resistant to the narrative of a Petrarchan conversion from mourning to Stoic acceptance of loss, and more interested in the coexistence of incompatibilities.

Conclusion: A further intertext for "commune dolor"

By way of a brief conclusion, let us return to *RVF* 3, with the suggestion of a further possible intertext for the phrase "commune dolor": St Ambrose's *De excessu fratris sui Satyri* (*On the Death of Satyrus*). This text has already been invoked by Marco Ballarini as an intertext for Petrarch's consolatory Latin letters (BALLARINI 2008). It is also presented by Giuseppe Chiecchi in his book *La parola del dolore* as a foundational text for medieval and humanistic writings on consolation (CHIECCHI 2005: 3–46). Finally, we know that Petrarch had a copy of this text, which has been edited with his annotations (see SANTIROSI 2004: 151–202).

Reflecting on his own grief in dialogue with others who are also mourning the death of his brother Satyrus, Ambrose asks:

> Cur solus prae caeteris fleam, quem fletis omnes? Privatum dolorem communi dolore digessi, praesertim cum meae lacrymae nihil prosint, vestrae autem lacrymae fidem astruant, consolationem afferant. [...] Itaque licet privatum funus, fletus tamen est publicus. (AMBROSE 1845: 1292A)

> [Why should I be the one to show more grief for my brother than all you other mourners? I have dissolved my personal grief in the public sorrow, especially since mine is of no avail, while yours builds up faith and provides comfort. [...] Therefore, while the funeral is that of a private individual, there is general mourning. (AMBROSE 2004: 163)]

There is much to be said about this passage and its attitude towards mourning versus consolation.[15] What I want to highlight, more succinctly, is the way it suggests a reconciliatory subsuming of private grief into communal grief. This reconciliation is, perhaps, the ideal: community here means comfort, companionship, and learning how to grieve properly – where the right way to grieve is defined in the quotation above explicitly in terms of utility versus futility, consolation versus despair. But Petrarch, I contend, never reaches this unity, neither as regards his solitary mourning for Laura nor even as regards his mourning for Cino da Pistoia where, notwithstanding, a mournful community is both acknowledged and addressed. Petrarch's grief remains a *privatus dolor*; he is, as I have suggested (borrowing a term from Ahmed), an "affect alien".

Crucially, Petrarch's status as an "alien" is to a significant extent self-willed; he excludes himself more than he is himself excluded. His self-presentation as isolated and vulnerable is certainly a carefully adopted and curated posture that is quite different from the forced or traumatic exclusions treated in many of Ahmed's examples. Yet his experience of grief-stricken alienation rather than of mournful community does share with Ahmed's readings a sense of the greater variety, freedom, and flexibility afforded by alienation (as,

[15] On Petrarch and consolation see especially CHIECCHI 2005: 176–263 and MCCLURE 1991: 18–72, and also on consolation more generally PIETERS 2021.

more generally, by non-conformity). To return once more to Zak's reading of the *Bucolicum carmen*, this openness represents a form of generosity on the part of Petrarch vis-à-vis the reader:

> [Petrarch] introduces to his readers the possible forms of consolation, dramatizes the tensions and conflicts between them, and ultimately leaves it to his readers to determine what would be, in their view, the ideal remedy to the inevitable sorrows that come with living. (ZAK 2016: 62)

Petrarch does not offer us a fixed or singular guide to grief, but rather multiple possible ways of responding to loss. He is attentive to grief's capacity to divide and isolate, as well as to unite. For his own part, Petrarch found – or chose to place – himself apart from "commune dolor"; only Amor could share in his "dolore unico". Others may find, or at least hope to find, these two forms of "dolor" more compatible, as Ambrose suggests above. In other words, Petrarch's "vedova sconsolata" (as the poet addresses his own canzone on the death of Laura; PETRARCA, *RVF* 268, v. 82) has a long and uncertain journey to make in search of a community where she may fitly dwell.

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Petrarch's Poetic Conscience: Time, Truth, and Community

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I begin with an epigram from Plato's *Phaedrus*. Phaedrus and Socrates have been discoursing on the nature of love while resting under a plane tree near a stream outside Athens. At the end of the dialogue, Socrates turns to Phaedrus and remarks about their mutual friend Isocrates,

> φύσει γάρ, ὦ φίλε, ἔνεστί τις φιλοσοφία τῇ τοῦ ἀνδρὸς διανοίᾳ.
> [There is something of philosophy, my friend, in-born, by nature, in the understanding of this man.] (PLATO 279a-b).

In his autobiographical reflections *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, Petrarch noted how Aristotle appreciated Isocrates's emphasis on the unity of wisdom and eloquence.[1] My comments on Petrarch also underscore this unity and accent an innate philosophical quality in his writings related to his poetic conscience. This conscience, by my reading, pondered the possibilities of existence, including its ultimate possibility, that of non-existence. The poet and humanist sustains a feeling for life's unfolding potential on the basis of dread and anxiety over the timing of death; his writings, in form and content, display the overwhelming fact of temporality, in which every moment offers contrasting, manifold choices. His conscience calls upon himself, and his readers, to be alive to this potential, and sharpen their sensitivity to life's possibilities under the shadow of death. The call is both personal and transcendent. Not the least of Petrarch's paradoxes is that the poet calls to his readers by calling to himself, for his conscience is by nature his own.

I would highlight how Petrarch's poetic conscience is highly time-bound – invested, intricated in time; and his conscience is also, by its focus on the fact of temporality, transcendent, engaging its readers today and tomorrow as well as yesterday. In my remarks sound phenomenological echoes – of temporality, finitude, and being towards death – for phenomenology orients us to historical phenomena – "to the matter itself (zu den Sachen selbst)", as Husserl and Heidegger explained – allowing us to realize a new awareness of ourselves and others on the basis of seeing how things appear in time.[2] Time marks our perceptions, allowing them to unfold up to the final possibility of Being, namely death. For Petrarch and many of his contemporaries, life is a journey toward death; the gravity of death – his own, Laura's, his friends' – moved his poetic conscience in concentric orbits.

Individual moments of his writings coalesce into patterns when we read them through the matrix of temporality. We can begin to attend less to stasis than movement, less to completion than transition, as these qualities inhere in both form and content. Petrarch's conscience called to him to review the agonal uncertainties of his community and his world, and lend them poetic power, precisely on account of the way poetry wove these uncertainties into a tapestry that, like Penelope's funeral shroud for Laertes, remained always in a process toward completion.

Our examination of Petrarch's poetic conscience proceeds by way of reading two moments in his compositions: *RVF* 129, the 'canzone' "Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte" and the letters to Francesco Nelli, in particular *Fam.* 21.12. Apparently disparate writings – one in meter, the other in prose; one in 'volgare', the other in Latin – they nonetheless address each another about the turnings and amplitude of poetic conscience. Revolving around feelings of temporality and finitude, these writings are studies of Petrarch's stages on life's way. As do many of his other works, these pieces showcase his sense of errancy, incompletion, and imperfection. They comprehend this sense however not only, or even mainly, as a moral failing – a false choice – but more basically as an existential condition. Life, these writings demonstrate, inheres in ongoing potentiality: choice itself. Potentiality has a more vital existential quality than actuality,

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[1] See *De sui ipsius* 1.11 with reference to CICERO *Tusc.* 1.4.7 and *De orat.* 3.35.141: PETRARCH 2003: 232.

[2] See HEIDEGGER 2006: 250 (§ 50); 258 (§ 52); 260-67 (§ 53).

they suggest, and they thereby question the Aristotelian priority of 'actualitas' as the desired end of human existence.[3]

By placing side-by-side the *Rime sparse* and the *Familiares*, we hear how they speak to one another. The *Rime* offer a blueprint or matrix for reading the letters, and do so in their antiphonal contrast to them. The letters in turn heighten our sensitivity to the turnings of conscience in the verses. The two sources disclose a philosophical understanding through a method that employs a series of images and remembrances, and this method takes root in Petrarch's effort to appreciate the demands of existence prior to and beyond logic and learning.

The ground quality of this method is the use of personal voice: the voice of the poet, the voice of the humanist, the voice of the friend. While scholars from Kristeller to Witt have remarked on the personality of Petrarch's expression, we seek to uncover a deeper philosophical dimension.[4] Petrarch designs each voice, each persona to convey an individual perspective that hearkens to the individuality of his readers. The personae launch writer and reader on a voyage of individuation, creating community in individuality. This community is founded in empathy and understanding – 'pietà', 'cura', 'humanitas' – embracing what we might call 'a friendship unto death.'

This shared sensibility between writer and reader entails an awareness not only of the fragility of existence but also of its unfolding potentiality. Petrarch expresses this feeling for temporality both conceptually and stylistically, providing his readers a call to conscience, his own and their own. By studying this call to conscience, we may discern a new characteristic of Renaissance dialogue: it moves its interlocutors inward, to an inner life existing in uncertainty, with options that elicit empathy for each other's very human condition.[5]

RVF 129

The 'canzone' "Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte" consists of five stanzas of thirteen lines, along with a 'congedo'. The rhyme scheme follows that of *RVF* 125 and 126 and 'canzoni' 125 through 129 are considered a cycle. 129 is the concluding poem, but one that more fully and wholly opens up questions and observations about the poet's awareness of time.

Four of the five stanzas place the poet in a natural setting that evokes self-scrutiny and apparent doubt:

Stanza 1

Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte
mi guida Amor, ch'ogni segnato calle
provo contrario a la tranquilla vita.
Se 'n solitaria piaggia, o rivo, o fonte,
se 'nfra duo poggi siede ombrosa valle, 5
ivi s'acqueta l'alma sbigottita;
et come Amor l'envita,
or ride, or piange, or teme, or s'assecura;
e 'l volto che lei segue ov'ella il mena
si turba et rasserena, 10
et in un esser picciol tempo dura;
onde a la vista huom di tal vita experto
diria: Questo arde, et di suo stato è incerto.

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 1-13)

[3] On 'actualitas', see Thomas AQUINAS, *Sum.Theol.* I.3 a.4; I.8 a.1; ARISTOTLE, *Nic. Eth.* 1177b; *Met.* 1047a-1048b; on the last passages, see HEIDEGGER 1976: 239-301; 284. More generally, see PUGH 2002. STIERLE 2007: 306, compares the oscillating, horizontal motion of *RVF* 129 with Dante's vertical completion of his climb.

[4] KRISTELLER 1965: 65-66; WITT 2000: 93, 172, 264-66.

[5] For approaches to Renaissance dialogue, see MARSH 1980; TATEO 1993; ZORZI-PUGLIESE 1995; KIRCHER 2021.

In this first stanza, he contends with contrasting emotions: “or ride, or piange, or teme, or s’assecura”. The emotions align with joy, sorrow, fear and hope, the emotional interlocutors in the *De varietate utriusque fortune*. Here, the poet focuses on the soul’s disturbance, the “l’alma sbigottita”, when following the face of Laura, “et in un esser picciol tempo dura”. Inconstancy, vacillation, and impermanence mark the mood, leading the poet to a comment from an imaginary observer, “Questo arde, et di suo stato è incerto.”

Stanzas two, three, and five repeat and vary this theme of inconstancy.

Stanza 2

Per alti monti et per selve aspre trovo
qualche riposo: ogni habitato loco 15
è nemico mortal degli occhi miei.
A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo
de la mia donna, che sovente in gioco
gira ’l tormento ch’i’ porto per lei;
et a pena vorrei 20
cangiar questo mio viver dolce amaro,
ch’i’ dico: Forse anchor ti serva Amore
ad un tempo migliore;
forse, a te stesso vile, altrui se’ caro.
Et in questo trapasso sospirando: 25
Or porrebbe esser vero? or come? or quando?

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 14-26)

The opening lines “di pensier in pensier” echoes in lines 17-18 of the second stanza, now with another enjambment: “A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo | de la mia donna (...)”. The poet walks and thinks, and the movement appears both external and internal.[6] Once again, he holds an internal dialogue about Love’s unreliable service “ad un tempo migliore”; emphasizing the perambulative poetic process, the “passo” of line 17 falls as the “trapasso” of the stanza’s concluding lines, with its conditional, temporal question: “Or porrebbe esser vero? or come? or quando?”

Petrarch shifts the natural imagery in the third stanza.

Stanza 3

Ove porge ombra un pino alto od un colle
talor m’arresto, et pur nel primo sasso
disegno co la mente il suo bel viso.
Poi ch’a me torno, trovo il petto molle 30
de la pietate; et alor dico: Ahi, lasso,
dove se’ giunto! et onde se’ diviso!
Ma mentre tener fiso
posso al primo pensier la mente vaga,
et mirar lei, et obliar me stesso, 35
sento Amor sì da presso,
che del suo proprio error l’alma s’appaga:
in tante parti et sí bella la veggio,
che se l’error durasse, altro non cheggio.

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 27-39)

It emphasizes shadow and light, an imagery already adumbrated in the “ombrosa valle” of line 5. There is a stop in shadow, “talor m’arresto” – and now the poet recreates Laura’s face in the first stone he sees. The internal dialogue here reflects his awareness of his own immobility. At the center of the ‘canzone’, lines 31

[6] See the process of walking knowledge in *Fam*. 4.1 and 6.2, as well as the sea-imagery expressing temporality in *Fam*. 1.1.

and 32, there is a meta-reflection about his own state of rapt absorption; this moment broaches the following lines in which the poet comments on his loss of self. The state is both fixed and transient in his narrative: "Ma mentre tener fiso | posso al primo pensier la menta vaga, | et mirar lei, et obliar me stesso, | sento Amor sí da presso, | che del suo proprio error l'alma s'appaga (…)" "L'alma s'appaga" returns the reader to the "alma sbigottita" of line 6. Here there is rest and solace, but it is paradoxically the solace of error and wandering, with its Augustinian close "che se l'error durasse, altro non cheggio."[7] "Se l'error durasse": the conditional answers and reinforces the "esser picciol tempo dura" in the opening stanza.

Stanza 4
I' l'ò piú volte (or chi fia che mi 'l creda?) 40
ne l'acqua chiara et sopra l'erba verde
veduto viva, et nel tronchon d'un faggio
e 'n bianca nube, sì fatta che Leda
avria ben detto che sua figlia perde,
come stella che 'l sol copre col raggio; 45
et quanto in piú selvaggio
loco mi trovo e 'n piú deserto lido,
tanto più bella il mio pensier l'adombra.
Poi quando il vero sgombra
quel dolce error, pur lì medesmo assido 50
me freddo, pietra morta in pietra viva,
in guisa d'uom che pensi et pianga et scriva.

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 40-52)

The following fourth stanza, as already mentioned, stands apart from the others by sounding the poet's identity in first position; but this contrast amplifies the incohesive turnings of heart, mind, and vision.[8] Laura's living image appears in water, land, and sky, more resplendent than starry Helen of Troy. The visions are linked but disparate, and commentators have remarked on the poet's change from the more organic reflections of 'canzone' 126, "Chiare, fresche et dolci acque".[9] Here the "pensier l'adombra": the thought traces, represents, "shadows" her face as bright as the sun. His passionate striving cannot be but flawed, yet it is one that gives him life as it inheres in time's passing (lines 49-52):

> Poi quando il vero sgombra
> quel dolce error, pur lí medesmo assido
> me freddo, pietra morta in pietra viva,
> in guisa d'uom che pensi et pianga et scriva.[10]

The last lines pile on temporal abutments and internal paradox: the truth about his error, his ongoing wandering is a revelation unto death; it strikes him into cold stasis, into becoming more stone-like than the surface on which he shadowed her face, so that he shows a transfixed figure of a weeping, thinking, writing poet, a timeless image of creative mourning.[11]

Stanza 5
Ove d'altra montagna ombra non tocchi,
verso 'l maggiore e 'l piú expedito giogo
tirar mi suol un desiderio intenso; 55
indi i miei danni a misurar con gli occhi

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[7] Cf. AUGUSTINE, *Conf.*, 8.7: "da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo."
[8] LANYI 1979: 208, has commented on the difference of the fourth stanza, in the sense of its "outward movement."
[9] PETRARCA 2005: 1.630; GERI 2013: 55. BIGI 1983: 80, speaks of the poem as a "canzone di lontananza", citing Carducci and Contini.
[10] See ASCOLI 2011: 29-34, which focuses on the poet's internal divisions but not on the paradoxical temporal movement that leads to this stasis. Also STURM-MADDOX 1992: 124.
[11] On this passage, see also ZAK 2010: 47-50 and FENG 2017: 21.

comincio, e ’ntanto lagrimando sfogo
di dolorosa nebbia il cor condenso,
alor ch’i’ miro et penso,
quanta aria dal bel viso mi diparte 60
che sempre m’è sí presso et sí lontano.
Poscia fra me pian piano:
Che sai tu, lasso! forse in quella parte
or di tua lontananza si sospira.
Et in questo penser l’alma respira. 65

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 53-65)

The ‘canzone’ moves on in its final full stanza, stanza five. For the transfiguration into stone, this stasis, is momentary. The poet returns to the landscape and is now at the mountain summit, “ove (...) ombra non tocchi.” His “desiderio intenso” creates a vision from the mountaintop, “indi i miei danni a misurar con gli occhi | comincio.” “Comincio” is stressed, as the beginning at the end, a looking down and back and across at a process over time, in which he comes to understand – is coming into understanding – how the “bel viso (...) sempre m’è sí presso et sí lontano”.[12] The poet accents that the “sempre” conveys not simply simultaneity but rather constant oscillation and motion, which produces the final internal dialogue, “Che sai tu, lasso? forse (...)”. The third “forse” of the poem underscores the hope in potentiality, “Et in questo penser l’alma respira.” The soul breathes again, being “sbigottita” and then ‘appagata’ in error.

Congedo

Canzone, oltra quell’alpe
là dove il ciel è più sereno et lieto
mi rivedrai sovr'un ruscel corrente,
ove l’aura si sente
d'un fresco et odorifero laureto. 70
Ivi è ’l mio cor, et quella che ’l m’invola;
qui veder pôi l’imagine mia sola.

(PETRARCA, *RVF* 129, vv. 66-72)

The allusions the poet conveys in *RVF* 129 are rich and manifold. The ‘congedo’ alone, with its final line, “qui veder poi l’imagine mia sola,” echoes and comments on *RVF* 16.14, “la disiata vostra forma vera,” while remaining ambiguous about the *l’imagine mia sola*: that of the poet, or of his beloved?

RVF 129 expresses, through the lens of the poet, how variable his thoughts become as he wanders amid the sunlit peaks and shadowed valleys. Scholars have discussed the ‘canzone’ as the last of a cycle that begins with *RVF* 125, “Se ’l pensier che mi strugge” and have done so on account of formal technical as well as conceptual reasons. The consolatory vision of Laura in 125 and 126 yields, it is argued, to the poet’s anxious, “tragic” sense of exile from her. I perceive an underlying continuity, as this final ‘canzone’ reveals and completes the poet’s initial feelings about temporality, community, and truth. “Di pensier in pensier” stands in dialogue with the earlier poems as well as the later important ‘canzone’ 264, “I’ vo pensando”; its evocation of distance and longing, its involvement with time’s passing, brings to a close, for the moment, themes present in the previous ‘canzoni’ and developed in those that follow, and in his letters.[13] Before turning to the letters, I present a few remarks on this continuity, in particular the way these poems show a cyclical progression, a gyre, of poetic conscience.

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[12] As ASCOLI 2011, 29-45, has noted, *RVF* 129 stands in conversation with *Fam*. 4.1, Petrarch’s account of ascending Mt. Ventoux.

[13] PETRARCA 2004: 627; PETRARCA 2005: 1.625. See also BAROLINI 1989: 25: “This series [the cycle *RVF* 125-129] takes the poet from the brink of escape, in 125, to actual ec-stasis in 126, where momentarily the turning-back mechanism of memory places him outside the temporal continuum, only to return him to the adamantine chains of time and narrative in 127, 128, and 129.”

'Canzone' 125, "Se 'l pensier che mi strugge", sets forth an idea continued in "De pensier in pensier", that of thoughts being voiced in poetic language. The poem struggles with verbs of release: "strugge", "sforza" (14), "sgombra" (23), "scaltro" (26), "sfogarme" (32), "stempre" (37), "snoda" (41). The harsh sounds of these words illuminate the central simile, that of the tongue-tied child:

Come fanciul ch'a pena
volge la lingua et snoda,
che dir non sa ma 'l più tacer è noia,
così 'l desir me mena
a dire.... (vv. 40-44)

The poet addresses the banks of the stream where Laura walked "a partir teco i lor pensieri nascosti". He not only shares, but sends along his heart's buried thoughts. He seeks rest, "ma come po s'appaga l'alma dubbiosa et vaga" (65) with anticipation, we have seen, of the references to "alma" in *RVF* 129: "sbigottita", 'appagata.'

The following 'canzone', the famous *RVF* 126, "Chiare, fresche et dolci acque," attempts a strategy of remembrance in the sense of gathering the thoughts of time past: "col sospir me rimembra", the poet writes, "ove le belle membra | pose colei che sola a me par donna" (2-5). He collects himself, especially in images and appearances of Laura.

Already in this poem, time past connects to time future, since the moments the poet recollects leads him to envision existential possibility. He imagines his death in the woods, where his beloved may see him as earth amid the stones: "Tempo verrà ancora forse | ch'a l'usato soggiorno | torni le fera bella et manueta (...) cercandomi (...) già terra infra le pietre vedendo (...)" (27-35) and this moment causes her to sigh, too, in 'pietà' and remembrance.

This conditional state, this future possibility, is full of action, signified by the gerundives "cercando" and "vedendo"; it is a spiral of thoughts gyrating outward from pity and self-pity over his death. The poet's thoughts find expression in the flowers circling down on Laura, and then momentarily transfix him, as in 129: "Così carco d'oblio | (...) et sì diviso | da l'imagine vera, ch'i' dicea sospirando: | 'Qui come venn'io o quando?'" (56-62). As we witnessed in the final 'canzone' of the cycle, the poet describes a temporary stasis, for the moment is recollected, the transfixion resolved by the conditional question of time. The "imagine vera", from which he is apart, will echo in the final line of 129, as we have heard, "l'imagine mia sola", his alone, solitary image.

The intervening 'canzone', 127, releases its thinking from a primary mood of restlessness. The 'rime' "son seguaci de la mente afflitta" (3) and in the poet's verses, "i sospiri | parlando àn triegua et al dolor soccorso" (10-11). He aims for composition of mind and word, yet is in continual motion.

The following stanzas pursue the road of recollection the poet traveled in 126: "Amor col rimembrar sol mi mantene" (18); sì forte mi rimembra | del portamento umile" (39). He would piece together images of past but present events, gathering, with the same rhyme of 126, Laura's "pargolette membra | rimembra" (36) in his poetic embrace. Now these pursuits are tied to the rising and setting of the sun, and course of the seasons; the light and warmth are joined to desuetude, decay, and darkness, "ch'allor fioriva et poi crebbe anzi agli anni | cagion solo et riposo de' miei affanni" (41-42).

"Cagion et riposo": for even winter sun blazes on the snow, and in darkness Laura's eyes appear like "stelle errant (...) per l'aere sereno" (44; 58); and these images, so recollected, bring the poet to the momentary rest in forgetful thoughtlessness that is a hallmark of his hope-filled chasing after her memory:

Che quando sospirando ella sorride
m'infiamma sì che oblio
niente apprezza, ma diventa eterno:
né state il cangia né lo spegne il verno (vv. 53-56)

This moment, as in the other 'canzoni', is recalled at the middle of the poem. The poet moves on after this ecstasy, and he meditates on his passing insufficiency that fires his passion to find new thoughts, words, and feelings with a wider range of possibility. He could perhaps ("forse") sooner count the stars "Ad una ad una"

or " 'n picciol vetro chiuder tutte le acque (...) quando in sì poca carta | novo penser di ricontar mi nacque" (85-88). The image again is Augustinian, from the story of the young boy teaching the saint about mysteries of the Trinity; he could more easily empty the sea with a conch shell than understand them.[14] But here the poet considers the endless variety of thoughts recorded on his journey. The 'congedo' closes "ma quinci de la morte indugio prendo." The poet heads toward death, and his multitude of wandering thoughts disclose life's potential at every instant, establishing a fragmentary whole.

Letters to Nelli

Petrarch's poetic conscience shines through his Latin letters, in which time both chases and opens up his thinking about the field of human action. Petrarch picks up the theme of conscience and temporality in a series of letters to Francesco Nelli (ca. 1304-1363). Nelli, a prior at the Florentine Church of Santissimi Apostoli, encountered Petrarch in 1350 during Petrarch's visit to the city, and became Petrarch's most frequent correspondent. We have forty-four letters from Petrarch to Nelli, including twenty-nine in the *Familiares*. Nelli's extant letters to Petrarch amount to thirty, and were published in 1892 by Henri Cochin. Cochin's edition is based on MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale lat. 8631, a codex that Petrarch himself may have commissioned. Petrarch would christen Nelli "Simonides" and dedicate to him the *Seniles*. He was tutor to Petrarch's son Giovanni; and he was part of the Florentine sodality of Petrarch's friends – a "legio devota", Nelli called it – that included Boccaccio, the elder Lapo, Zanobi da Strada, and Forse Donati.[15]

I examine Petrarch's dialogue with Nelli about how the fact of temporality reverberates in his conscience, and I will focus on *Fam.* 21.12 (1359), in reference to earlier letters from the collection, *Fam.* 16.11 and 16.12 (1353). Similar to the 'canzoni', the letters form a thematic cycle.

21.12's rubric suggests the intensity of Petrarch's preoccupation: "De laxandis temporum angustiis sistendaque vite fuga": on stretching or expanding the shortness of time and bringing to a standstill the fleetingness of life.[16] It sounds a note that initially contrasts with the musings of the 'rime', since the poet of the 'canzoni' follows the wanderings of time and season, while here, in the letters, the writer appears to seek a stop to this movement. Yet the contrast, we will see, is antiphonal; Petrarch composes a dialectical arrangement in the two genres, since the moment in the present confronts time past and time future, and the writer is alive to choices for actions in all three dimensions.

Petrarch announces this theme with Nelli in the two letters from their earlier correspondence, 16.11 and 16.12. In 16.11, the humanist sounds out "quam cara res est tempum." But what makes time a dear or precious thing? He begins,

> Non solebat michi tempus esse tam carum; quamvis enim eque semper incerti, plus saltem sperati tempus tunc erat; nunc res et spes, postremo omnia in angustum desinunt. (*Fam.* 16.11.1)[17]

We hear the word "angustum" that will describe the topic of the later letter: brevity or spatial narrowness. Petrarch attributes to time's preciousness its brevity. "Paucitas autem est que precium rebus facit." [Furthermore scarcity is what gives things their value.] With an essayistic development of ideas, he is moved

[14] One of the earliest records of this encounter is in the hagiography by Petrarch's contemporary Pietro de' Natali (Petrus de NATALIBUS, *Catalogus Sanctorum* VII,128). See the reference in VAN FLETEREN and SCHNAUBELT, OSA 1999: 53. If Pietro composed his *Catalogus* between 1369 and 1372, there is a likelihood that the two men knew one another and possibly corresponded. See PAOLI 2012.

[15] DOTTI (ed. and transl.) 2012): 4. See also GARBINI 2013. Despite the letters testifying to their friendship and to Nelli's place in Trecento cultural history, I have found only one article concerning their correspondence: CHIECCHI 2003.

[16] References to the letters are from PÉTRARQUE 2002-2015. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. PÉTRARQUE, 6.211.

[17] PÉTRARQUE, 5.87. [Time did not used to be so dear to me; for although it is always uncertain, then clearly I was hoping for much more from it; but now both time and hope, indeed everything devolve into scarcity.]

to declare time's irreplaceable value: "tempora semel elapsa non redeunt; ea demum irreperabilis est iactura" [Once time has elapsed, it does not return; the break is exactly that: irreparable.] (16.11.5).
But time's dearness is more than this, this awareness of its evanescence. It is the matrix in which Petrarch's thinking moves. Similar to the poet in the *Rime*, Petrarch is careful to inform his reader – here, Nelli – about his journey to awareness: "Non solebat (...) tunc (...) nunc." He read, he says, Seneca's counsel to Lucilius; now he understands it: "Noveram caros dies; inextimabiles non noveram", he writes in Senecan style, "audite me, pueri, quibus integra est etas, inextimabile tempus est" [I used to know days were precious; I did not know they were invaluable. Hear me, o youth, who are in the bloom of life: time's worth is beyond calculation.] (16.11.4).[18] To cite the old adage, youth is wasted on the young. In another 'canzone' from the cycle, "Italia mia", the poet uses a similar apostrophe:

> Signor, mirate come 'l vola
> et sì come la vita
> fugge et la Morte n'è sovra le spalle.
> Voi siete or qui; pensate a la partita (PETRARCA *RVF* 128.97-101)

Yet Petrarch here describes to Nelli his own growing consciousness that has also reached him at this moment of life. It is on the path of transformed understanding that changes his thinking and his style of expression: "bona pars temporis a tergo est" [the best part of time is behind us], he tells Nelli, and therefore:

> Que cum ita sint, et breviores deinceps epystolas et submissiorem stilum et leniores decet esse sententias; primum temporum brevitati, reliquo fatigato animo ascribes. (*Fam.* 16.11.6)[19]

This thought lead again to another; the meditation on time's passing moves, in time, to a deeper feeling of friendship: "Neve frustra hodie philosophatum putes", he writes, "novi ego animum moresque tuos (...) Ureris angeris estuas afflicteris et dum maxime siles, clamat humanitas tua, meque de rebus meis invicta pietas interrogat" [So that you don't think I have been philosophizing in vain today, I know your mind and your ways (...) You are enflamed, distressed, agitated, and afflicted; and even when you remain most silent, your human kindness cries out, and your unbowed devotion asks me about my affairs] (16.11.7).[20] Petrarch moderates his style, to the point where he hear Nelli speak in his absence and silence, on the basis of a common 'humanitas'.

The following letter in the collection, 16.12, also speaks with Nelli about the humanist's struggle to "find time" and adds, "puto enim ad multa sufficeret [tempus] nisi illud nostra segnities angustaret" (16.12.2).[21] Once again the 'angustum' is in view, and he continues, "laxare illud est animus, de quo fortassis dabitur ut alicubi pluribus ad te scribam." [The thought is to extend time, about which I may be able to write you more later.] Here the humanist signals a link to the project of 21.12. Returning to his friend, he tells him that he writes by night. "Quod ad hanc attinet noctem, tentabo si (...) sententias longas brevibus verbis amplecti queam" [As for this night, I will try to succeed in capturing long opinions with brief words.] Night's passage moves him to write succinctly and pregnantly, and amid the darkness he sees the bright face of Nelli in the letters he has sent. "Michi quidem, amice, luculentissimus epistole tue tenor sole clarius animum scribentis ostendit: anxius es (...) Sciebam; nullis opus erat verbis; absentem intueor, tacentem audio" [The brilliant course of your letter shows me your mind, my friend, more clearly than the sun: you are worried (…) I knew

[18] The reference is to SENECA, *ep.* 1.2.
[19] [These things being as they are, it is fitting from now on that the letters are briefer and my style humbler, and my opinions simpler. You can attribute the first of these to the brevity of time, and the rest to the weariness of my mind.]
[20] These two letters, *Fam.* 16.11 and 16.12, are typically analyzed in context of the "affairs" that led Petrarch to stay in Milan, at the expense of straining his friendships with his Florentine friends, including Boccaccio. Nelli served as an emissary between Petrarch and these friends during this difficult period. See WILKINS 1961: 129-31; and Ugo Dotti's comments in PÉTRARQUE, 5.445-49.
[21] PÉTRARQUE, 5.92-99. "I consider time to be sufficient for many things, if our sluggishness did not restrict it." The humanist refers to the example of the Roman tribune Vulteius, who persuaded his legion to commit suicide in a single night rather than surrender.

that: there was no need for words: I see you though you are absent, I hear you though you are silent.] (*Fam.* 16.12.3-4).

This letter, like the preceding one, connects Petrarch's care for time, his sense of its dearness, with his care for his friends, since the community they share is also time-bound, in motion, and, as he expands in the later letter, rounded with the sleep of death.

Written six years later, *Fam.* 21.12 opens with a superlative, and universal thesis: "Fugacissimum quidem tempus est, frenarique ullo ingenio non potest; seu sopito, seu vigilii labentur hore dies menses anni secula; omnia que sub celo sunt, mox ut orta sunt, properant et ad finem suum mira velocitate rapiuntur." The contrast is dramatic, with absolutes and negations, but also with crescendos of change and development.[22]

In the very first letter of the *Familiares*, Petrarch writes to his Socrates, "ad ipsum vite limen auspicio mortis accessi."[23] Now, to Nelli, his future Simonides, the seasons whirl by as he and all else spin toward their end. Petrarch avails himself of the metaphor of the sea-voyage: "non ut in mari ventis alternantibus varia navigatio, sed unus semper est vite cursus isque celerrimus; nunquam regredi nunquamque subsistere est; tempestate qualibet et omni vento provehimur (...) omne momentum nos impellit et invitos ex hoc pelago in portum trudit, vie amantes, metuentes termini, preposteros viatores" [If at sea the voyage varies with the shifting winds, it is not so with the course of life, always steady and most rapid : there is no reversal, no stop; in any storm, with every wind, we advance (…) every moment pushes us on and drives us, unwilling, from the depths into port, lovers of the way, cowards of the end, hasty travelers] (*Fam.* 22.12.4).[24]

We can pause here and think on the apparent contrasts to our reading of the 'rime'. Petrarch places the reader at sea, and not in the mountains. More strikingly, he speaks not as an individual poet, but in the voice of common humanity. The letter philosophizes more openly than the poem, even as we can see in its phrases reflections of the poetic wanderings: "vie amantes, metuentes termini". The singular poet becomes more fully emblematic. His halting voice, forming sweet songs in pursuit of Laura, is transformed in Latin cadences echoing the humanist's meditative urgency: "his mollio, his durior, his longior, his brevior via: omnibus una celeritas est. Non eodem calle, sed iisdem passibus gradimur, diversisque tramitibus omnes unum petimus finem" [Some have an easier way, some a harsher, some a longer, some a briefer: there is the same pace for all. Not by the same road, by the same steps we advance, and by diverse foot-paths we all travel to a common end] (*Fam.* 21.12.3).

"Omnes unum petimus finem"; "omnia ad finem suum (...) rapiuntur." "Finis", "terminus", is shared by all, no matter the diverse means of reaching it. The bond of humanity is its mortality; we are friends unto death, Petrarch suggests, though as "lovers of the way", we are also "hasty travelers": indeed, as we fear, and at times ignore, our common destination.

"Finis" is the keyword of the letter, and of Petrarch's larger philosophical orientation. "Frustra tergiversamur, ire oportet", he continues, "imo vero pervenire; iter a tergo est, finis ante oculos" [We dither in vain, we must go on, indeed, arrive: the path lies behind us, the end is in sight] (*Fam.* 12.21.4). These opening lines, with their emphasis on fearing and facing the end, provide Petrarch with his challenge, "quod istud laxande vite propositum est?" How do we expand, extend life, in awareness of the end? The poet meets the pedagogue: "In primis, fateor, componendum animum ad amorem finis." We must turn, he writes his friend, from fearing to loving the end.

The letter's next section is taken up with this discussion, and to underscore his theme Petrarch resorts again to antithetical contrasts. Those who love the end are those given to the study of virtue, a 'rarum genus': they are those who live a "completed life, which Seneca has discussed" [vivere vita peracta cuius mentio apud Senecam est.] They have escaped the bonds of emotional turmoil, turmoil featured in the opening lines of *RVF* 129 or in the *De remediis*. Here Petrarch can express this state through negation:

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[22] PÉTRARQUE, 6.211-225 (21.12.1) [Most fleeting indeed is time, and no means can retrain it; whether we be in slumber or awake, hours days months years ages roll on. Everything under heaven, from the moment of its birth, hurries on and is taken to its end with amazing speed.}

[23] PÉTRARQUE, 1.25 (1.1.22) [I stepped onto the very threshold of life under the sign of death.]

[24] Reading *preproperos* for *preposteros* in the text.

> quo vite genere, ut opinor, nichil est dulcius, quando nichil terret, nichil solicitat, nichil angit, nichil expectatur, nisi quod adeo venturum esse certum est, ut nullo obice possit arceri; quando presens bonum recordatio preteriti venturiqu spes accumulant. (*Fam.* 21.12.6)[25]

Here we may think of the interlocutors of fear, sorrow, and hope in the *De remediis*, and the echo of "or piange, or teme" in the *Rime*. The ineluctable future end, accepted with equanimity, with the awareness of a 'vita peracta', transmutes leaden anxieties into golden hopes and memories. Time is gathered, and transcended, in the complete life.

But in case Nelli, or other readers, imagine that this describes Petrarch's fixed state of actualized virtue, the humanist reminds them that this virtue entails a process; he uses the word "finis" in this context, too: "Ad hanc finem", he writes, "non perveniunt qui post concupiscentias suas eunt; nunquam enim peragunt qui semper incipiunt, nunquam impletur futile aut pertusam vas, nullus infinito finis est" [Those people do not arrive at this end who run after their passions; for they never complete, finish who always begin: a useless, broken vase is never full, there is no end to the endless] (*Fam.* 21.12.7). Here "finis" appears to mean completion, or wholeness, or fulfillment. It suggests a meaning different from 'end, terminus, death'. It has a moral sound, and a moral soundness: "nullus infinito finis est".

Petrarch is carried away in this moral moment to develop this contrast, and speaks to Nelli about those devoted to "semper vaga et infinita cupiditas" [continually diffuse, infinite desire]: "Qui hanc semper sectantur, infinitum iter arripiunt," [Those who always adhere to this [desire] pursue an unending path] he writes (§ 8). They move to and fro in passionate aimlessness, and, in fact, "Horum vita non finitur sed abrumpitur", whereas the wise, by comparison,

> illorum vero vite peractis officiis felices otioseque reliquie sunt; horum igitur imperfecta desinit, illorum perfecta durat vita, et tum demum iocunda, tum vera vita esse incipit, dum perfecta est.
>
> [The lives of these do not finish but are cut short, while the lives of those with duties complete are happy and at rest; for the former therefore life falls off imperfect, for the latter life lasts a perfect period, and so finally joyful: for true life begins to exist when it is perfect.] (*Fam.* 21.12.8)

This is a clear and pleasant contrast, in which "finis" and "perfecta" acquire a moral rather than an existential resonance. The sage has actualized virtue, has a "perfecta vita". We might be led to think that Petrarch now reflects upon and indicts the errancy of the poet's pursuit of Laura, which was punctuated, we have seen, by temporary ecstasies.

But to rest in this indictment would miss the existential impetus of the letter, an impetus conveyed as much or more in style as in content. The letter gathers and meditates on the meaning of temporal vagrancy by beginning its discourse with "finis" as death; "ad finem suum [omnia] mira velocitate rapiuntur"; "omnia unum petimus finem". After beginning with this meditation, the letter shows the movements of Petrarch's mind, "di pensier in pensier". The idea of the "vita peracta" surfaces in the ocean of disquiet, whose currents the humanist, like the poet, may trace but not master, so attuned is he to time's force in his life, evoked by the soundings of language. He admits this dynamic position of potentiality in the next sentence. It is the fulcrum or axis of the letter, on which his thinking gyrates:

> Michi uni ex eorum grege qui medium locum tenent, cui necdum peracta, nec in longum cupiditatis imperio protrahenda nunquamque peragenda vita est, cui aliquid, cui multum desit, sed finitum tamen, cui preterea ad peragenda que superant non multis seculis sit opus, sed tamen tempore opus sit et sole temporis angustie timeantur, ea quam dixi laxandi temporis necessaria ars videtur.
>
> [As for me: I am one of that crew who hold a middle place, my life is not yet complete, nor prolonged or completed under the sway of desire; I lack some, indeed much, but nonetheless within limits: the task is to complete what needs completing not over many centuries but yet within time, and the narrowness of time is

[25] PÉTRARQUE, 6.213 (21.12.6) [I believe that nothing is sweeter to this form of life when nothing frightens us, nothing worries, nothing distresses it, nothing is anticipated except that which surely must come and that cannot be prevented by any obstacle, and when the memory of the past good and the hope for the future good increase our present good."] Cf. SENECA, *ep.* 32.5.

frightening, and therefore it appears necessary to possess what I have called the art of extending time.] (*Fam.* 21.12.9)

We don't know how quickly, or how often, Nelli read this sentence, or under which time-bound circumstances. It is a cascade of dependent clauses "qui, cui, nec, cui, cui, sed, cui, que, sed." The humanist defines, revises, shifts his position, and the syntax mirrors the opening declaration of holding the "medium locum", the position of possibilities under the clicking clock of time, whose increasing narrowness or strictures ("angustie") demand the art of expansion or extension ("ars laxandi").

The remainder of the letter addresses this art. One must not waste time! The art appears simple but is most difficult. For the young, who have the most time, do not know time's value. Petrarch returns here to the theme of his earlier letter to Nelli, *Fam.* 16.11. Echoing his *De remediis*, Petrarch criticizes the false hopes of both the young and the old, who would imagine having more time before dying: "Hanc ne in finem circumveniar, aperire oculos incipio; satius est enim sero quam nunquam sapere" [And so that I am not led astray in moving to this end, I am beginning to open my eyes; it is better to reach wisdom late than never] (*Fam.* 21.12.13). Here the word "finis" reverts to its earlier connotation, as the mortal end.

We notice the verbs: "circumvenire" in hanc finem; "incipere" aperire oculos. Extending time is paradoxically a function of time: if we must seize the moment, we must also be ready for, aware of, the moment in its passing. Here Petrarch's readers could recall the "comincio" in the final full stanza of *RVF* 129: "indi i miei danni a misurar con gli occhi | comincio", the poet writes from the mountain top. At the clarity of the summit, he would "begin", summoning the remembrance of past things, "i miei danni", while the humanist letter-writer "begin[s]" to see the days of shadow before him. Petrarch writes variations on the theme of time and mortality; the backward glance implies the awareness of what is to come, just as the future is predicated on what comes before it in earlier years or his immediate, emergent present.

Petrarch's conscience calls to Nelli's and both men would know that it took six years for Petrarch to keep his promise of recording his art. Perhaps it took six years of practice: the point he is making is that time fashions us even as we try to master it. Of his vigils, he tells his friend, "Utinam hec iuveni mens fuisset; unum hoc saltem gratulor, seni erit" [If only this intention had been part of my youth; I am grateful at least that I have come to in my later years] (*Fam.* 21.12.16), for he can now write with conviction, "de omnibus vita annis una mortis hora pronuntiat. Ad hanc componi singularis et summe providentie opus est" [the very hour of death announces the state of one's entire life. For this we must prepare with singular and complete foresight] (*Fam.* 21.12.17). Petrarch would have read Cicero's paraphrase of the *Phaedo*, "tota philosophorum vita (...) commentatio mortis est."[26] The humanist, in this 1359 letter to a friend, provides the dictum with its existential aperture: the opening for his realization of this truth comes late in life, when he wanders in 'medio loco': past and future are equally present, equally necessary, equally alive with potential. He cites Horace about his efforts, "Nil mortalibus arduum", and adds "inter tenebras scripsi, quod reversa luce vix legerem. He sunt cure mee" [Nothing for mortals is difficult (...) I wrote amid the darkness things I can hardly read with the return of light. These are my cares.][27] To mortals, those caught in finite time, no obstacle is too great, and the transit from day to night provides him with the space and quiet to write.

The poet traced Laura's face in shadow, imagining her absence and his death. The humanist records his thoughts at night, and with the dawn, 'vix legerem': has the light chased his shadow, his meditation? In fact, the letter now breaks into imaginary dialogue, with Nelli asking his friend, what have you learned? "Disco senescere," he replies, "disco mori" [I learn to grow old; I learn to die] (*Fam.* 21.12.27).

Petrarch tells his friend that he has progressed over time to learn how to confront and extend time. His poetic conscience has awakened him to time's power, traced in language, and he says that his renewed zeal to read and write has led to moments when the cares of time are forgotten. He describes a humanist counterpart to the poetic ecstasy of the *Rime*:

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[26] CICERO, *Tusc.* 1.30: "[t]ota philosophorum vita...commentatio mortis est", adapting PLATO, *Phaedo* 67d: "καὶ τὸ μελέτημα αὐτὸ τοῦτό ἐστιν τῶν φιλοσόφων."

[27] PÉTRARQUE, 6.221 (21.12.23, 26). The reference is to HORACE, *Od.* 1.3.37. See the comments on this passage by WILKINS, 1961: 167-68.

> Sed redeo ad inceptum et precipuam illam studiorum curam, in qua ego sic exerceor, amice, quasi nunc ceperim, et si nihil amplius, satis est quod multis interea curis gravibus abstrahor et obliviscor temporum, et delector et iuvat vivere et ea quibus maxime conflictantur homines, vix sentio (*Fam.* 21.12.31).
>
> [But to return to where I began; and to that distinguished care for studies, in which I so train, my friend, as if I have just now started, and if nothing else, it is enough that in the meantime I am released from pressing cares and forget the times, and take delight and joy in life, and I hardly feel those things that greatly torment humankind.][28]

In the *Familiares*, Petrarch couches this experience between his discussions of the seasons of life. While his later years may correct the errors of his youth, they still are founded on the past: a ripe old age harvests the fruits planted and nurtured in early life: “eadem iuvente studiis prefulta solicite, dives bonorumque ferax artium atque utilis et iocunda est” [if the same life has been helped by dedicated studies in youth, it is rich and abundant with the humane arts, both useful and pleasant] (*Fam.* 21.12.30), he writes in an Horatian tone. Now, in fact and in recollection, Petrarch sees that his youth provided the basis for his present insights: “Quod propositum nec puero defuit, nisi quod tum lentus ex commodo quasi matutinis ibam horis, nunc gradum quasi pulsius ingemino, versa ad occasum die” [This was my inclination when young, except then I walked slowly, at my convenience, as if at morn, when now, facing sunset, I am impelled to double my pace] (*Fam.* 21.12.32).

These gatherings of memories are enriched, bound more tightly by the passing of time. Time allows the poet and humanist to collect insights and remembrances and record them, as he says, “legendo, scribendo, cogitando, vigilando” [reading, writing, thinking, holding watch] (*Fam.* 21.12.33). Time urges him to hasten his humanist practice, to explore and realize the possibilities that it opens up for him, before his final sleep over the verses of Virgil.

Conclusion: lines, circles, gyres

Petrarch’s emphasis on time’s flow and passing, and life’s end, suggest the linearity of time: from birth to death, youth to age. Many of his readers, past and present, have noticed a similar linearity in Petrarch’s thought and moral development, a linearity he himself articulated. The love-struck poet yields to the virtuous humanist; errancy of desire matures to more focused, cerebral contemplation. This becomes evident in an early commentary, that of the fifteenth-century Milanese humanist Guiniforte Barzizza. Interpreting the first sonnet of the *Rime sparse*, Barzizza wrote with respect to line four, “quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’sono”: “ch’io era huomo sensuale, et hora vivo come rationale.”[29]

This linearity, I have argued, approaches Petrarch’s writings with a certain representation about his life and work’s moral ‘telos’ or ‘finis’, a representation grounded in the notion that an actualized state of being, the ‘vita peracta’, structures and determines the meaning that these writings would convey. While this view is correct, I do not find it wholly true. My reading by contrast would observe the circularity of his thinking, how its poetic narratives in verse and prose recall, gather, and re-gather past experience. *RVF* 129 and *Fam.* 21.12 compose and conclude a cycle of impressions, and do so momentarily, as the writer is alive to existing ‘in medio loco’, in a transient instant that discloses both past and future possibility. Petrarch’s poetic conscience calls to himself and his readers to recognize the choices that existentially lie in wait, should one have eyes to see them.

This heightened sense for personal potential, for the choices inherent in life’s passage, dovetail with two modalities that constantly condition his conscience. One is the ever-growing awareness of mortality: life’s finitude fires the feeling for the irreplaceable immediacy of the moment; it intensifies the ‘cura’ for expanding the strictures of time. The second modality is dialogue, as the poet-humanist realizes his solidarity with

[28] Perhaps Machiavelli had this passage in mind when writing his famous letter to Vettori in December 1513. That letter, too, involved an exchange with a close friend.

[29] I am indebted for this comment to Nicolas Longinotti. See RUGGIERO 2017: 125.

others, in their singular finitude. Dialogue is then not a revival of past models; the classical and Christian models of dialogue are useful precisely because they contain the means for greater introspection and for fostering the process of individuation. They help Petrarch and his readers to listen to the personal voice of conscience.

Perhaps the image that best captures Petrarch's feeling for time, truth, and community is the gyre. Time moves forward while circling back; its return in time provides a spring-like impetus for deepening one's conscience about one's current state; and the conscience about the future conversely pushes one back to examine, and exploit, past potentiality.

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Linking the Ancients to Posterity: Petrarch's Ideal and Intended Readership in the *De vita solitaria*

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In the *Letter to Posterity*, or *Posteritati*, likely drafted between 1347 and 1353 and revised in 1370-1371, Petrarch confesses that almost all of his works, including the unfinished ones, were inspired by the contemplation of the wild nature of Vaucluse,[1] which he valued as a 'locus sacer'. In other words, all of his literary production was the unique gift of the solitary life he had spent in Southern France; more precisely, Petrarch links to Vaucluse his own ideal canon, mentioning three works only: *Bucolicum carmen*, *De vita solitaria*, and *Africa*. This passage merits quotation at length:

> Hic mihi ipsa locorum facies suggessit ut *Bucolicum carmen*, silvestre opus, aggrederer, et *Vite solitarie* libros duos ad Philippum, semper magnum virum sed parvum nunc epyscopum Cavallicensem, nunc magnum Sabinensem epyscopum cardinalem; qui michi iam solus omnium veterum superstes, non me epyscopaliter, ut Ambrosius Augustinum, sed fraterne dilexit ac diligit. Illis in montibus vaganti, sexta quadam feria maioris hebdomade, cogitatio incidit, et valida, ut de Scipione Africano illo primo, cuius nomen mirum inde a prima michi etate fuit, poeticum aliquid heroico carmine scriberem – sed, subiecti de nomine, *Africe* nomen libro dedi, operi, nescio qua vel sua vel mea fortuna, dilecto multis antequam cognito (*Posteritati*; PETRARCA 1955: 12).

> [The aspect of my surroundings suggested me my undertaking the composition of a sylvan or bucolic song, my *Bucolicum carmen*. I also composed a work in two books on *the Solitary Life*, which I dedicated to Philippe, now exalted to the Cardinal and Bishop of Sabina. He was always a great man, but at the time of which I speak, he was only the humble Bishop of Cavaillon. He is the only one of my friends who is still left, and he has always loved and treated me not episcopally, as Ambrose did Augustine, but as a brother. One Friday in Holy Week while I was wandering in those mountains I had the strong urge to write an epic poem about Scipio Africanus the great, whose name had been dear to me since childhood. The poem was called *Africa*, after its hero, and by some faith, whether the book's or my own, it did not fail to arouse the interest of many even before its publication] (transl. Mark Musa; BONDANELLA/MUSA 1987: 8-9).

The importance of this canon, as well as the authority of the letter itself, cannot be underestimated. Whereas the latest editors of the *Seniles*, Silvia Rizzo and Monica Berté, have persuasively concluded that Petrarch eventually abandoned the idea of including this fictitious letter in the collection as the final touch to his life-long self-portrait (PETRARCH 2006: 10), it is also true that this letter was still revised in 1370-1371, that is, only three years before Petrarch's death. We can therefore safely assume that the three Latin works do form Petrarch's own ideal canon, to which he meant to entrust his future reputation to posterity.

It must be no coincidence that these three canonical works are all written in Latin and that, interestingly enough, the *Letter to Posterity* makes no reference to the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* or any other vernacular work; this amounted to a loud silence already at the time when the letter was first conceived and drafted. It is certainly possible – as Gianfranco Contini argued – that Petrarch considered the vernacular language as a laboratory where unique poetic experiments should be carried out ("Il volgare è solo sede di esperienze assolute"; CONTINI 1970: 173); it is also possible that the identity construction of the new humanist, as portraited in the *Letter to Posterity*, would not allow for the inclusion of any works in a language other than Latin. Nonetheless, it has passed unnoticed that the respective genres of the three canonical works and the specific order in which Petrarch mentions them are certainly meant to represent a Vergilian canon.

[1] "Longa erit historia si pergam exequi quid ibi multos ac multos egerim per annos. Hec est summa: quod quicquid fere opusculorum michi excidit, ibi vel actum vel ceptum vel conceptum est; que tam multa fuerunt, ut usque ad hanc etatem me exerceant ac fatigent." [If I were to tell you what I did there during those many years, it would prove to be a long story. Indeed, almost every bit of writing was either done or begun or at least conceived there, and my undertakings were so numerous that even to the present day they keep me busy and weary, transl. Mark Musa]. See PETRARCH 1955: 12; BONDANELLA/MUSA 1987: 8. Martellotti mentions five finished works (*Secretum*, *Psalmi*, *De vita solitaria*, *De otio religioso*, *Invective contra medicum*) and four unfinished (*Africa*, *De viris illustribus*, *Epistole*, *Bucolicum carmen*) excluding letters and vernacular poems (comm. *ad loc.*).

Michele Feo wrote that, together with the *Africa* and the *Bucolicum carmen*, it is the *Epystole* (erroneously known as *Metrice*) that form the great triad of Petrarch's Latin poetry. Notwithstanding Petrarch's love and veneration for Vergil – Feo argues – he could not conceive of a poem like the *Georgics*, because the countryside was to him a place of solitude and contemplation, not of fatigue and production. This lacuna is supposedly filled with the *Epystole*, modelled on Horace: that is, with the imaginary dialogue with close and far friends and enemies (FEO 1989: 239). If this were the case, why did Petrarch mean instead to hand down the *De vita solitaria* to posterity? The treatise had a long and complex history of composition. While Petrarch wrote it straight away in 1346, the work was revised and sent to the dedicatee, Philippe the Cabassoles, only in 1366; the final addition of the famous Romualdian supplement to the latest version in 1372 bears witness to the importance of the treatise within Petrarch's œuvre. And yet, why and how could a doctrinal treatise on the solitary life, a long prose work so different from both the *Bucolicum carmen* and the *Africa*, be part of a renewed Vergilian canon?

If we reread Vergil's *Georgics*, we will find a section that undoubtedly attracted Petrarch's attention. This is Vergil's praise of the country life in Book 2, vv. 458-542. In the countryside, the Roman farmer leads a simple and happy life, which is compared to the hectic and meaningless life of the city man.[2]

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
agricolas! quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis
fundit humo facilem uictum iustissima tellus.
si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis
mane salutantum totis uomit aedibus undam,
nec uarios inhiant pulchra testudine postis
inlusasque auro uestis Ephyreiaque aera,
alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana ueneno,
nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus oliui;
at secura quies et nescia fallere uita,
diues opum uariarum, at latis otia fundis,
speluncae uiuique lacus, at frigida tempe
mugitusque boum mollesque sub arbore somni
non absunt; illic saltus ac lustra ferarum
et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta iuuentus,
sacra deum sanctique patres; extrema per illos
Iustitia excedens terris uestigia fecit.

[O happy husbandmen! too happy, should they come to know their happiness! for whom, far from the clash of arms, most righteous Earth, unbidden, pours forth from her soil an easy sustenance. What though no stately mansion with proud portals disgorges at dawn from all its halls a tide of visitors, though they never gaze at doors inlaid with lovely tortoise-shell or at raitment tricked with gold or at bronzes of Ephyra, though their white wool be not stained with Assyrian dye, or their clear oil's service spoiled by cassia? yet theirs is repose withour care, and a life that knows no fraud, but is rich in treasures manifold. Yea, the ease of broad domains, caverns, and living lakes, and cool vales, the loving of the kine, and soft slumbers beneath the trees–all are theirs. They have woodland glades and the haunts of game; a youth hardened to toil and inured to scanty fare; worship of gods and reverence for age; among them, as she quitted the earth, Justice planted her latest steps. (VERGIL 1916: 149)]

(VERGIL *Georg.* II, 458-474)

The first line is echoed in *Vita sol.* II, 14 ("Tibi, pater, si te ipsum, tua si bona noveris [...]"; PETRARCH 1955: 558) and later glossed in Petrarch's Ambrosian Vergil, ms. A 79 inf. (BAGLIO 2006: 238-39). Petrarch's other codex containing Vergil's works (*Eclogues*, *Georgics*, *Aeneid*), ms. Harley 3754 of the British Library, has autograph marginal glosses that can be dated between 1330s and early 1340s (FIORILLA 2012: 5). Last but not least, in line 494 (but see already *Georg.* I, 20) Vergil's mention of *Silvanus*, Petrarch's 'alter ego' in the eclogue *Laura*

[2] On the influence of Vergil's *laudes vitae rusticae* on the *De vita solitaria*, see also PETRARCH 1990: 200, 229, 231, 245, 254, 281, 554, 376.

occidens of the *Bucolicum carmen*, begun in 1346 (DE VENUTO 1996: 2) like the *De vita solitaria*, confirms that the *Georgics* helped inspire the composition of the treatise:

> Fortunatus et ille deos qui novit agrestis
> Panaque Silvanumque senem Nynphasque sorores.
> Illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum
> flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,
> aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,
> non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille
> aut doluit miserans inopem aut inuidit habenti.
> Quos rami fructus, quos ipsa uolentia rura
> sponte tulere sua, carpsit, nec ferrea iura
> insanumque forum aut populi tabularia uidit.
>
> [Happy, too, is he who knows the woodland gods, Pan and old Silvanus and the sister Nymphs! Him no honours the people give can move, no purple of kings, no strife rousing brother to break with brother, no Dacian swooping down from his leagued Danube, no power of Rome, no kingdoms doomed to fall: he knows naught of the pang of pity for the poor, or of envy of the rich. He plucks the fruits which his boughs, which his ready fields, of their own free will, have borne; nor has he beheld the iron laws, the Forum's madness, or the public archives. (VERGIL 1916: 151)]
>
> (VERGIL *Georg.* II, 493-502)

In contrast to the most negative figures of the treatise, the 'occupatorum omnium extremi', who are enslaved in golden chains, Petrarch's image of the 'agricola' who "at least may find confort in the thought that he will be beneficial to another generation" ["qui tamen sortem sua consolari potest, eo quod alteri saltem seculo profuturus sit"] (*Vita sol.* I, 3; PETRARCH 1924: 123, revised; PETRARCH 1955: 321) most likely draws on Vergil's 'agricola', whose hard work and difficult life conditions are redeemed when he bestows the fruits of the land onto the future generation:

> agricola incuruo terram dimouit aratro:
> hic anni labor, hinc patriam paruosque nepotes
> sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuuencos.
> nec requies, quin aut pomis exuberet annus
> aut fetu pecorum aut Cerealis mergite culmi,
> prouentuque oneret sulcos atque horrea uincat.
>
> [Meanwhile the husbandman has been cleaving the soil with crooked plough; hence comes his year's work, hence comes sustenance for his country and his little grandsons, hence for his herds of kine and faithful bullocks. No respite is there, but the season teems either with fruits, or with increase of the herds, or with the sheaves of Ceres' corn, loading the furrows with its yield and bursting the barns. (VERGIL 1916: 153)]
>
> (VERGIL *Georg.* II, 513-518)

Therefore, only the farmer can still live in the Golden Age of Saturn's reign.

> Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini
> hanc Remus et frater [...]
> aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat.
>
> [Such a life the old Sabines once lived, such Remus and his brother. [...] such was the life golden Saturn lived on earth (VERGIL 1916: *ibid.*).]
>
> (VERGIL, *Georg.* II, 532-538)

The region of Sabina, identified as the location of the peaceful *Saturnia regna*, will turn out to be evocative of the dedicatee of the *De vita solitaria*, Philippe De Cabassoles, who in the *Letter to Posterity* is in fact addressed as the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina. This is certainly one of the later additions to the letter, as Philippe

was ordained Cardinal of Sabina in 1370; this event may in part have spurred the revision of the letter itself in 1370-1371.

Before Seneca's contrasting portraits of the 'solitarius' and the 'occupatus' in the *De brevitate vitae* and *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, it was in fact Vergil who had praised the solitary life in his *Georgics*, which could offer an authoritative model for the *De vita solitaria* by filling in the gap of Petrarch's Vergilian canon. In both Vergil and Seneca, the literary figure of the 'solitarius' is certainly very rare, if not ideal. Do Philippe and Francesco belong to the elite cohort of the 'solitarii'? This is most likely not the case, as we shall see. So what was Petrarch's intellectual goal while writing the *De vita solitaria*? And what ideal community of readers does the treatise aim to address? This essay tries to provide answers to these key questions, while showing how ambitious was Petrarch's project of creating an elite community of solitary readers and how refined his rhetorical strategy aiming to convey such a spiritual message. To do this, it is necessary to describe preliminarily Petrarch's ideas of reading and writing as a complex intellectual process. Writing tackles the difficult task of annulling the chronological distance between two different readers: the author on the one hand, who has read the most authoritative works of the ancient tradition, and his readers on the other, who will access this tradition in a new way. This process is aptly described in a passage of the *De vita solitaria* which can be considered one of the early manifestos of Italian Renaissance humanism. The new intellectual's task will be travelling through time to meet and dialogue with the ancient and illustrious men. This dialogue, which stems jointly from literary memory and solitary life, allows one

> [...] et lectioni dare operam et scripture, et alterum laborem alterno solatio lenire, legere quod scripserunt primi, scribere quod legant ultimi, et beneficii literarum a maioribus accepti, qua in illos non possumus, in posteros saltem gratum ac memorem animum habere, in eos quoque qua possumus non ingratum, sed nomina illorum vel ignota vulgare, vel obsolefacta renovare, vel senio obruta eruere et ad pronepotum populos veneranda transmittere; illos sub pectore, illos ut dulce aliquid in ore gestare, denique modis omnibus amando, memorando, celebrando, si non parem, certe debitam meritis referre gratiam. (PETRARCA 1955: 356-358)
>
> [[...] to devote oneself to reading and writing, alternately finding employment and relief in each, to read what our forerunners have written and to write what later generations may wish to read, to pay to posterity the debt which we cannot pay to the dead for the gift of their writings, and yet not remain altogether ungrateful to the dead but to make their names more popular if they are little known, to restore them if they have been forgotten, to dig them out if they have been buried in the ruins of time and to hand them down to our grandchildren as objects of veneration, to carry them in the heart and as something sweet in the mouth, and finally, by cherishing, remembering, and celebrating their fame in every way, to pay them the homage that is due to their genius even though it is not commensurate with their greatness." (PETRARCH 1924: 151)]

It is in fact in the *De vita solitaria* that a specific reading pattern begins to emerge. If in the prefatory address to Philippe de Cabassoles Petrarch maintains that the work is inspired by everyday life rather than by literary sources such as Basil of Caesarea or Pier Damiani, an intertextual examination shows just how literate is Petrarch's text. Nonetheless, the ideal preference for experience over culture is in keeping with the nature of the treatise itself, which presents solitude as a school of life, not of rhetoric, whose final aim is to direct the reader's attention toward the spiritual goal of his or her own 'quies mentis'. And if solitary leisure without literature is exile, or prison and torture, or even – as Seneca puts it – "otium sine litteris mors est et hominis vivi sepultura" [is death; it is the tomb of the living man] (*ep.* 82; SENECA 1920: 242-243), Petrarch's discourse seems to be searching for a balance between life experience, on which the treatise depends, and literature, which makes solitude desirable. Within this contradiction the solitary Petrarch, who writes in his refuge of Vaucluse, shares the privileged conditions of Cicero, Vergil, and many others, who "non multorum evolutione voluminum est opus: illis iam ante perlectis, in animo legunt, sepe etiam in animo scribunt: lectione preterita sed presenti ingenio se se attollunt" [have no need of turning over many books, for they can read in memory the books they have read before and often even compose in their minds what they have omitted to read] (*Vita sol.* I, 7; PETRARCH 1924: 158; PETRARCH 1955: 366). For him, as for everyone who aspires to become a true solitary, it will always be possible to entertain an inner dialogue between himself and his own books, the reading of which is the golden middle way between two extremes, the hectic life of the 'occupatus' and the extreme solitude that is barbarism.

Having explored the intellectual process of writing and reading, we shall examine the two main characters of the imaginary dialogue that lies at the centre of the *De vita solitaria*: Petrarch the writer and Philippe the reader. It will suffice here to focus on the prefatory address and the conclusion of the second book. From the former, we learn that the treatise is dedicated to Philippe inasmuch as he is the work's ideal reader:

> His argumentis inducor ut credam quod valde cupio (sumus autem faciles ad credendum quod delectat): posse tibi res meas, pater optime, placere, que ut paucis placeant laboro, quando, ut vides, sepe res novas tracto durasque et rigidas, peregrinasque sententias et ab omnia moderantis vulgi sensibus atque auribus abhorrentes. (PETRARCA 1955: 286)
>
> [These considerations induce me to believe what I earnestly wish – for we are easily inclined to believe whatever pleases ourselves – that my works may give you pleasure, excellent father, since I studiously aim that they should give pleasure only to the few. For, as you see, the matters that I treat are often novel and difficult, and the ideas severe, remote, and alien from the vulgar horde which regulates everything by its sensations. (PETRARCH 1924: 97)]

There is nothing really new here – we may say – whereas what follows is far more unexpected:

> Si indoctis ergo non placeo, nichil est quod querar: habeo quod optavi, bonam de ingenio meo spem. Sin vero doctis quoque non probor, est fateor quod doleam, non quod mirer. (PETRARCA 1955: 286)
>
> [If I should fail to please the ignorant, I shall have no occasion for complaint; rather shall I enjoy good hopes of my talent according to my ambition. But if I should also miss the approval of the learned, I confess I shall be sorry, though not surprised. (PETRARCH 1924: 97)]

Who are the learned to whom Petrarch is referring here? The following digression on the fortune of Cicero's *Orator ad Marcum Brutum*, which did not meet the favour of the dedicatee, most likely serves a twofold purpose; on the one hand, to inform Philippe that he may react like Cicero, who showed indignation at Brutus' reaction in one of his letters; on the other, to introduce a polemical stance against Petrarch's possible detractors ('obtrectantes'). In any case, it will be easy to persuade Philippe of something he has already experienced: the virtue of the solitary life. Conversely, it will be impossible to convince the crowd, including some who are supposed to be learned and who clearly are not. These fierce enemies of solitude cannot be persuaded to embrace the solitary life, and the *De vita solitaria* is not written for them.

> Idem si probari vulgo velim, frustra nitar, nec vulgo tantum inscio sed multis quoque qui sibi literatissimi videntur, fortasse etiam nec falluntur. Sed copia literarum non semper modestum pectus inhabitat, et sepe inter linguam et animum, inter doctrinam et vitam concertatio magna est. De his autem loquor qui, literis impediti et onerati potius quam ornati, rem pulcerrimam, scire, turpissimis moribus miscuerunt, tanta animi vanitate ut scolas nunquam vidisse multo melius fuerit; qui hoc unum ibi didicerunt, superbire et literarum fiducia vaniores esse cuntis hominibus. (PETRARCA 1955: 292)
>
> [If, however, I proposed to commend this virtue to the crowd, I should be spending my efforts in vain. I speak not alone of the ignorant crowd but of many who think themselves educated and perhaps are not deceived in their opinion. But store of learning does not always dwell in a modest breast, and often there is considerable strife between the tongue and the mind, between teaching and the conduct of life. I speak of such as being oppressed and handicapped rather than improved by their education, have light-mindedly united a thing beautiful in itself, like knowledge, with disgraceful morals. It would have been much better if they had never seen the schools, since the only thing they learned there was with the overweening arrogance of their education to become vainer than all other men. (PETRARCH 1924: 100-101)]

Except for Philippe and generations to come, Petrarch does not mention any explicit readership of his treatise. If Philippe is the ideal reader and the privileged interlocutor for the writer, are we sure that he does not need to be persuaded to embrace wholeheartedly the solitary life? The negative example of those learned men who acquired only a superficial knowledge foreshadows what we will learn from the beginning of the first book; that is, that the life of solitude can only be appreciated as an existential experience and not simply

as an intellectual habit. Paolo Cherchi has convincingly argued that the *De vita solitaria* should be read as a work that properly belongs to the ancient genre of the 'suasoria' (CHERCHI 2018: 157-186). Petrarch, in fact, does not say that he wishes to persuade Philippe of a truth which his friend knows well; rather, he wants to make this truth more apparent. This means – Cherchi continues – that Petrarch will not pursue a kind of reasoning aimed at teaching, but will praise a good that has already been gained in order to celebrate its value together with those few friends who can truly understand and appreciate it. In this way, the 'suasoria' addressed to his friend becomes Petrarch's self-exhortation to embrace the solitary life, a choice that will ultimately lead to his "mutatio vitae" (CHERCHI 2018: 161). As a matter of fact, just before describing the contrasting lives of the 'occupatus' and the 'solitarius', Petrarch confesses to have experience with both conditions: "partim e medio vite huius, partim ex alterius recenti memoria, que legis elicui" [I have drawn forth what you here read partly from the present tenor of my life and partly from a past experience which is yet fresh in my memory] (I, 1; PETRARCH 1924: 107; PETRARCH 1955: 298).

Petrarch does not conceal from his readers that the solitary path is not for everyone. Only two likeminded friends such as them can share the same thoughts, in such a way that one will see his true self mirrored in the other.

> De his ergo alii ut libet, quanquam facile consensuros vero eruditorum animos atque ora confidam. Quodsi omnes negent, tu michi saltem non negabis (nempe qui negantem primus argueres); sic eveniet ut et tu in verbis meis tuam sententiam agnoscas, et ego supremam metam cuiuslibet eloquentis attigisse videar, auditoris animum movisse quo volui, idque nullo negotio. Tunc enim suadenti magnus est labor, quando in suam sententiam trahere nititur animum reluctantem; contra, quid difficile habet oratio in illius aures ventura qui, quod audit secum conferens, non exempli imaginem, non autoritatis pondus, non rationis aculeum, ut credat, nichil denique nisi suiipsius testimonium querit, et tacitus dicit: "ita est"? (I.1; PETRARCA 1955: 296)

> [Yet, however lightly people in general may regard these matters, men of learning, I am sure, will second me in thoughts and words; and even if all should oppose me, you at least will not – indeed you would be the first to confute my opponents. You will happen to recognize your own thoughts in my words, and I shall appear to have attained the ultimate goal of all eloquence – to have moved the mind of the listener according to my wish, and that with no trouble. It is indeed a sore task for the pleader when he is bent on dragging over to his own view a mind that resists persuasion; but what trouble is there for a discourse when it enters the ears of a person whose own thought chimes with that he hears and who, having the evidence of his own experience, in order to yield his assent requires neither concrete examples, nor weighty authority, nor pointed reasoning, but in silence says to himself, "It is true?" (PETRARCH 1924: 105-106)]

Cherchi's insightful identification of the *De vita solitaria* with a 'suasoria' is buttressed by other loci that should be read in context. The first one is a key passage in Book I, Chapter 7, in which Petrarch aims to clarify Seneca's argument that the wise man should search the extreme solitude as his ultimate life goal. Seneca's 'durum ac precisum dogma' [an austere precept and a rigid one] cannot be fully accepted: "Fuge multitudinem, libenter id quidem; fuge paucitatem, patior non moleste; fuge etiam unum, nil est quo me ulterius trudas, ad extremam solitudinem coarctasti" ['Avoid the many,' he says: I assent to it willingly. 'Avoid the few:' I can bear with it with no distress. 'Avoid even the individual:' you can drive me no further, you have hemmed me in within the narrowest confines of solitude] (PETRARCH 1924: 161; PETRARCH 1955: 370-372). But Seneca's recommendation of a dialogue 'solus ad solum' is reserved for the perfect man, not for someone who is still on the way, as his Lucilius was, and as both Petrarch and Philippe are now. Setting Seneca's moral thought in context is a way for Petrarch to introduce one of the key topics of the entire treatise: that is, the value of friendship for the 'solitarius'. Without friends, solitude will be the solitude of beasts rather than men; and, in fact, Petrarch admits that he would prefer to lose solitude itself rather than a single friend. Let them be few, then, and well selected, not a crowd. But what interests us most here is the final confession that, like Lucilius, the two friends are far from reaching the goal of a true spiritual solitude. Therefore, their solitude will not be perfect, but, as it were, "friendly" (II, 14).

> Quod si forte omnia, que animos tenent, abdicare nondum possumus – id enim unum est ex eorum genere, que prius incipiunt homines docere quam discere –, at saltem amicam nobis solitudinem faciamus, quod nullo vetante permittimur, inque illam cum omnibus fortunarum nostrarum sarcinulis commigremus; quibus cum

fortiter carere posse ceperimus, tum demum plena libertas erit et securum gaudium. Interea, ut res sunt, nusquam certe quietius victuri sumus. (PETRARCA 1955: 576)

[But if we cannot all at once free ourselves from all the bonds which hold the spirit captive – for this is among the lessons which men begin to teach before they have themselves learned it – let us at least treat solitude in a friendly fashion. Let us transport ourselves to its province with all the little encumbrances of our fortune. When we find ourselves able to dispense with these, we shall at last come into our full liberty. Meanwhile, as things are, we shall surely live nowhere more peacefully. (PETRARCH 1924: 307)]

But the community of the two friends is already threatened by Philippe's incumbent 'negotia'. So, when the treatise is reaching a closure, Petrarch cannot help warning his friend against the peril of his new appointment to a rank higher than bishop of Cavaillon (from 1334), which Urban V will indeed make in 1368 and 1370 (Cardinal priest and bishop, respectively). Then, the expression "maioris epyscopii pondus" (I, 15; PETRARCH 1955: 582) cannot but refer to the possibility of this future appointment and indeed the dream of creating a community of likeminded spirits will be doomed to failure. A letter not typically linked to the *De vita solitaria,* the *Sen.* 11.3 sent to Francesco Bruni and dated 4 October 1368, reveals in fact how this utopian dream of sharing a solitary life eventually transformed into its opposite (CANDIDO 2021: 341-342). The letter serves the purpose of justifying Petrarch's former invective against the French cardinals at the Papal curia. In all likelihood, Bruni had invited his friend to be more cautious, but Petrarch cannot but confirm his desire to pursue the noble fight for the future of the Church. He has nothing to fear or lose, except for an ecclesiastical privilege that for him would be more a burden or even a punishment than a benefit. Whether or not the question of ecclesiastical privilege was still open, it introduces Petrarch's reflection on the recent election of Philippe de Cabassoles to the cardinal dignity on 22 September 1368 (HAYEZ 1972: 680). The news brings joy on the one hand, commiseration on the other. The image of the 'aurea cathena', in particular, appears in the *De vita solitaria* as the oxymoric symbol of a golden enslavement, which identifies the condition of the 'occupatus occupatorum', the worst typology of 'occupatus' and the most negative figure of the entire treatise. In this way, Philippe is turned into a model of active life: "Scripsi ad eum olim in solitudine mea et in rure suo posito *Vite solitarie* libros duos; nunc status sui mutatio suggerebat ut tòtidem sibi *Active vite* libros scriberem, iamque id animo volvebat" [Once I wrote to him in my solitude and his countryside two books *On the solitary life*; now his change of status suggested me to write another two books on *Active life*] (§ 32; PETRARCH 2014: 251). The choice of writing a pair of books in both cases must be no coincidence; it is a choice that, for what concerns the *De vita solitaria*, is explained by one of treatise's closing remarks (II, 15):

Putabam enim epystolam scribere; librum scripsi. Quem divisurus non fueram, quo scilicet solitarie vite solitaries liber esset, nisi quia in mentem rediit eam me solitudinem laudasse, non que unum etiam sed que turbas fugit. Simul illa me cogitatio proposito emovit, ut honustum fessumque vie medio lectorem partitio relevaret: unum igitur in duos secui. (PETRARCA 1955: 588)

[I intended to write a letter and I have written a book. Moreover, I ought not to have divided it, since a book on the solitary life ought appropriately to be composed as an unbroken unit. But it occurred to me that I was writing in praise of the kind of solitude which, while it avoided crowds, was not averse to a limited companionship. I was also deterred from my first purpose by the consideration that an interruption in the middle of the journey rests the weary and overtaxed reader, and so I divided the book in two. (PETRARCH 1924: 315-316)]

It is easy to infer at this point what this limited companionship truly is; as the books on solitary life are two, but in fact one, so the friends are as well two, but one at the same time.

Only in 1366, twenty years after the first draft was complete, did Petrarch send his *De vita solitaria* to Philippe de Cabassoles. The Paduan priest Giovanni da Bozzetta, introduced to Boccaccio in the *Sen.* 5.1, dated 17 December 1365, had prepared the dedication copy between the end of 1365 and the beginning of 1366. The *Sen.* 6.5, dated 6 June 1366, accompanies the copy which reached Philippe through Sagremor de Pommiers, a nobleman of French origins. This copy can now be identified with the ms. Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, 9633. Marco Petoletti's new examination of the manuscript has recently confirmed the authenticity claim which its owner, Joseph-Louis-Dominique de Cambis, marquis of Velleron, made in 1770

(Petoletti 2020: 143-144). From *Senilis* VI, 6, dated 8 August 1366, we also know that Philippe – as Petrarch had predicted, or we should say hoped for – truly appreciated the treatise and fostered its circulation in the cultural environment of Avignon. Thus enacting a moderate version of the solitary life, Philippe wanted the *De vita solitaria* to be read during mealtimes, like the Bible (*Senilis* XIII, 12, dated 26 June 1372). In the 1370s, then, the prior of Camaldoli, Giovanni Abbarbagliati di Borgo San Sepolcro, having read the treatise, could not help noticing that there was no reference in it to the founder of his order, Saint Romualdus. Petrarch eventually accepted the prior's wish to include the biography of the saint among the illustrious solitaries, so that the so-called 'supplementum romualdinum' was added in 1372. It was most likely Donato Albanzani who had sent a copy to the prior, the same Donato who is possibly one of the copyists of the ms. Vat. Lat. 3357 (Rajna 1910: 664-666; Petoletti 2020: 138, 142), a manuscript that has represented, until the recent addition of the Madrid codex, the most reliable witness of the manuscript tradition of the *De vita solitaria*.

The first circulation of the *De vita solitaria* bears witness to the existence of a lively community of readers interested in the work. This cannot but confirm the same rhetorical strategy which we see deployed in other Petrarchan works; an ideal relationship that binds writer and reader corresponds to the search for a broader readership that can be identified among Petrarch's contemporaries. This is undoubtedly a precious cohort of interlocutors or even friends, without whom, as we know, solitude would be unbearable; and without whom the writer could not fulfil his moral duty of handing the ancient knowledge down to posterity.

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Affectivities of Reason, Rationality of Affects: Strategies of Community-Building in Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortune*

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Best known today for the Italian love poetry of his *Canzoniere* (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*), Francesco Petrarca dominated the international cultural scene of the Renaissance with a series of texts, of which the ambitious *De remediis utriusque fortune*, begun in the mid-1350s and published to lasting effect in the winter of 1366/67, was probably the most successful.[1] Outside of Italy, and especially north of the Alps, Petrarch's fame and literary reputation rested mostly on this imposing opus consisting of 253 dialogues between Ratio, or reason personified, and the four passions of the soul: Pain ('dolor'), Fear ('metus'), Joy ('gaudium'), and Hope ('spes'). While the first of its two books is concerned with the human response to the positive aspects of life (122 dialogues on 'good fortune'), the second offers advice on how to overcome negative experiences (131 dialogues on 'bad fortune'). The work's all-encompassing engagement with the various facets of human existence is in keeping with the author's expressed intent to reach a far broader audience than the circle of humanist scholars to which he himself belonged. With his comprehensive treatment of the fundamental problems faced by humanity, Petrarch sought to establish a community of readers that included nothing less than the 'genus humanum' as a whole.[2] Diligently extracted from a wide range of existing works and carefully distilled into concentrated discursive remedies for specific existential ailments,[3] *De remediis* did indeed appeal to an unusually diverse readership from a wide array of social backgrounds, as can be seen from the large number of extant manuscripts (c. 160 complete copies, along with c. 60 redacted or abbreviated versions), the numerous translations of the text that appeared from the late fourteenth century onward, and dozens of commercially successful print runs in the wake of the *editio princeps* of 1470/74.[4]

As Petrarch himself noted in a letter to Jean Birel in 1354, his primary goal in composing *De remediis* was to attenuate – and, if possible, even to eliminate – both his own "passiones animi" and those of his readers, with whom he felt united in an affective community:

> Et dicam tibi quorsum processerim, dictu mirum, cum adhuc nichil inceperim. Est michi liber in manibus *De remediis ad utranque fortunam*, in quo pro viribus nitor et meas et legentium passiones animi mollire vel, si datum fuerit, extirpare.

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[1] For a detailed discussion of the content, structure, origins, and reception history of *De remediis*, as well as for a comprehensive list of further reading, see the complete, annotated Latin-German edition by the author of the present essay (PETRARCA 2021/2022); all Latin quotes from *De remediis* follow this edition. The English translations provided in square brackets are based on Conrad H. RAWSKI's 1991 edition of the text. (The wording has been altered in some cases to reflect recent advances in scholarship.)

[2] See SCHOTTLAENDER 1988: 24. The preface to the second book explicitly states that the text is addressed not only to insiders and experts, but also and especially to readers who are less familiar with its moral-philosophical subject matter ("hi[.] maxime, qui doctrina minus fulti essent", Pref. 2.35 [particularly for those less given to learning]). In a letter to Tommaso del Garbo written in November 1367, Petrarch rejoices at the favourable reception *De remediis* has received from various important readers ("eo tamen michi [liber *De remediis*] probatior factus est quo illum quibusdam magnis ingeniis gratum valde et optatum sensi", *Sen.* 8.3.60 [Still I have taken more satisfaction in it when I learned that it was very well received and sought by certain great minds]), which he interprets as a sign that his text is indeed, as he had hoped, finding appreciation among a broad audience, as opposed to a tiny group of initiates ("quod michi ad vulgares sepius quam ad philosophos sermo esset," *Sen.* 8.3.60 § 61 [because I would more often address the general public than philosophers]). English translations of quotes from the *Seniles* follow BERNARDO/LEVIN/BERNARDO 1992.

[3] See Petrarch's dedicatory preface addressed to Azzo da Correggio (Pref. 1.11), to which we shall return towards the end of this essay.

[4] For further details, see PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.VIII-XV.

[And I shall tell you how far I have advanced, strange to say, though I have so far begun nothing: I do have a book in hand, *De remediis ad utranque fortunam*, in which, to the best of my ability, I try to soften the passions of my heart and the readers' hearts, or, if possible, to uproot them.]

(PETRARCA, *Sen.* 16.9.48)

Here, Petrarch dons the mantle of a psychotherapeutic philosopher working in the Stoic tradition, who is simultaneously a doctor of the soul and a human being suffering from the very same ills as his patients.[5] His concern with the affects not only establishes a connection between the interlocutors in the book's dialogues, but also between the highly stylised, 'real' Francesco Petrarca and his readers, whom he clearly conceives of as a transepochal audience: he does write for his own time, but even more so for posterity.[6] The author figure in *De remediis* partakes in the readers' afflictions, while promising a cure for the affective community of which he, too, is a part – and the objective of his proposed course of treatment is in keeping with Stoic doctrine, with the affects being classified as pathologies of the soul that must at least be mitigated ("mollire"), if not eradicated altogether ("extirpare").

At the heart of Petrarch's more than 250 dialogues are the four 'classical passiones animi' as theorised by the Stoics, discussed by Cicero, and harnessed by patristic writers for the purpose of Christian self-reflection: depending on whether the affective response is directed towards the present or the future, the first book on 'good fortune' pits Ratio against Joy (present) or Hope (future), whereas the second book on 'bad fortune' features either Pain (present) or Fear (future) in the role of her adversary. The critical importance of "those four most famous, twin-born passions of the mind" (Pref. 1.17)[7] is emphasised in the prefaces to both books (Pref. 1.17; 2.35), and they also play a central role in Petrarch's *Secretum meum*,[8] another work in dialogue form with a strong thematic bearing on *De remediis*. Here, on the very first day of their meeting, Augustinus encourages Franciscus to examine a line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Hinc metuunt cupiuntque dolent gaudentque"; 6.733) with an eye to what the stylised Church Father calls "the four-headed monster that is so hostile to human nature". Franciscus, in turn, correctly interprets the quartet of joy, pain, hope, and fear as "the fourfold passion of the mind, which is first divided in relation to the present and the future into two parts, each of which is then subdivided into two according to the belief that they are good and evil. Thus the tranquility of men's minds is destroyed as if by four conflicting winds." (*Secretum meum* 1.34) What becomes apparent here is that both in Stoic (Cicero, *De finibus*; *Tusculanae disputationes*) and in Christian (especially Augustine, *De civitate Dei*; *Confessiones*) doctrine,[9] the 'passiones animi' operate as a philosophical construct that denotes the agitation of the soul by external forces, which then gives rise to an erroneous assessment of their respective causes.[10]

There is a tendency to classify *De remediis* as an intellectual product of the Middle Ages, with some scholars going so far as to call it Petrarch's 'most medieval' work.[11] Such an evaluation is predicated on the assumption that Petrarch adhered to the discursive formula of medieval 'psychomachia' without any substantial alterations, while also presupposing that the dialogic form itself is quintessentially medieval. When viewed from this perspective, *De remediis* constitutes a series of talks between a master and his pupil with a correspondingly clear hierarchy: in terms of learnedness and argumentative prowess, Ratio maintains the upper hand over the affects, who double as her verbal sparring partners and as the objects of discussion.

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[5] Petrarch assumes this double role in analogy to Seneca, whom he draws on extensively throughout *De remediis*; see PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.XXV-XXVII. We shall return to this issue towards the end of this essay.

[6] This is especially evident in Petrarch's *Epistula ad posteritatem*, which he intended to serve as the culminating point of his correspondence project and the conclusion to his life's work; for a detailed discussion of Petrarch's concern with his literary afterlife, see the introduction to Laura REFE's 2014 edition of the *Epistula* and cfr. Igor Candido's essay in the present volume.

[7] For details, see the corresponding commentary in my edition of *De remediis* (PETRARCA 2021/2022).

[8] All quotes from Petrarch's *Secretum meum* are taken from Nicholas Mann's edition (MANN 2016: 57, 59).

[9] See the commentary on Pref. 1.17 and 1.40.6 in PETRARCA 2021/2022.

[10] For a detailed discussion of this issue and a list of further reading, see PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.XXII-XXV.

[11] See PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.XL, especially n. 135.

If this were truly the case, then Ratio would accomplish the Stoic mission of mitigating or eliminating the affects altogether. Ratio certainly argues her case at great length and seems to always have the last word, while the affects take on the role of establishing the dialogues' themes with their initial complaints. As is the case in Seneca's *De remediis fortuitorum*,[12] an important source of inspiration for *De remediis*, their replies tend to be brief and repetitive, which has been interpreted as an effort on the part of the author to characterise the personifications of the four 'passiones animi' as dull, inflexible, fundamentally irrational, capable only of monotonous self-assertion, and entirely lacking in argumentative capacity. Assuming such a perspective means that Ratio's discursive victory is essentially a foregone conclusion, notwithstanding the fact that the affects never actually admit defeat. Yet as will soon become clear, the discursive and argumentative role of Ratio's adversaries in *De remediis* is much more sophisticated.

For one thing, the notion that Ratio triumphs over the personified affects is dependent on an understanding of the soul in which reason and emotion are subject to an unequivocal hierarchy. Platonism, with its clear distinction between rationality on the one hand, and feelings and instinct on the other, would be a plausible source for such a concept: once 'logos' and 'ratio' are detached from the emotions, reason can confront the affects as an externalised interlocutor in order to rein them in and steer them in the right direction, much like the chariot of the soul in Plato's *Phaidros*.[13] And yet, from the vantage point of moral philosophy, *De remediis* is by no means a Platonic text. As hinted above, the series of discussions that take place between Ratio and the 'passiones animi' speak to a model of the human psyche that is essentially Stoic in nature. In the Stoa, the soul is understood as monistic; affects and rationality belong to *one* soul – an issue that has received scant attention in the scholarship on *De remediis* to date – which means that Ratio's battle against misguided emotions is not so much the result of a fundamental dualism, but rather the product of a monologic dialogue that serves the twin purpose of coming to a realistic evaluation of one's current circumstances and subjecting one's affective response to rational control.[14] In other words, from a Stoic standpoint, we are effectively eavesdropping on Petrarch's Ratio entering into a conversation with another dimension of the same soul to which it itself belongs.[15]

Involved in this dialogue is the entity that is being described (the human soul in general), the entity doing the describing (something that we could call 'the soul of the implicit author'), and – last, but certainly not least – our own souls as readers. Reason and affects are therefore two closely related and inextricably entwined parts of the same whole; a statement that holds true not only for the text-internal communicative sphere of the dialogues, but also for the text's external relationships with the entire intellectual community engaged in the production and reception of *De remediis*, whether it be in the Trecento or in 'posteritas'. The relationship in which Ratio and the affects are conjoined is not characterised by separation, but rather by a strong interdependence – and herein lies the reason for Ratio's tenacity in engaging with the affective facets of the soul. This also explains the reciprocal mechanism hinted at in the title of this paper: Ratio's character has an 'affective' dimension, and the affects are no strangers to rationality. I will illustrate this point further in the section that follows with the help of an especially complex dialogue from *De remediis*, namely "De totius corporis dolore ac languore vario" (2.113 ["On Various Pain and Illness of the Whole Body"]).

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Dialogue 2.113 constitutes a crucial building block within the overarching argumentative framework of the second book of *De remediis*. Following an extensive discussion of various mental and physical ailments (the

[12] See *ibid.*: 1.XVIII-XIX.

[13] *Phaidros* 246a-248a, 253c-256c; this model underwent multiple transformations at the hands of Christian authors in the wake of Augustine and was repeatedly adapted and updated in the early modern period; see HUSS 2007: 143-144, 273-274, 409.

[14] For details and references to specialised research in the field of the history of philosophy, see PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.XXX-XXXI.

[15] The Augustinian notion of the 'sermo intimus', which had a considerable influence on Petrarch, is itself heavily indebted to this concept.

two immediately preceding dialogues deal with fever, colic, and fainting spells), and a correspondingly long list of vices and moral failings, it heralds the text's climactic conclusion in the form of a detailed discussion of the fear of dying, the circumstances surrounding the inevitable end of human life, and proper ways of preparing for it. Serving as a summary of the many painful and potentially anguish-inducing aspects of life that have been discussed up to this point, the dialogue with its universal statements on how pain and suffering can – or cannot – be overcome has a much broader outlook than the chapters that precede it. Moreover, as the patient (Dolor) insistingly questions the remedies prescribed by the doctor of the soul (Ratio), the dialogue lays bare the discursive 'modus operandi' of *De remediis* and subjects it to critical scrutiny. As we shall see in a moment, Dolor's replies are unusually substantial here, both in terms of the length and the weight of his argument: the beleaguered affect mounts a spirited challenge to Ratio's propositions in the form of numerous sceptical queries and interjections,[16] which display remarkable erudition, intellectual versatility, and a willingness to engage with complex issues.[17]

But before we examine this aspect in more detail, let us briefly consider the dialogue's overall structure. Dolor's initial complaint about a feeble and ailing body is followed by a debate over the Stoic notion that there is only one good, namely virtue, and therefore only one evil, namely vice. (From this perspective, pain does not qualify as evil.) As Dolor remains unconvinced that the ideal of philosophical imperturbability proposed by Ratio is a valid solution to the problem at hand (§§ 1-15), she proceeds to cite several 'exempla' in order to encourage endurance in the face of pain and weakness – an approach that Dolor also rejects (§§ 16-24). What follows is a general disputation on the nature and attainability of virtue accompanied by a discussion of the corporeality of pain and the grave afflictions wrought by leprosy and pestilence, over the course of which Ratio resorts not only to wholly conventional Christian 'topoi', but also to inconsistent and at times even contradictory historical evidence. Ratio clearly has a hard time articulating a coherent position vis-à-vis severe physical impairment (§§ 25-49), an argumentative impasse that leads her to propose a compromise in the form of an eclectic authority not entirely beholden to Stoic philosophy: Cicero and his *Tusculanae disputationes*. This approach meets with a more favourable response from Dolor, and Ratio is allowed to expound at length the "arms of the mind" (namely effort/'contentio', determination/'confirmatio', and interior dialogue/'sermo intimus'; *Tusc.* 2.22.51) described by Cicero (§§ 50-64). However, while Dolor praises Cicero's ideas, he remains unconvinced that his soul has been saved, and even though Ratio fires another salvo of potent *exempla* and ultimately appeals to the highest – i.e., Christian – truth, the issue remains unresolved (§§ 65-68).

Two of the themes negotiated in this dialogue are particularly prominent: the practicability of the Stoic demand to minimise or eliminate the affects (a key tenet of Stoicism used by Petrarch himself to commend *De remediis* to the reading public, see above); and the utility of 'exempla' as a means to cope with weakness and pain (a strategy that Ratio employs throughout *De remediis* in the form of a veritable torrent of examples drawn from pagan and Christian history and literature in the hope of convincing the 'passiones animi' of

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[16] Based on the dialogue's particularly complex structure (on the extent of this complexity, see STROPPA 2014: 95-96) and its resemblance to the *Secretum meum*, ŠPIČKA 2008 argues that what we are dealing with here are the remains of a prior, dialogically more sophisticated conception of *De remediis* that was subsequently abandoned by its author. This notion is entirely speculative and could easily be dispelled with the help of our previous observation that 2.113 criticises the structure of Ratio's arguments and her discursive strategies as they become apparent in the *entire* text.

[17] It is interesting to note that the affects give a particularly good account of themselves in dialogues dealing with topics that were dear to Petrarch's own heart: in 1.69 ("De gratis amoribus"), for example, Gaudium mounts a skilful defence of his amatory experience – and, significantly, his love poetry – against a stern and inquisitive Ratio, which produces a similar result to the dialogue between Franciscus and Augustinus in the *Secretum meum*; and in 1.43 ("De librorum copia"), Gaudium is equally passionate in defending the pride of ownership engendered by a sizable collection of books (the use of which the supposedly dull-witted affect apparently enjoys a great deal), a pride which Petrarch himself may well have felt when he thought of his own library, which was one, if not the most outstanding private collection of the day. On dialogue 1.69, see HUSS 2021. The online talk on dialogue 1.43 that I gave at UZH Zürich on 18 March 2020 is accessible as a podcast via the office of the organiser of the event, Susanne Köbele.

their own inappropriateness). We will now take a closer look at the passages in question, before proceeding to an in-depth analysis of Dolor's rationality and Ratio's affectivity.

On the practicability of Stoic tenets. After an initial argumentative skirmish, Ratio lays out the position of the Stoics as follows:

> Stoici unum in rebus omnibus humanis bonum dicunt, virtutem. Et quamvis alii aliter, hec verior tamen viriliorque sententia visa est. Cui consequens est, unum quoque quod huic bono obicitur malum esse, vitium. Quo fit ut dolor corporis, molestissimus licet, malum tamen utique non sit.
>
> [The Stoics say, with regard to things human, that the only good is virtue. Although others think differently, I believe this viewpoint to be correct and worthy of a man. Consequently, there is only one ill that is opposed to that good, namely vice – whence follows that physical pain, no matter how severe, cannot be considered an ill.]
>
> (PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.4)

Implicitly, Ratio's statement denies that pain has any relevance at all. Her explicit claim, however, is limited to the assertion that physical suffering does not qualify as an ill in the sense of a "vitium". Dolor, who immediately notices the weakness of Ratio's argument, points out – correctly – that her proposals neither address pain *per se* nor offer a remedy against it, and complains:

> Heu michi misero, ego torqueor, tu disputas, philosophice fabelle.
>
> [Alas, I am wretched, I am tormented – and you engage in philosophical babble!]
>
> (PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.5)

In her reply, Ratio makes a normative case based on established authorities by stating that the Stoics' tenets are by no means "fabelle", but rather "humane vite regule" (§ 6 [rules of human conduct]). Dolor counters along a line of attack used by critics of the Stoics from the days of antiquity: while undoubtedly noble and mellifluous in theory, their demands are much easier said and written than done. Only an utterly unrealistic and purely hypothetical Stoic sage could actually live up to them:

> Sonora hec in scholis, famosa per libros, sed nec equuleos nec egrotantium ascensura grabatulos: dicuntur scribunturque facilius quam probantur.[18]

[18] Cf. the dialogue in *Secretum meum* 1.6: "FRANCISCUS. Recordor equidem; ad stoicorum precepta me revocas, populorum opinionibus aversa et veritati propinquiora quam usui. AUGUSTINUS. O te omnium infelicem si ad veritatis inquisitionem per vulgi deliramenta contendis, aut cecis ducibus ad lucem te perventurum esse confidis." [*Fr.* Of course I remember: you are directing me back to the teachings of the Stoics, which are contrary to popular opinion and closer to the truth than to general practice. *Aug.* You are the unhappiest of men if you try to pursue truth through the delusions of the common people, or trust that with the guidance of the blind you will reach the light.] In *De remediis*, Dolor takes up Franciscus' position and joins a longstanding tradition of criticism directed against the Stoics' overly rigid and unrealistic philosophy which was articulated even by thinkers favourable to the Stoics' cause (e.g., Cicero, *Tusc.* 5.5.13). Cf. also *Fam.* 23.12.7: "Leve est autem, ut dixi, assidentem egro sanum disputare et opinionum angustias argumentorum flexibus ingredi ac sonantia eructare problemata; sed fomentis non verbis dolor tollitur; quanquam et verbis mitigatur dolor et frangitur; sepe vel amica increpatio vel virilis exhortatio pudore vel ardore sic armavit animum, ut ingestum suo corpori supplicium non sentiret." [It is easy, as I have said, for a healthy person attending a sick person to dispute and to advance petty theories with subtle argumentation, or to spout forth resounding problems; but pain is relieved with warm lotions and not with words, although even with words it too may be soothed and alleviated. Often a friendly rebuke or manly admonition has incited shame or desire to the point of not feeling the pain inflicted upon the body.] This is exactly what Dolor finds fault with in our passage: Ratio makes grandiose promises to cure illnesses that do not affect her. Petrarch, on the other hand, casts himself as a human being in need of remedies for the afflictions of his own soul. As far as his parallel role as a healer is concerned, he points out that empathy is ultimately paramount to rationality: "Multi alios, quidam se libris aut tractatibus consolati sunt; ego utrunque simul facere molior, quod, ut spero, tibi gratius qualecunque remedium erit egrotanti prestitum ab egroto; bene enim valenti egrum verbis solari facile est; nullius solamen altius in mestum animum descendit quam similia patientis et ideo efficacissime confirmandis

[These resounding phrases are for the classroom, made famous by books. But on the torture rack or in the sickbed, when you are deadly ill, they mean absolutely nothing. It is easier to profess and write them than to prove them!]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.7)

Far from constituting an impulsive and emotionally driven (or in other words, 'affective') rejection of Ratio's claims, Dolor's reaction is in fact a fundamental and well-aimed critique of the Stoic insistence on conquering the emotions. The position taken by the – supposedly – slow-witted affect is underpinned by a close familiarity with Stoic teachings as they are presented both orally (in philosophical lessons) and in writing (in the canonical philosophical texts) – in fact, Dolor shows all the makings of a skilled disputant. Ratio, on the other hand, does not behave in a particularly rational manner. Instead of invoking the indisputable normativity of philosophical dogma, she could have countered the charge of engaging in 'philosophical babble' with an explanation of the Stoic belief that exterior influences are irrelevant ('indifferentia') for the mental balance of human beings,[19] but she did not do so. Her subsequent reply is equally awkward:

Immo vero et ad dolorem et ad egritudinem et ad mortem prosunt, sed non omnibus, quippe que non omnium insedere pectoribus, et profecto quibus credita non sunt, salubria esse non possunt.

[They do help in sorrow, sickness, and death. But they do not help everyone because they cannot enter every heart; nor can they be beneficial to those who do not believe in them.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.8)

Ratio portrays the efficacy of Stoic remedies against weakness and pain as a matter of personal belief: those who lack faith ("quibus credita non sunt") cannot profit from them. Ratio's case in favour of the Stoic position thus does not turn on rational arguments, but rather on an unquestioning acceptance of the usefulness and ethical validity of Stoic dogma. While such an argument could succeed with an irrational and credulous adversary, Petrarch's Dolor has a much more inquisitive mindset and proves to be quite impervious to the appeal of blind faith, ultimately dismissing the plausibility of the ideal of philosophical imperturbability associated with the Stoic notion of 'indifferentia' in no uncertain terms:

RATIO: Interim forti animo ferre mortalia speciosum ac virile est.

DOLOR: Speciosum dictu, fateor, factu ne possibile quidem reor.

[REASON: And remember in the meantime that it is beautiful and manly to bear the hazards of human life with a courageous mind.

PAIN: Beautifully said, I grant. But I do not think it can possibly be done.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.12-13)

By rejecting the Stoic position, Dolor assails what constitutes one of the cornerstones of Ratio's discursive strategy throughout the entirety of *De remediis*, and the unusually explicit discussion of Ratio's 'modus operandi' in this passage turns the dialogue in question into a highly consequential negotiation of the relationship between the 'rational' and 'affective' dimensions of spiritual life in anticipation of the argumentative climax that will be reached in the remaining chapters.

On the purpose and usefulness of historical exempla. With Dolor unwilling to accede to the Stoic views articulated at the beginning of the dialogue, Ratio tries another strategy that she has employed on numerous

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astantium animis voces sunt que ex ipsis suppliciis emittuntur." (*Sen.* 10.4.39 [Many have comforted others, and some themselves, with books or treatises. I am struggling to do both at the same time, which I hope will be more gratifying to you, whatever the remedy that is offered by one suffering man to another; for it is easy for a healthy man to comfort a sick one with words. No one's solace penetrates a saddened mind more than that of a fellow sufferer, and therefore the most effect[ive] words to strengthen the spirits of the bystanders are those which emerge from the actual torments.])

[19] On this 'indifferentia', see the commentary in PETRARCA 2021/2022 (1.69.20, 1.69.24, and 2.92.2).

previous occasions – she inquires whether historical examples of resilience in the face of weakness and pain might not be helpful:

> Quid est enim, oro te, cur impossibile homini censeas, quod sepe olim et potuisse vides hominem et fecisse?
>
> [But, I ask you, why should you think it impossible for humans to do in your day and age what, as you clearly know, a man could do, and did do, in the distant past?]
>
> (PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.16)

Dolor, however, does not give credence to Ratio's claim of a supposedly widespread ("sepe") human ability to cope effortlessly with pain, and her examples are dismissed as irrelevant stories from the bygone days of antiquity. As Dolor gives voice to a very early modern sense of temporal – and potentially ideological – distance from the Greek and Roman heritage, the efficacy of 'exempla' in general is called into question:

> Heu michi, rursus ad historias vocor et in medio dolorum estu, vix presentium, vix mei ipsius memor, in memoriam protrahor antiquorum!
>
> [Alas, I am again referred to history and, amidst burning pain, being hardly aware of here and now, or even myself, am asked to bother with remembering the deeds of the ancients!]
>
> (PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.17)

Dolor's critique, which is best understood against the backdrop of a broader early modern 'crisis of exemplarity,'[20] threatens to collapse another pillar of Ratio's argument. Petrarch makes heavy and repeated use of historical and biblical 'exempla' throughout his oeuvre (the catalogues of the *Trionfi*,[21] his various versions of *De viris illustribus*, and his *Rerum memorandum libri* are cases in point), and he discusses their application at considerable length, including in the preface to the extended version of his *De viris illustribus* and in his letter to Giovanni Colonna entitled "Quid exempla valeant exemplis ostenditur" (*Fam.* 6.4).[22] In § 7 of the former, for example, Petrarch points out that the usage of 'exempla' has a moral and epideictic objective, namely to recall manifestations of human virtue and thereby to denounce vice ("ut commemoratione virtutum vitiis convitium faciamus"). But even as he lauds the protreptic and apotreptic function of 'exempla' while acknowledging their origin in rhetoric (§§ 32-33), a much more cautious – if not to say pessimistic – note starts to creep in: while there may well be a multitude of texts brimming with examples of commendable human behaviour, the application of rigorous ethical standards reveals that true 'exempla illustria' are, in fact, extremely rare.[23]

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[20] By way of an introduction to this concept, see the section dedicated to the topic in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.4 (1998), esp. CORNILLIAT 1998, JEANNERET 1998, RIGOLOT 1998, and STIERLE 1998 (see also STIERLE 2003: 181-184). Cornilliat, in particular, engages thoroughly with the positions taken by Stierle and Timothy Hampton (cf. HAMPTON 1990). Generally speaking, the scholarly discourse on this matter tends to underestimate the role the supposedly 'medieval' Petrarch played in bringing about this 'crisis', as well as the depth and complexity of his reflections on the issue. On Petrarch's involvement, see DELCORNO 1989 and the brief overview given in BAADER 1999 – the latter emphasises Petrarch's shifting of the focal point to the particularities of the individual *exemplum* and his use of examples for the purpose of introspection and self-analysis; see also LEINKAUF 2017: 1.1012-1019.

[21] E.g., in the *Triumphus Famae*.

[22] English translations of passages from the *Fam.* follow PETRARCH 1975-1985.

[23] Preface to *De viris illustribus – Adam-Hercules* 27-29: "Illos, inquam, viros describere pollicitus sum quos illustres vocamus, quorum pleraque magnifica atque illustria memorantur, quanquam aliqua obscura sint. Si enim omnia prorsus illustria requirimus, exiguum teximus volumen seu potius nullum. Quis enim ad eum modum illustris reperitur? Quin hoc in plerisque compertum est quod, ut preclaros vultus, sic illustres sepe animos aliqua insignis nature iniuria afficit." [I have therefore promised to reconstruct the lives of those men we call illustrious, most of whose deeds are attested to be magnificent and famous, although others are obscure. For if we demanded the fullness of glory, we would be putting together a volume of very little, if any, size. Who could meet this requirement? On the contrary, it is well known that, like the most beautiful faces, even the noblest souls are disfigured and marked by some defect of nature.] All English translations of quotes from *De viris illustribus* are the author's own.

Clearly, this statement contravenes Ratio's claim in *De remediis* that applicable examples abound – if anything, it lends support to Dolor's scepticism in that regard. Moreover, as Petrarch himself notes, while it would be preferable to cite positive cases from one's own personal experience ("visa") as opposed to garnering them from ancient texts ("lecta"), the present contains even fewer true 'exempla' than the past – none, to be exact.[24] (Were Dolor to deploy this knockout argument in our dialogue, the discussion would essentially be over – if the present lacks not only political, but also moral role models, the use of historical 'exempla' becomes very difficult to defend.) And yet, the dearth of truly suitable examples lamented here does not deter Petrarch from employing them. In *Fam.* 6.4, he explicitly counters the charge of inflationary use levelled against him by critics who negate the utility of examples ("quibus exempla non placent" [those who do not like examples], *Fam.* 6.4.14) by emphasising their desirable emotional impact. Examples produce a sense of "iocunditas" which, as he hopes, is not only keenly felt by himself, but forges a strong affective link to his readers present and future – if Petrarch is moved to feel "gratia" towards the ancients, could not the same gratitude be shown to him by posterity (§ 4)? In justifying the usage of 'exempla', he highlights their relatability, their direct and immediate connection to the everyday lives of his audience: examples make it possible to anchor the virtues they promote in the reader's own 'experientia' (with 'proponere exempla' being tantamount to 'dare experiendi facultatem').[25] As evidence of their efficacy, the *Familiares* cite a case which belongs to exactly the same hypotextual field (Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.22.53), and treats exactly the same topic as our dialogue – prior to Gaius Marius, all patients undergoing a painful medical procedure had to be physically restrained, but after the illustrious Roman submitted to surgery without being tied down, many others followed his lead.[26]

Petrarch supports his claim that 'exempla' are useful and applicable to the challenges of quotidian life with an extreme example of the stoical endurance of pain, and this essential argumentative link is precisely the point against which Dolor directs his attack when he points out that stories such as this may well showcase laudable behaviour but prove useless as remedies against real-life pain. In § 18, Ratio praises 'exempla' as a source of comfort ("solamen") and relief ("lenimen") – a characterisation very much based on affect as opposed to logic and rationality – only for her argument to be rejected yet again:

> DOLOR: Sentio ad imitandum rarissimos hortatores gloriosa consilia, sed alta nimium supraque hominem.

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[24] *Ibid.*, §§ 9-10 : "Scriberem libentius, fateor, visa quam lecta, nova quam vetera, ut sicut notitiam vetustatis ab antiquis acceperam ita huius notitiam etatis ex me posteritas sera perciperet. Gratiam habeo principibus nostris qui michi fesso et quietis avido hunc preripiunt laborem; neque enim ystorie sed satyre materiam stilo tribuunt." [I confess that I would be more willing to deal with things that have been seen rather than read, and with things that are current rather than remote, in order to pass on to future generations the knowledge of this era, just as the knowledge of the past has come to me from the ancients. I am grateful to our princes who spare me, tired and eager for rest, such a commitment, because they offer the pen material for satire, not history.]

[25] *Fam.* 6.4.4: "Id sane, preter experientiam que certissima magistra rerum est, nullo melius modo fit, quam si eum [sc. animum] his quibus simillimus esse cupit, admoveam. Itaque, sicut omnibus quos lego, gratiam habeo, si michi sepe propositis exemplis hanc experiendi facultatem dederint, sic michi gratiam habituros spero qui me legent." [Next to experience itself which is the best teacher of things, I would wager there is no better way to learn than by having the mind desire to emulate these greats as closely as possible. Therefore, just as I am grateful to all those authors I have read who afford me this opportunity to test myself with appropriate examples, so do I hope that those who read me will be grateful.]

[26] *Fam.* 6.4.8: "Omnes qui ante Marium a medicis secabantur, vinciri mos fuerat; quia enim dolorem corporis animi robore superari non posse persuasum erat, vinculorum auxilio utebantur. Primus Marius solutus sectus est, sed post eum plurimi; cur, queso, nisi quia exemplum viri constantissimi atque fortissimi ad imitandum animos erexit, et ut compatriote sui verbo utar, valuit autoritas?" [Before Marius, all those who had to undergo amputation at the hands of doctors used to be bound, for since they were persuaded that the pain of the body could not be overcome by the strength of the mind, they used cords for assistance. Marius was the first to be amputated untied, but after him there were many others. Why was this so, I ask, if not because the example of a very resolute and strong man fired minds to imitate him, and, to use the words that were used by a fellow citizen of his, because his authority prevailed?] (The "fellow citizen" alluded to here is Cicero; cf. the passage from the *Tusc.* quoted above.)

RATIO: Quid supra hominem dicis? Non deorum tibi, sed hominum rationes hominumque exempla proponimus.

DOLOR: Hominum fateor, sed paucorum; estque ultima et exacta raritas nullitati proxima. Non multum inter Phenicem et Chimeram interesse dixerim (illos sequor, qui Chimeram nichil esse volunt, apud alios namque Cilicie mons est).

[PAIN: I suppose so, but you urge me to imitate the rarest of outstanding men, which is magnificent advice, but too high-flown and beyond human capacity.

REASON: Why do you say beyond human capacity? I am talking about the conduct engaged in by men, not gods, and am proposing examples of human action.

PAIN: I admit that you talk about humans, but about those select few, who are of such great and exacting rarity that their number is next to nil. I, for one, cannot see much difference between the Phoenix and the Chimera, and agree with those who say that the Chimera does not exist – while others think it is a mountain in Sicily.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.19-21)

Dolor's trenchant critique is twofold: first, linking examples to a catalogue of desirable Stoic values that they supposedly illustrate is an inherently absurd proposition, as the ideal of the Stoic sage is ultimately unattainable for the regular human beings to whom lofty moral 'exempla' are addressed; second, such sages either do not exist at all (in which case they would be entirely fictional, like the Chimera), or are at least extremely scarce (in which case they would resemble the elusive Phoenix), and hence carry no moral weight whatsoever. Applied to Petrarch's own (Ciceronian) 'exemplum' of Gaius Marius' fortitude in the face of painful medical treatment, Dolor's position would be that Marius' undergoing surgery without being immobilised is either a figment of the imagination (Marius is a Chimera), or that his is an admirable but highly exceptional case, rare to the point of singularity (Marius is a Phoenix). Neither of the two interpretations commends Marius' example as something to which the majority of human beings could realistically aspire, or to put it differently: Dolor would dismiss the claim raised in *Fam.* 6.4.8 that Marius inspired a large number of people ("plurimi") with his courageous behaviour as being utterly implausible.

Ratio, for her part, is incapable of recovering from this argumentative setback and responds feebly:

Quasi vero imitandus tibi proponatur Phenix et non acies virorum, que quo rarior, eo dignior cui similis fieri velis. Quisquis raros sequi negliget, rarus esse vir non poterit.

[Oh, sure – as if I had proposed to you to imitate a Phoenix, not a host of men who, the rarer they are, the more worthy they are of your trying to be like them. Who neglects to follow such rare men cannot become such a rare man!]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.22)

Apart from failing completely to engage with Dolor's eminently clear metaphor, Ratio is compelled to admit that 'exempla' that meet her own standards are, indeed, few and far between. This gives Dolor another opportunity to emphasise his point of view – he is "one of many" (i.e., one of those who suffer from the affects), and not "one of the few" (who are capable of suppressing or eliminating them):

Video unum ex paucis fieri iubes; unus ex multis sum.

[I understand. You want me to become one of the few. But I happen to be one of many.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.23)

Both from a purely rational and a Christian point of view, Ratio's way of responding to this challenge is highly inadequate. Hers is a cold and scornful intellectualism that disdains the masses and values only extraordinary individuals, and as such it has a pronounced instinctive quality to it – it springs from an unrestrained feeling of smug superiority, or in other words, from an unbridled affect:

Prope nullum te maluerim, quam ex multis unum. Nescio enim an non esse, an stultum esse sit melius. At qui plurimorum, idem et stultorum e numero sit oportet.

[I would prefer you to be nobody rather than one of many. I do not know what is better, not to be or to be stupid. But I do know that to be one of the greatest number is tantamount to being stupid.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.24)

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As the dispute over the ideal of the Stoic sage and the viability of *exempla* has shown, it is quite possible in *De remediis* for an affect to behave 'rationally' and for Ratio to pursue an 'irrational' line of argument. Before I conclude with a brief explication of how this relates to the community building envisaged by Petrarch, I would like to discuss this seemingly paradoxical state of affairs in a little more detail.

The 'rational' affect. At this point, it should no longer come as a surprise that dialogue 2.113 casts Ratio's adversary in a rather favourable light. Far from being obtuse, Dolor is evidently capable of 'rational' tasks such as reading and debating, and demonstrates a remarkable command of self-reflective irony, as in the passage where Ratio inadvertently sabotages her own argument that 'exempla' provide role models for the public at large,[27] to which Dolor responds with the magnificently laconic "At non omnia possumus omnes" ["Well, we cannot all of us do everything"]. Not only is this a verbatim quote from Virgil's *Bucolica* (8.63), but Dolor also assigns it correctly to the pastoral genre and uses it as a springboard for a subtle wordplay with the ecclesiastical sense of 'pastoral.'[28]

When Ratio proposes that Dolor peruse the second book of the *Tusculanae* as potential grounds for compromise, it turns out that the latter has long since read it. Much like Cicero himself (*Tusc.* 1.11.24), Dolor is not easily won over by the grandiloquent philosophical claims he has read about, and herein lies the reason why he is willing to engage in an in-depth discussion of Cicero's text.[29] There is, as it were, nothing left for Ratio to do but to take Dolor's apparent familiarity with Cicero in stride and discuss the text in the tones of one veteran reader talking shop with another.[30]

This is not the only instance of Dolor showing himself to be Ratio's equal in terms of erudition: in § 35, where the two trade thinly veiled variations on Cicero's dialogue, Dolor's entire reply is lifted from the *Tusculanae* (2.12.29),[31] and Ratio pays him back in kind by continuing at exactly the same spot in Cicero's text

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[27] "[N]eque ego quod uni casus dedit, ad cunctos, sed quod multis virtus tribuit, ad unum traho, ad omnes tractura libentius, sed in uno etiam defatigor." (§ 28 [Nor do I apply to all what accidentally happened to one but, rather, apply to one what virtue has granted to many. I would be happy to apply it to all – but I get tired trying to apply it even to one!])

[28] "[N]on poeticum modo, sed pastorium est verbum." (§ 29 [This is not only a poetical expression but also a pastoral one.]) The erroneous attribution of this line to Ratio in Rawski's translation has been corrected in my edition based on manuscript evidence.

[29] "Edissere, oro, singula. Legi quidem hec sepe olim, tamen vereor ne michi accidat quod multis solet, qui apud se legentes intelligere sibi omnia videntur, apud alios locuturi, tum demum nichil intellexisse se intelligunt. Dic, si libet, quenam ista contentio est?" (§ 57 [Please discuss each one of them. I have read all this many times before. But, I am afraid, that it happened to me as to many others, who, when they read by themselves, think they understand everything, but when it comes to telling others about it, find out that they understood nothing. So tell me, if you will, what is *contentio*?])

[30] "Satis id quidem, si parum ultra progrediare, in ipsius Ciceronis verbis apparet, sed ne quid me frustra poposceris, dicam idem aliter." (§ 58 [This becomes sufficiently clear if you read a little further in Cicero's text. But lest you feel you have asked for naught, I shall tell you about it in a different way.])

[31] "Proh superi, quorsum hec inania, que philosophica dicitis! Scio plane dolorem non esse animi vitium, sed corporis; scio dolorem aliud esse quam perfidiam, dolere aliud quam furari. Hec ne ut nova me doceas, satis magnum, etsi nil addideris, per se dolor malum, cuius ego non noscendi consilio, sed ferendi seu, quod malim, depellendi egeo. Novi enim (nossemque utinam minus!), quid est dolor." (§ 35 [Dear God! What purpose serve these inanities that you call philosophical? I know full well that pain is not an affliction of the mind, but of the body. I know that pain is something

where Dolor has left off (§ 36).[32] Here, Ratio and Dolor are engaged in a sophisticated intertextual game that only well-versed readers of Cicero can join, and Dolor is clearly 'rational,' intellectually agile, and learned enough to do so. By all appearances, Dolor is fully aware of his own status as an affect that constitutes just one dimension of the human soul, and he is able to deduce abstract and general conclusions from this realisation.[33] As a result, Dolor's contributions to the dialogue amount to much more than mere affective self-assertion – he argues, contradicts, and takes an active hand in determining the direction of the debate.[34]

'Irrational' Ratio. Throughout the dialogue, Ratio's performance falls short of what readers are likely to expect from a character who is, after all, the personification of reason. Ratio does not argue a logically stringent case – she is a rhetorician who tries to adapt her approach to the affective response of her interlocutor. In doing so, she is prone to 'affective' reactions of her own, and commits what, from a strictly logical perspective, could only be called grave argumentative errors. Once again, the contentious 'exempla' used by Ratio are an area in which this tendency is particularly evident. When Dolor's previously vague complaints about pain and weakness gain a sharper focus, namely leprosy (§§ 41, 43), Ratio responds that this condition merely blemishes the outward complexion but does not compromise a person's health *per se* (§ 44). The cold comfort that she offers here is based on Augustine and Isidore,[35] and is lent support by the examples of the Hellenistic philosopher, Plotinus, and the Roman emperor, Constantine (§ 44, 46). These 'exempla' appear to be endowed with ample 'auctoritas', but they are in fact completely incongruous with Ratio's claim: as is related by Firmicus Maternus (*Matheseos seu Astronomicorum libri* 1.7.20-21), Plotinus died a horrible death from leprosy; and while Constantine, whose own illness constituted divine punishment for his initial persecution of the Christians (Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea – De sancto Silvestro* 2, p.71 Graesse), was indeed cured by Pope Sylvester I, his miraculous recovery is such a momentous event in the

else than dishonesty. To be in pain is one thing, to steal another. Concerning these things, you can't teach me anything new. They are wearisome enough for me without your adding anything. Pain in itself is an ill, and I do not need advice on how to know it but, rather, on how to endure it and, what I would prefer, how to get rid of it. I know, and wish to God I knew less well, what pain is!]) Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.12.29: "'nihil est' inquit 'malum nisi quod turpe atque vitiosum est.' ad ineptias redis; illud enim, quod me angebat, non eximis. scio dolorem non esse nequitiam; desine id me docere: hoc doce, doleam necne doleam, nihil interesse: 'numquam quicquam' inquit 'ad beate quidem vivendum, quod est in una virtute positum; sed est tamen reiciendum.'" ['There is nothing evil', says he, 'except what is base and wicked.' Now you are talking foolishly, for you do not take away the cause of my torment: I know that pain is not villainy; stop teaching me that; tell me that it makes no difference whether I am in pain or not in pain. 'It never makes any difference', says he, 'to the fact of leading a happy life, which is based on virtue alone; but, all the same, pain is to be shunned.'] All English translations of quotes from the *Tusculanae* are cited according to J. E. KING's edition.

[32] "Et ego dolorem rem acerbam scio, immitem, horridam, amaram, tristem, nature adversam, sensibus odiosam" (§ 36 ["I too know that pain is a severe thing, savage, horrid, bitter, sad, contrary to nature, and hateful to the senses"]). Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.12.29: "asperum est, contra naturam, difficile perpessu, triste, durum." [It is unpleasing, against nature, hard to endure, melancholy, cruel.]

[33] E.g., in § 39: "Delectant aures verba magnifica, sed vera animum. Quid si dolor enim corporis animi patientia maior est?" [[G]rand words delight the ears, true words the mind. But what if the body's pain is greater than the mind's capacity for patience?]

[34] E.g., in § 41: "Quid vero si doloris intolerantiam morbi feditas gravat et pudor et fastidium? Quid si lepra putre corpus ac miserum invasit? Quid hic michi sermo tuus iste contulerit?" [But what if unbearable pain is aggravated by a loathsome disease, nauseating and shameful? What if leprosy afflicts that pathetic, putrescent body? How will your lecture help me in that case?]

[35] See Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* 2.40.2: "Quaerendum est igitur, quid ipsa lepra significet; non enim sanati sed mundati dicuntur qui ea caruerunt; coloris quippe vitium est, non valitudinis aut integritatis sensuum atque membrorum. 'Leprosi' ergo non absurde intellegi possunt qui scientiam verae fidei non habentes varias doctrinas profitentur erroris"; Isidor, *Etymologiae* 4.8.11: "Lepra vero asperitas cutis squamosa lepidae herbae similis, unde et nomen sumpsit: cuius color nunc in nigredinem vertitur, nunc in alborem, nunc in ruborem. In corpore hominis ita lepra dinoscitur: si variatim inter sanas cutis partes color diversus appareat, aut si ita se ubique diffundat, ut omnia unius coloris quamvis adulteri faciat."

annals of the Church (where it is celebrated as the reason for the Donation of Constantine)[36] precisely because of the fact that leprosy is not – pace Ratio – a harmless irritation of the skin, but a lethal disease. This is not the only time that Ratio's 'exempla' are chosen for rhetorical effect and affective impact as opposed to logical compatibility with the respective line of argument.[37] But all to no avail: while Dolor concedes that the discussion of the *Tusculanae* was stimulating and fruitful (not, however, without making clear that this is Cicero's merit, not Ratio's; § 63), he rejects the general drift of Ratio's argument and voices the suspicion that her suggestions might, after all, be nothing more than irrelevant diversions that "occupy the mind and please the ears but do nothing for the pain" (§ 65).

As her 'exempla' and moral postulates continue to fall flat, Ratio begins to seek refuge in ominous religious allusions and cautionary tales from the Bible[38] in the hope of downplaying the significance of corporeality and thereby making its discussion superfluous.[39] The same goal is served by Ratio's warning that sensual impressions can be deceiving, which is why "[t]ruth must be sought by thinking and inquiring, not by sensing" (§ 48). But this statement immediately creates yet another logical dilemma: given that the question of how one can bear the pain that is transmitted by the senses without suffering perturbations of the soul lies at the very heart of the Ciceronian topic (§ 4, § 10, § 12, §§ 33-34, § 36, § 66, etc.), much of the preceding discussion is effectively rendered null and void, including Ratio's own arguments.

Ratio's admonition to put faith in the teachings of the Stoics (§ 8, see above) also falls into this pattern of 'irrational' behaviour. In the end, all her efforts come to nothing, and she gradually retreats from the debate on the grounds that further arguments are futile.[40] Dolor's reply makes it clear that he, too, considers the issue still open and the problem unresolved:

> Heu, hinc tu me urges, hinc dolor, et cui cedam nescio.
>
> [Alas, you are attacking me on one side, pain, on the other. I do not know whom to believe.]
>
> (PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.67)

With all other means at her disposal exhausted, Ratio makes one last-ditch attempt to gain the upper hand. Truth, she argues, is only to be found in the Christian faith, and Christ himself is the ultimate *exemplum*:

> Cede nobiliori. In quod illud quoque plurimum adiuverit, meminisse summum illud et eximium mundi decus, eum scilicet qui divinam atque humanam in se units naturam, tot tantosque pro te passum cruciatus, ut que

[36] On Constantine's cure at the hands of Pope Sylvester I, see *Fam.* 6.2.13 (along with Dotti's commentary on the passage), 9.13.36; on the (fictitious) Donation of Constantine resulting from this cure, see *Sen.* 2.2.18.

[37] § 62 is a case in point: here, Ratio attempts to support Cicero's commendation of the *sermo intimus* (see above) with examples of how it engendered steadfastness in historical figures. However, the *exempla* she chooses – Job and Emperor Theodosius – leave much to be desired: far from conducting a stoical-cum-Augustinian conversation with himself, Job loudly laments his suffering (*Job* 7.1-21, cf. 19.21-22); and if Theodosius won the Battle of the Save against the usurper Magnus Maximus in 388, he did so not because of an interior dialogue that gave him strength, but because he had addressed a plain and simple plea for help to the Almighty (see the corresponding commentary in PETRARCA 2021/2022). While Ratio's examples lack neither authority nor verisimilitude (two core criteria Petrarch articulates in the preface to *De viris illustribus – Adam-Hercules* 18), they simply do not match the case at hand. Or to put it differently: they are incompatible with the 'rational' argument they are supposed to undergird.

[38] E.g., in § 46: "postremo ante oculos habere celi dominum, non lepram odisse, sed vitium, eumque ipsum angelorum iudicem atque hominum, de quo scriptum est: 'neque habitabit iuxta te malignus, neque permanebunt iniusti ante oculos tuos' [*Ps* 5.6]" [And, finally, you should keep your eyes trained on the Lord in Heaven, Who hates, not leprosy, but vice, and Who is the judge of the Angels and of mankind, of Whom is written: 'Neither shall the wicked dwell near thee: nor shall the unjust abide before thy eyes.'])

[39] One example of this is Ratio's entire reply in § 42; see the respective commentary in my edition of *De remediis* (PETRARCA 2021/2022).

[40] "Sed iam de re, ut aiunt, omnium asperrima plura quam pro consuetudine diximus. Desinendum est: dolorem enim si non lenit virtus, verba non lenient." (§ 66 [But I realize that I have said more on this subject, which is, as they say, *omnium asperrima* – the hardest of all – than has been my habit before. I must come to an end, particularly so because, if there is no virtue to soothe one's pain, words certainly won't soothe it; italics in the original]).

pateris, illorum collatione facilia, immo vero dulcia longeque suavia iudicari possint. Validissimum hoc remedii genus scrutantes cuncta philosophi nescierunt.

[Believe the noblest! You may find help in this, remembering the greatest and most exalted glory of the world – Him, to be sure, Who in Himself united the nature of God and man, and suffered for you so many excruciating pains, compared to which whatever you may have to bear must appear easy, even sweet, and altogether gratifying. Consider carefully this, the most potent remedy of all, of which the philosophers know nothing.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* 2.113.68)

In the Christian exemplary tradition, Christ is a trump card that is impossible to beat. In the context of Ratio's argument, however, the case is radically altered: her conclusion is a logically incongruous move that completely devalues the ideas of the pagan philosophers she has so extensively discussed, along with the equally pagan *exempla* used in the process.[41] With one ill-considered utterance, Ratio demolishes the validity of Stoicism and delegitimises Cicero's *Tusculanae*, a crucial hypotext that has played a dominant role throughout large parts of the dialogue. Far from shoring up her supposedly superior position, Ratio has thus pulled the rug from under her own feet by asserting that the pre-Christian material she has been drawing on does not, in the end, give access to a higher truth.

***

As we have seen, Dolor's behaviour certainly qualifies as 'affective,' but it also exhibits a pronounced 'rational' dimension. Ratio, on the other hand, deviates from her primarily 'rational' approach on several significant occasions by acting in a decidedly 'irrational' fashion, both with regards to the pragmatics of her argument and the semantic content of her replies. But what does all this have to do with community-building?

The connection lies in the fact that Petrarch proposes a covenant with us, his readers, inviting us to join him in a discussion of human life, its proper conduct, and its theoretical conceptualisation. Both the author and his audience participate in this discussion as the flawed human beings that they are, and Petrarch leaves no doubt that he conceives of both himself and us as complex beings torn by inner conflicts who are constantly oscillating between the opposing poles of reason and affect. He returns time and again to this tension in his texts, perhaps most famously in his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, where desire constantly collides with the limits imposed by rationality. We encounter the same problem in dialogic form in his *Secretum meum*, where a worldly Franciscus, preoccupied with a multitude of human affects, faces off against Augustinus, a Christian, stoical, and 'rational' inquisitor of the human soul, whose efforts are ultimately rewarded with no more success than Ratio's in our dialogue.

In the preface to the first book of *De remediis*, Petrarch underscores his view that reason and affects are closely interlinked: human beings are subject to manifold external influences, which stir up the 'passiones animi' that the Stoics attempt to suppress. The relationship between rationality and the passions of the soul is not one of simple antagonism, but rather involves a fair amount of reciprocity and mutual dependency. If we struggle with our affects – our fear, our pain, our joy, and our hope – we do so not despite, but *because* of our "ingenium et acumen":

Idonei visi sumus, qui pile in morem huc illuc tam facile iactaremur, animalia evi brevissimi, sollicitudinis infinite, quibus insciis cui puppim litori, cui consilio animum applicemus, pro consilio interim sit pendere ac preter presens malum et a tergo quod doleat et ante oculos semper habere quod terreat. Quod preter hominem animantium nulli accidit, quibus presentia evasisse plenissimam securitatem tribuit. Nobis ob ingenium et acumen animi semper quasi cum Cerbero tricipiti hoste luctandum est, ut ratione caruisse prope melius in nosmetipsos etherea nature prestantioris arma vertentibus.

[41] This rejection is prefigured by an offhand remark made by Ratio earlier in the dialogue: "quamvis hoc ultimum Cicero vel nescivit vel non rite scivit, non defectu ingenii, sed gratie." (§ 62 [This last item Cicero either did not know or did not know how to do properly, not because he lacked intelligence, but because he lacked grace.])

[For we seem good for nothing else but to be tossed back and forth like balls, being creatures of very short life span, of infinite apprehension, yet ignorant of how to steer our boat to shore, how to reach decisions, and overcome our ever present doubts. Besides an immediate calamity, we have always something to worry us in our back and something to frighten us before our eyes – which happens with no living being other than man, since having escaped what is presently the case affords perfect security to all other creatures. But we, because of our intelligence and the capacity of our minds, must continuously wrestle with threats as menacing as a three-headed Cerberus. It might almost be better if we had no reasoning powers, as we turn the heavenly weapons of our superior nature against ourselves.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* Pref. 1.3)

The uncertainty that springs from the human condition can only be overcome through philosophical reflection, and suitable texts play a key role in this quest for moral fortification and inner peace. Given that not everybody – and certainly not those who are busily engaged in matters of public life – can find the time to work through the substantial body of pertinent writings composed since antiquity, Petrarch has filled his textual pharmacopoeia with a wide range of condensed remedies. Much like a physician prescribes certain pills against certain illnesses, the dialogues of *De remediis* are intended to provide problem-specific comfort and reassurance in times of need (Pref. 1.11). This extended medical metaphor is highly conducive to Petrarch's self-fashioning as a Stoic doctor of the soul, a role we have touched upon earlier in this paper. In order to deliver on his promise of soothing the affects, Petrarch initially assumes a position of Stoic rationality (Pref. 1.17), and it is thus only fitting that the first preface quotes repeatedly from Seneca's *De remediis fortuitorum*,[42] a dialogue that Petrarch explicitly names as a literary parallel to his own work: while Seneca came to the aid of his brother, Gallio, in the hope of easing the latter's struggle with bad fortune, Petrarch seeks to offer the same kind of assistance to the dedicatee of the first book, Azzo da Correggio (and, by extension, his entire readership, Pref. 1.10), with the added benefit of also discussing the treacherous allure of what he refers to as "smiling fortune" (Pref. 1.8f.). With this programmatic claim, Petrarch not only casts himself as a healer in Seneca's mould, but he effectively presents himself as superior to his precursor given that his skills encompass a much more complex and ambiguous dimension of spiritual wellbeing.

If the preface to the first book invites us to commend the welfare of our soul to the author's powers of healing and submit our affectivity to rational treatment, the preface to the second book strikes a completely different chord: here, the healer himself is no longer above suffering, and the rational peace of mind we have been encouraged to pursue suddenly appears completely out of reach. Drawing on philosophical metaphors furnished by Heraclitus,[43] Petrarch paints a bleak picture of human life and indeed the entire cosmos, which he finds riddled with endless contradictions and violent confrontations, an inexhaustible source of tension, pain, and desperation. Everything in this world is conflict-laden, unsettling, wearisome: from the inscrutable workings of the firmament via the vagaries of the weather to petty nuisances like the nerve-racking noise created around the clock by animals and humans that banishes all hope of peaceful contemplation, or the clandestine destruction wrought by woodworms – not to mention the relentless armies of ants invading our gardens to devour our precious flowers and produce. Animals, especially, bear the unmitigated brunt of affectivity; in their interactions, love and hate commingle indistinguishably in destructive dynamics. But human existence is equally fraught with the constant struggle against adversity, and if that were not enough, individuals find themselves entirely at the mercy of the 'passiones animi' (Pref. 2.35) – as Petrarch puts it, "Ad summam ergo, omnia, sed in primis omnis hominum vita, lis quedam est." (Pref. 2.33 [In short, therefore, *the life of man, more so than anything else, consists of strife*; italics in the original]) Even the would-be doctor of the soul is embroiled in this war of all against all, and of all against everything – he, too, has turned into a sufferer who is no longer firmly on Ratio's side. In the grasp of the affects, he is in acute danger of losing his mind over the absence of any sort of rational recourse:

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[42] In all likelihood, *De remediis fortuitorum* does not constitute a forgery, but rather an abbreviated treatment of a Senecan original; see PETRARCA 2021/2022: 1.XVIII-XIX incl. n. 43-44.

[43] "[I]llud Heracliti: 'Omnia secundum litem fieri.'" (Pref. 2.1 [[A]s Heraclitus says: *everything exists by strife*; italics in the original])

Taceo quod, ut omnia (et que sensu carent et que sentiunt) in unum cogam, a supremo celi vertice, ut dixi, usque ad infimum terre centrum et a principe angelo usque ad minimum et extremum vermem iugis et implacabilis pugna est. Homo ipse, terrestrium dux et rector animantium, qui rationis gubernaculo solus hoc iter vite et hoc mare tumidum turbidumque tranquille agere posse videretur, quam continua lite agitur, non modo cum aliis, sed secum!

[I shall be silent about the fact that, as I consider everything inanimate and animate, from the highest top of heaven, as I have said, to the lowest center of the earth, from the firstmost of the angels to the smallest and least of the worms – the battle is unceasing and relentless. Man himself, lord of the earth and ruler of all living creatures, the only one who with the rudder of his reason should be able to control calmly the course of life and its swirling, turbulent seas, is engaged in continuous strife, not only with others, but with himself.]

(PETRARCA, *De rem.* Pref. 2.24)

This is a struggle that extends far beyond our author and his readers, and to discuss the vicissitudes of life is therefore to discuss the universal fellowship of destiny that unites all human beings: individual readers join an extensive community of reception that encompasses the past, the present, and the future.

From the very outset, Petrarch intended for *De remediis utriusque fortune* to reach a broad audience. I would argue that his ambitious plans came to fruition precisely because he opted *not* to write a hierarchical dialogue between master and pupil in which Ratio always prevails over the affects and thus his readers. Combined with his willingness to fully embrace the ambivalences and contradictions of the human condition, Petrarch's choice to present emotional and rational points of view as a complex, entangled web goes a long way towards explaining the runaway success that *De remediis* enjoyed not only in fourteenth-century Italy, but also in the centuries to come. As comprehensive as it is relatable, Petrarch's collection of philosophical remedies against the ailments of everyday life accomplished exactly what its author had hoped to achieve with his own use of 'exempla':

Si vero forsan studii mei labor expectationis tue sitim ulla ex parte sedaverit, nullum a te aliud premii genus efflagito, nisi ut diligar, licet incognitus, licet sepulcro conditus, licet versus in cineres, sicut ego multos, quorum me vigiliis adiutum senseram, non modo defunctos sed diu ante consumptos, post annum millesimum dilexi.[44]

[If in some way the fruit of my labours has quenched the thirst of your curiosity, I ask only one reward: that you love me, even if you do not know me, even if I am locked in a sepulchre, even if I am now reduced to ashes, as I have loved so many by whose vigils I have felt helped, and I have loved them even though they were dead, or rather: already worn out by an infinity of years.]

(PETRARCA, Preface to *De viris illustribus – Adam-Hercules* 39)

Translated from the original German by Martin Bleisteiner and Gabriella Szalay.

[44] Cf. *Fam.* 6.4.4 (quoted above in n. 25).

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Psicomachie petrarchesche. Comunità in dialogo tra *Secretum* e *De remediis*

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1. La 'messa in scena' degli affetti

Si può dire che il tema degli affetti è onnipresente in Petrarca, sicché una qualsiasi delle sue opere potrebbe rappresentare un buon campione per verificare la tesi che qui propongo: cioè che anche attraverso il discorso su tale tema il poeta sia andato via via assumendo posizioni ideologiche nelle quali i membri delle comunità intellettuali sorte intorno a lui (i discepoli e le prime generazioni di posteri) trovarono un efficace strumento identitario, una proposta di rinnovamento culturale in cui riconoscersi e a cui collaborare.

Alla dimostrazione di questa tesi si prestano particolarmente bene *Secretum* e *De remediis utriusque fortune*: in primo luogo perché, pur proponendo un catalogo di affetti del tutto analoghi a quelli che popolano l'intera produzione latina e volgare, e spesso impiegando strategie retoriche affini per discuterne (stesse argomentazioni, stessi esempi, stesse autorità), in questi due casi Petrarca ricorre a una forma di rappresentazione specifica, mettendo 'in scena' le umane passioni in una specie di confronto tra voci che incarnano atteggiamenti distinti; in secondo luogo perché, come in una specie di dittico, tali opere offrono l'occasione di guardare allo stesso fascio di problemi attraverso 'focalizzazioni' complementari. Nel primo caso, il poeta assume il punto di vista dell'individuo che riflette sul rapporto tra la propria sfera emotiva e quella etico-religiosa (la coscienza personale educata alla dottrina cristiana), pur mantenendo l'attenzione ben desta su questioni del tutto secolari, per esempio quelle di natura retorica; nel secondo caso, assume invece il punto di vista del soggetto (un uomo generico, ma non qualsiasi uomo) che guarda agli esiti psicologici suscitati dal rapporto tra sé e la comunità di riferimento, nelle sue varie articolazioni sociali: la famiglia, il gruppo degli affini, l'ordine professionale, le istituzioni civili e religiose, la classe sociale.

In altre parole, se nel primo caso il poeta ragiona in termini individuali sulla natura dei propri sentimenti, nel secondo caso egli ragiona sulla loro dimensione collettiva, mostrandoli come forze che agiscono sul soggetto nel dispiegarsi delle relazioni interpersonali, particolarmente in contesti selezionati, per lo più aristocratici. Se è vero infatti che la paura della malattia e della morte, o il desiderio di felicità sono 'affezioni dell'anima' appartenenti ad ogni persona, indipendentemente dallo status sociale, in una larga parte dei casi presentati nel *De remediis* si tratta di aspirazioni, paure, manifestazioni di godimento o di sofferenza legate all'esercizio di qualche potere (economico, politico, militare, intellettuale), all'acquisizione o alla perdita di qualche privilegio, incarico o bene materiale per lo più riconducibili all'esperienza terrena di chi appartiene agli strati elevati della società trecentesca.[1]

[1] Avverto sin d'ora che, in mancanza di edizione critica, le citazioni del *Secretum* provengono dall'edizione a cura di Enrico Fenzi, il cui testo latino riproduce quello messo a disposizione da Antonietta Bufano nel 1975 per i 'Classici' Utet; quelle del *De remediis* provengono invece, per la traduzione italiana, dall'antologia introdotta e annotata ancora da Enrico Fenzi, a partire dal testo stabilito da Lucio Ceccarelli e Emanuele Lelli per Lexis (Roma 1997); per il testo latino, della nuova edizione commentata e tradotta in lingua tedesca a cura Bernhard Huss (2 vol.); cfr. rispettivamente PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 92; PETRARCA 2009: 46-48 e PETRARCA 2021: XLIII-XLVI. Per la distinzione fra passioni individuali, pubbliche e universali nelle opere di Petrarca, cfr. MCCLURE 1991, in particolare i capitoli da 1 a 3; STROPPA 2014: 121-130 e STROPPA 2020: 377-380. Per la centralità dei temi di carattere 'aristocratico' nei *Remediis* e per la differente struttura del dialogo in rapporto al *Secretum*, cfr. ŠPIČKA 2005: 218; ŠPIČKA 2008: 189 e FENZI 2015.

A legittimare l'accostamento tra le due opere vi sono poi ragioni letterarie, trattandosi in entrambi i casi di dialoghi dalla comune matrice classica (principalmente Platone e Cicerone, aggiunto Agostino), ma con una certa tendenza alla drammatizzazione che si evince, in particolare, dalla cura della messa in scena (come nel proemio del *Secretum*) e dalla caratterizzazione degli interlocutori (soprattutto nei dialoghi del *De remediis*).[2] Infine è ormai accertato che, pur essendo state concepite in momenti successivi della vita di Petrarca (l'una prima, l'altra dopo il fatidico 1353), e quindi risentendo di contesti culturali diversi, le due opere coesistettero a lungo sullo scrittoio del poeta, finendo per interferire ripetutamente.[3]

2. Finti segreti, esili rimedi

Cominciamo dal *Secretum* che, almeno nella sua prima redazione, dovette precedere di alcuni anni il *De remediis*, risalendo grossomodo al periodo compreso fra il 1347 e il 1353, vale a dire quel travagliato giro di anni in cui il poeta, rotto il sodalizio con la famiglia Colonna, progettava di abbandonare definitivamente la curia avignonese e cercava una nuova collocazione in Italia, finendo per stabilirsi presso la corte dei Visconti a Milano; qui, nel corso del decennio successivo, avrebbe portato a termine molte delle opere iniziate in precedenza, incluso probabilmente il *Secretum*, oltre a scrivere per intero il *De remediis* (fra 1353 e 1366).

Proviamo allora a dire qualcosa sulla natura di questo 'libellus' costituito di tre parti e un proemio, destinato, secondo le dichiarazioni dell'autore, a fuggire ogni consorzio umano e, dunque, per principio escluso dal nostro discorso sulla formazione di comunità affettive o culturali: "Tu dunque libretto, evita d'incontrarti con altri, e statti contento di rimanertene con me, memore del tuo nome. Sei infatti il mio segreto, e così sarai chiamato" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 99).[4]

Ebbene, per andare direttamente al punto, e rimandando alla bibliografia per tutte le opportune considerazioni sui contenuti e le forme, sui rapporti con gli altri scritti petrarcheschi e le tecniche di citazione delle fonti, diciamo che proprio questa dichiarazione fondamentale, che sigilla il proemio prima dell'inizio del dialogo offrendone la chiave di lettura (ma inoculandovi anche una fondamentale antinomia: *dyalogus* significa disputa, confronto fra opinioni diverse, ed è nella tradizione occidentale lo strumento principe della relazione tra maestro e discepoli) è falsa; o, per meglio dire, non va in alcun modo presa alla lettera, ma piuttosto intesa come didascalia conclusiva di una rappresentazione, rivolte entrambe, la didascalia e la rappresentazione, a un preciso gruppo di destinatari disposti a riconoscersi nei contenuti impliciti del proemio più ancora che in quelli espliciti del dialogo.

Scorriamo dunque il breve testo alla ricerca degli indizi di questo messaggio occulto e di questo pubblico eletto.

La prima scena che ci appare (complessivamente sono due) è la seguente: c'è un uomo solo, profondamente assorto nella riflessione, però ben sveglio e attento, che ragiona (il verbo è *cogitare*) sulla

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[2] La classificazione di queste opere nel sistema dei generi letterari è un problema aperto, che richiederebbe lunghe divagazioni anche bibliografiche. Sulla natura 'drammatica' del *De remediis*, cfr. almeno PACCA 1998: 186; VESCOVO 2014: 45-66 e RIGO 2018: 85-114. È per altro cosa nota che il *De remediis* ebbe una discreta fortuna nell'ambito del teatro scolastico quattro-cinquecentesco e che venne più volte drammatizzato; su questo aspetto della ricezione dell'opera, cfr. BROVIA 2013: 198-199.

[3] Per gli elementi che interessano in questa occasione, cioè la cornice in cui i due dialoghi sono inseriti e il pubblico a cui i loro messaggi sono destinati, cfr. almeno TATEO 1992-1993: 537-547; RAWSKI 1991: I, XXIII; ARIANI 1999: 150. Sulla coincidenza di temi e strategie argomentative tra *Secr.* e *Rem.*, cfr. ŠPIČKA 2008, soprattutto: 183-184. Cfr. inoltre FENZI 2018: 397-398; CHINES 2019: 23 e STROPPA 2020: 371-377; HUSS 2022: 62-78.

[4] "Tuque, ideo, libelle, conventus hominum fugiens, mecum manisse contentus eris, nominis proprii non immemor. *Secretum* enim *meum* es et diceris" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 98).

propria condizione morale: in particolare, su quando e come egli abbia intrapreso la via del peccato, e su cosa fare per uscirne prima della morte.[5] Improvvisamente al suo cospetto appare una donna, ineffabile per luminosità, indefinibile per età, e di una bellezza tale da non essere del tutto compresa dall'umano intelletto. Una sola cosa risulta subito chiara all'uomo, che ovviamente è lo stesso Petrarca, il suo stato virginale, che si evince dal contegno e dal volto:

> mi parve allora di vedere – angosciato e ben desto com'ero – una donna di un'epoca e di uno splendore inenarrabili, e di una bellezza che noi uomini non riusciamo interamente a comprendere. Non sapevo per quali vie fosse giunta sino a me: ma che fosse vergine, me lo dicevano l'abito e il volto (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 95).[6]

Sfortunatamente della sovrumana figura Francesco non può cogliere altro, perché accecato dalla luce che emana dagli occhi di lei (proprio un sole, come in *RVF* 90), sicché è costretto a distogliere lo sguardo. Allora la donna, che subito se ne avvede, gli si rivolge con parole affettuose, lo invita a non temerla e lo incoraggia a levare gli occhi verso il cielo:

> E mentre restavo stupefatto alla vista della sua straordinaria luminosità, e non osavo alzare i miei occhi verso i raggi che emanavano dal sole dei suoi, così mi si rivolse: "Non tremare, e non lasciarti turbare dalla mia nuova bellezza. Ho avuto compassione dei tuoi errori, e sono giunta da lontano per portarti sollecito aiuto. Sin qui troppo hai tenuto rivolti a terra gli occhi offuscati: ma se le cose terrene li hanno allettati a tal punto, che mai potrai aspettarti se li alzerai verso le eterne?" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 95)[7]

Non è necessario essere specialisti di lirica italiana (e provenzale) delle origini per cogliere gli echi della fittissima intertestualità che costituisce la trama di queste righe, a partire dalla lirica dello Stilnovo (si legga ad es. *Veggio negli occhi de la Donna mia* di Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime* III 10) per arrivare ovviamente alla *Commedia*. Ma decine sono anche le reminiscenze di autori classici e mediolatini, fra i quali Virgilio e Cicerone (i soli a beneficiare di citazioni esplicite, il primo all'inizio del proemio, il secondo alla fine), tanto da fare pensare a un vero e proprio centone. Poiché al riconoscimento di tali fonti si sono dedicati con diseguale ampiezza tutti i commentatori e qualche altro studioso più di recente, e avendo io stessa dedicato a questo proemio un contributo che aspira a portare qualche novità, non mi soffermerò oltre sulla questione.[8] Dirò tuttavia che proprio attraverso questa trama di citazioni implicite, riferimenti letterali, reminiscenze ed allusioni Petrarca costruisce un codice, una sorta di linguaggio cifrato interpretabile solo dai membri della sua stessa comunità intellettuale, da coloro cioè che quelle fonti potevano riconoscere immediatamente per averle studiate e commentate come lui, per averne condiviso il senso o, viceversa, per avere alimentato attorno ad esse discussioni.

[5] "Attonito michi quidem et sepissime cogitanti qualiter in hanc vitam intrassem, qualiter ve forem egressurus, contigit nuper ut non, sicut egros animos solet, sumnus opprimeret, sed anxium atque pervigilem" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 94).

[6] "Mulier quedam inenarrabilis etatis et luminis, formaque non satis ab hominibus intellecta incertum quibus viis adiisse videretur. Virginem tamen et habitus nuntiabat et facies" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 94).

[7] "Hec igitur me stupentem insuete lucis aspectum et adversus radios, quos oculorum suorum sol fundebat, non audentem oculos attollere, sic alloquitur: "Noli trepidare, neu te species nova perturbet. Errores tuos miserata, de longinquo tempestivum tibi auxilium latura descendi. Satis superque satis hactenus terram caligantibus oculis asperxisti; quos si usqueadeo mortalia ista permulcent, quid futurum speras si eos ad eterna sustuleris?" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 94).

[8] Per dare un'idea delle proporzioni del fenomeno, diciamo che nel solo proemio si possono contare decine di riferimenti a una quindicina di opere tra antiche e 'moderne', ascrivibili ad almeno otto autori diversi (oltre a Virgilio e Cicerone, anche Seneca, Orazio, ps. Ausonio, Agostino, Boezio, Dante). Cfr. al proposito: MERCURI 1987; FENZI in PETRARCA, *Secr.*; BISTAGNE 2006; DE RENTIIS 2018; BROVIA 2021: i.c.p.

La prova più eloquente di questa circostanza si trova nel trattamento riservato proprio a Dante, in particolare alla *Commedia*, il cui canto proemiale è qui ripetutamente evocato, non però in chiave celebrativa ma per essere smentito con sistematicità: dalla scelta della guida spirituale (l'Agostino padre della chiesa, vescovo, commentatore della Bibbia ed apologeta del cristianesimo) a quella del luogo in cui ambientare il proprio esame di coscienza (un'appartata e luminosa radura nella quale sedere insieme e conversare); dallo stato emotivo del protagonista al momento della apparizione (assorto e preoccupato, ma ben sveglio e consapevole di sé) all'identità della apparizione stessa (la verità in persona), tutto il proemio del *Secretum* si presenta come una confutazione delle scelte narrative dantesche, sicché il dialogo, se intendiamo il termine in senso etimologico, più che annunciarsi tra Agostino e Francesco, sembra accendersi tra Petrarca e Dante; o, meglio ancora, tra Petrarca e l'intera tradizione poetica precedente, cosa che per altro avviene concretamente al principio degli anni Cinquanta, quando tra il poeta e gli amici fiorentini (Boccaccio in testa) si scatena un'aspra polemica dalle radici principalmente politiche (la scelta di Petrarca di porsi sotto la protezione dei Visconti, i più minacciosi nemici della libertà di Firenze), ma che non manca di riflettersi anche in ambito letterario; particolarmente intorno al modello dantesco che Petrarca sprezzantemente rinnega contestandone tutte le scelte, dalla lingua alla retorica, dalla poetica alle posizioni teologiche.[9]

> E intanto [Agostino] guardandomi con affetto e riscaldandomi con un abbraccio paterno, mi accompagnava verso una zona più appartata, con la Verità che ci precedeva di poco. Qui ci sedemmo tutti e tre, e allora finalmente, lontani da ogni altro testimone, mentre ella giudicava in silenzio ogni singolo punto, nacque tra noi una lunga conversazione che, trascinata dall'argomento, si protrasse per tre giorni. (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 99)[10]

L'esempio più illuminante di ciò che sto descrivendo si trova però nelle due citazioni (la prima esplicita, la seconda implicita e per nulla scontata), che Petrarca sceglie per rappresentare la conversazione tra la donna dell'apparizione, appunto Verità, e Francesco; conversazione con la quale si conclude la prima scena del proemio ma non la puntuale palinodia antidantesca.

Riprendiamo dunque il filo del racconto. Francesco ha appena ascoltato l'invito della donna a sollevare gli occhi da terra, prova quindi a guardarla in volto. Il suo cuore trema ancora ma egli desidera conoscerne l'identità sicché, non osando rivolgersi a lei con parole proprie, lo fa con quelle che Virgilio attribuisce ad Enea, quando incontra la madre Venere sul lido di Cartagine senza riconoscerla: "Oh, come rivolgermi a te, vergine? Infatti non hai volto | mortale, né la tua voce suona umana" (VIRGILIO, *En.* I: 327-328).[11]

Ella allora si rivela, ricorrendo a sua volta a parole poetiche; mostra così di accettare il gioco di reminiscenze di Francesco, e intanto esprime il giudizio letterario al quale è stata sollecitata dalla citazione virgiliana: da una parte confermando lo screditamento di Dante e, prima di lui, dello stesso Virgilio; dall'altra celebrando Petrarca, attraverso la celebrazione del suo poema. Insomma, ciò che più sorprende qui è che Petrarca, tralasciando le molte ragioni teologiche adducibili contro Virgilio, e quindi contro Dante che lo ha scelto come *duca*, compie la sua opera di detrazione sul piano strettamente retorico,

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[9] Il più importante documento di questa polemica consiste nella celebre Familiare XXI 15 a Boccaccio (1359), con la quale Petrarca prende una precisa posizione nel quadro della tradizione poetica italiana. Per l'interpretazione di questo dibattito, che si manifesta molto più chiaramente in altri luoghi della produzione petrarchesca, soprattutto nella celebre Senile IV 5 a Boccaccio, cfr. FENZI 2002. Per una illuminante ricostruzione della tradizione poetica che precede le maschere convocate in questi testi, e in particolare quella di Ragione, cfr. FENZI 2016.

[10] "Simul [Augustinus] me benigne intuens paternoque refovens complexu, in secretiorem loci partem Veritate previa parumper adduxit; ibi tres pariter consedimus. Tum demum, illa de singulis in silentio iudicante, submotisque procul arbitris, ultro citroque sermo longior obortus, atque in diem tertium, materia protrahente, productus est" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 98).

[11] "O quam te memorem, virgo? Namque haud tibi vultus | mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat" (VERGILIUS, *Aen.* I: 327-328).

sottoponendo al giudizio di Verità sé stesso e i due illustri antagonisti non per le rispettive qualità umane e morali, ma per la qualità dei loro poemi:

> Io sono colei – risponde Verità – che nella nostra *Africa* tu hai descritto con curiosa eleganza; sono colei per la quale tu, non diversamente dal tebano Anfione, con mirabile artificio e, alla lettera, con mani di poeta, hai eretto nell'estremo occidente e sulla più alta cima dell'Atlante un palazzo fulgente e bellissimo. (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 95)[12]

Se è relativamente facile intuire perché il riferimento all'*Africa* da parte della Verità rappresenti qui una consacrazione di Petrarca come poeta epico, il che contrasta potentemente con il giudizio dato alla fine del dialogo da Agostino sulle sue ambizioni letterarie, causa stessa dello smarrimento spirituale;[13] in che cosa consiste invece lo screditamento di Dante? Ebbene esso consiste in una grave accusa di mistificazione della storia, avanzata mediante una breve citazione occulta che tuttavia porta con sé una tradizione lunga e autorevolissima per i contemporanei di Petrarca, toccando un serie di questioni all'ordine del giorno nelle polemiche del suo tempo: la difesa della poesia, la legittimità dell'allegoria, il trattamento della storia da parte dei poeti.

In effetti, quando Verità dice "Illa ego sum" sta evocando un'espressione di Didone, protagonista anch'essa dell'epopea di Enea e quindi del poema virgiliano; non però le parole che la regina di Cartagine pronuncia appunto nell'*Eneide*, poche righe dopo la scena di Enea e Venere, bensì quelle di un epigramma attribuito ad Ausonio, nel quale la regina morta (o meglio la sua epigrafe tombale) confuta il racconto del proprio insano amore per Enea, rivendicando per sé onore e verità storica:

> Ospite, d'aspetto sono quella Didone che tu vedi, straordinariamente rassomigliante e bella. Ero davvero così, ma la mia indole non era come fece credere Virgilio, né la mia vita fu disonorata da passioni non caste (...). Invidiosa Musa, perché hai incitato Virgilio a ideare menzogne a danno del mio onore? E voi, lettori, credete sul mio conto più agli storici che ai vati menzogneri, i quali cantano le relazioni illecite degli dei e mistificano la verità con la poesia, addossando agli dei le bassezze umane. (PS. AUSONIO, *Epigr. Bob.* 45 Sp.)[14]

Ora, va detto subito che non sappiamo se Petrarca conoscesse questo epigramma di prima mano; certamente però conosceva bene la discussione che i commentatori antichi ne avevano tratto, perché lui stesso insiste sulla vera storia di Didone in vari luoghi (*Afr.* III, 418-427, *Secr.* III, *Trium. pud.* 37-38, 154-159), citando i nomi dei suoi autorevoli difensori (da Pompeo Trogo a Giustino, da Tertulliano, a Girolamo, Agostino, Macrobio e Prisciano); in particolare, si dedica al tema nella Senile IV 5 a Boccaccio (1365-1467), quella che riguarda appunto il problema dell'allegoria e della fedeltà alla storia in poesia.[15]

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[12] "Illa ego sum – inquit – quam tu in *Africa* nostra curiosa quadam elegantia descripsisti; cui, non segnius quam Amphion ille dirceus, in extremo quidem occidentis summoque Atlantis vertice habitationem clarissimam atque pulcerrimam mirabili artificio ac poeticis, ut proprie dicam, manibus erexisti" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 94).

[13] "Dimitte Africam" raccomanda Agostino "te tandem tibi restitue" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 274).

[14] "Illa ego sum Dido, vultu quem conspicis hospes | assimulata modis pulchraque mirificis. | Talis eram; sed non, Maro quam mihi finxit, erat mens, | vita nec incestis laesa cupidinibus: | (...) | Invida cur in me stimulasti, Musa, Maronem, | fingeret ut nostrae damna pudicitiae? | Vos magis historicis, lectores, credite de me, | quam qui furta deum concubitusque canunt | falsidici vates, temerant qui carmine verum | humanisque deos assimulant vitiis", trad. it. di Francesca Romana Nocchi, in NOCCHI 2016: 148 (con qualche mio minimo intervento). Sulla 'revisione' della vicenda di Didone da parte di Virgilio e sulla lunga diatriba che al riguardo oppose molti autori, dal tardo antico in poi, cfr. MONDIN 2003-3004; BRESCIA 2015; NOLFO 2018.

[15] Su questa importantissima epistola, e per il corretto inquadramento della discussione tra Petrarca, Boccaccio e diversi altri loro amici (una vera comunità intellettuale raccolta intorno a questioni di poetica), cfr. almeno MARTELLOTTI 1967 e FENZI 2002.

Per togliere invece ogni illusione a chi volesse cercare nell'*Africa* il passaggio qui evocato sulla magnifica dimora di Verità, bisogna avvertire che esso è del tutto irreperibile nella redazione giuntaci del testo: espunto, secondo l'opinione comune, dopo gli ultimi ritocchi al *Secretum* (nel 1353 o addirittura nel 1358) che invece ne conserva il relitto; riciclato, forse, in un altro punto del poema per descrivere il palazzo di Siface. Ad ogni modo, l'autocitazione dell'*Africa* ravviva la memoria di Francesco che finalmente riconosce la sua interlocutrice.

Finisce così la prima sequenza narrativa del proemio, e con essa il colloquio tra Francesco e la celestiale apparizione; e qui m'arresto anche io, per passare rapidamente al *De remediis* e alla lunga epistola dedicatoria che fa da prefazione al I libro ma, di fatto, costituisce l''accessus' dell'intera opera.

È noto che il dedicatario del trattato, e dunque anche dell'epistola prefatoria, è Azzo da Correggio, amico di Petrarca fin dagli anni Quaranta, prima capitano di ventura e poi principe di Parma, presso il quale il poeta a lungo immaginò di stabilirsi (ad impedirglielo, oltre all'oggettiva instabilità politica della signoria, fu l'avversione del vescovo della città, Ugolino de' Rossi, con il quale il poeta aveva un contenzioso personale). La scelta, si è già detto, cadde alla fine su Milano, ma i rapporti con Azzo e la sua famiglia non ne risentirono e i due restarono in contatto fino alla morte di lui (intorno al 1364). Se dunque Azzo non poté leggere l'opera finita che, a giudicare dalla sottoscrizione di un codice disceso dall'autografo, fu licenziata solo nel 1366,[16] poté però con ogni probabilità discuterne con il poeta, oltre ad ispirargli, attraverso i rivolgimenti di una movimentata esistenza, i casi da rappresentare nel suo catalogo. E sebbene Petrarca vivesse negli anni della composizione del *De remediis* alla corte viscontea invece che a quella del Correggio, è evidente che la scelta delle occasioni da trattare e il contesto della loro rappresentazione vanno guardati con gli occhi di un cortigiano. La messa in scena delle passioni umane quindi – perché di questo si tratta espressamente nel *De remediis* – avrà sì una prospettiva universale, con il suo impianto plurale (gli interlocutori del dialogo sono ben cinque: Ratio, Gaudium, Spes, Dolor e Timor) e le sue argomentazioni filosofiche, ma all'interno di un perimetro sociale definito che non si allarga mai rispetto alla trama delle relazioni feudali. È quindi a una comunità di eletti che anche questa volta il poeta si rivolge, facendo di essa allo stesso tempo l'oggetto della propria analisi.

> Quando penso alle vicende e alle sorti degli uomini, e alle impreviste e repentine mutazioni degli eventi, non trovo quasi niente di più fragile e inquieto della vita dei mortali. E così mi accorgo che la natura ha provveduto con uno strano tipo di rimedio a tutti quanti gli animali, e cioè con una specie di ignoranza di sé; e mi accorgo che solo per noi uomini la memoria, l'intelletto, la previdenza, divine ed eccellenti doti del nostro animo, si risolvono in pericolo e travaglio. Soggetti infatti sempre ad affanni superflui, e non solo inutili, ma anche dannosi e pestiferi, noi ci tormentiamo per il presente, ci angosciamo per il passato e per il futuro, al punto che sembra che non abbiamo altra paura che di diventare un giorno o l'altro un po' infelici. Giacché con grande impegno ci procuriamo le cause della nostra infelicità e gli alimenti del nostro dolore con le quali abbiamo reso la nostra vita – che se fosse condotta secondo ragione, sarebbe felicissima e piacevolissima – un affare miserabile e triste, il cui inizio è dominato dalla cecità e dall'oblio, il proseguimento dalla fatica, la fine dal dolore, e tutto intero il suo corso è dominato dall'errore. Che le cose stiano così, lo capirà chiunque ripassi con senso critico il corso della sua vita. (PETRARCA 2009: 67-69)[17]

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[16] Cfr. ms. Zanetti Latino 475 = 1660 della biblioteca Marciana di Venezia, copiato nel 1388 a Treviso da Franceschino da Fossadolce.

[17] "Cum res fortunasque hominum cogito incertosque et subitos rerum motus, nichil ferme fragilius mortalium vita, nichil inquietius invenio. Ita cunctis animantibus naturam miro remedii genere consuluisse video, ignorantia quadam sui, nobis solis memoriam, intellectum, providentiam, divinas ac preclaras animi nostri dotes, in perniciem et laborem versas. Tam supervacuis enim semper nec inutilibus modo, sed damnosis atque pestiferis curis obnoxii et presenti torquemur et preterito futuroque angimur, ut nichil magis metuere videamur quam nequando forte parum miseri simus, tanto studio miseriarum causas et dolorum alimenta conquirimus, quibus vitam – que, si rite ageretur, felicissima prorsus ac iocundissima rerum erat – miserandum ac triste negotium effecimus, cuius initium

Così inizia la prefazione del *De remediis*, e subito nelle parole di Francesco – perché è lui che parla, senza maschera e in prima persona – si risente l'eco dell'analoga meditazione che inaugura il *Secretum*, dove il poeta si era rappresentato intento a riflettere (ancora una volta il verbo è *cogitare*) sulla propria condizione di peccatore, preoccupato di rintracciare nella memoria qualcosa che ne spiegasse la sofferenza contingente, e ansioso di scorgere nel proprio futuro una via d'uscita da quello stato di angoscia perenne. Questa volta però la scena si svolge su uno sfondo culturale molto più vario, conforme alle necessità espressive di un testo dalla funzione diversa (la formazione del principe e, più in generale, degli uomini di corte), che si rivolge tanto ai dotti come Azzo, quanto agli 'illetterati', cioè quella vasta schiera di laici non formati alla lettura diretta degli 'auctores' che gravita intorno ai centri di potere. Per questo il gioco intellettuale cambia: non tanto nelle tecniche di composizione dell'opera, che resta in larghissima misura una raccolta di esempi e di citazioni e, anzi, di tali autorità vuole essere lo scrigno ("in exigua pixide", PETRARCA 2021: 12); quanto nel ruolo riservato ai destinatari, che non sono più chiamati a decodificare il testo (ciò che accade nel *Secretum*, con i cui selezionati lettori l'autore condivide tutta una biblioteca), ma a partecipare di un patrimonio culturale e, se ne sono capaci, a trarne vantaggio. La differenza sta quindi soprattutto nelle tecniche della comunicazione (il meccanismo dialogico è molto diverso tra le due opere) e, appunto, nei modi della rappresentazione, che spesso paiono assecondare i gusti del pubblico anche attraverso l'allusione a fatti e argomenti di attualità (per esempio la polemica sul papato di *Rem.* I 107).

Al di là della lettera prefatoria, dunque, che si presenta come un vero e proprio compendio di filosofia, nei dialoghi tra figure allegoriche che costituiscono i due libri (queste sì, delle vere maschere) ciò che Petrarca raccoglie e mette in scena è l'intera tradizione morale dell'occidente cristiano – il pensiero stoico di Seneca e dello ps. Seneca, e quello neoplatonico di Agostino, l'eclettismo di Cicerone, la proto scolastica di Boezio – ma senza rinunciare a esercitarvi sopra il proprio spirito critico, che ad ogni occasione sfugge al dogmatismo per rivolgersi all'esperienza (ecco allora gli 'exempla' di Sallustio e Tito Livio, ma anche quelli di Terenzio e Marco Aurelio).[18] È questa, per il Francesco del *De remediis*, la vera filosofia, che si oppone alle sterili dispute dei dialettici ('ventosa iactancia') e sollecita il lettore a verificare ogni ragionamento nella realtà. Proprio nell'esecuzione di questo programma consiste la sua proposta di riforma culturale, in un momento in cui a praticare la critica delle fonti testuali è solo una piccolissima minoranza, prevalendo ancora ampiamente il metodo scolastico con le sue glosse e le sue compilazioni.

Il messaggio che Petrarca vuole trasmettere al pubblico del *De remediis*, in piena opposizione rispetto alla cultura dominante, è dunque il seguente: la vita è carica di sciagure, incerta ad ogni passo, soggetta al ruotare della fortuna. Sono questi dati di realtà inconfutabili, perché fondati su ciò che l'intelligenza vede, i sensi sperimentano e il cuore sente. E tuttavia, per non perdersi nella disperazione, una disciplina mentale è necessaria agli individui consapevoli di sé, che sono pochi e appartengono tutti a una qualche 'élite': gli uomini di governo e quelli di cultura, i principi della chiesa, i condottieri degli eserciti, persino certi uomini d'affari (banchieri, grandi mercanti, medici e altri professionisti delle città). A costoro, che non godono della rivelazione come Agostino e non sono predestinati a chiudersi in un monastero, Petrarca offre un prontuario di buoni ragionamenti, a cui attingere per rinsaldare i pensieri nella gioia e trovare consolazione nella sofferenza.[19]

Ratio – Petrarca lo sa benissimo – che vanamente prova a confutare le opinioni espresse dagli affetti con ben maggiore caparbietà ed evidenza, non dice la verità, alla quale non può attingere perché è

cecitas et oblivio possidet, progressum labor, dolor exitum, error omnia; quod ita esse quisquis vite sue cursum acri iudicio remetietur intelliget" (PETRARCA 2021: 2).

[18] Cfr. STROPPA 2020: 373-374 (con relativa bibliografia); HUSS 2022: 62-78.

[19] Ricordo che sulla predestinazione degli uomini che ricevono la vocazione monastica si possono leggere pagine intensissime e persino impressionanti nel *De otio religioso* e in alcune lettere al fratello Gherardo (soprattutto *Fam.* 10.3 e 10.5). Quanto alle ragioni delle passioni come *lex corporis*, cfr. STROPPA 2020: 377.

sostanza creata esclusa dalla rivelazione. Esprime casomai le logiche di un sistema culturale dato, frutto di precise convenzioni sociali storicizzate: non il vero, dunque, ma il ragionevole. Quando questo sistema culturale è condiviso da tutti gli interlocutori del dialogo, allora il ragionamento procede e l'argomentazione sembra persuadere; quando tale accordo non si verifica, allora *Ratio* comincia a divagare e perde di efficacia. E infatti non di rado accade che il discorso delle passioni appaia assai più convincente che quello di Ragione, com'è ad esempio nel *De senectute* o nei dialoghi sulla morte, dove Dolor insiste ad affermare il dato di fatto – "Senui (…) senui (…) senui" (*Rem.* II 83); "Morior (…) morior (…) morior" (*Rem.* II 119) – mentre Ratio pontifica astrattamente, senza poter correggere le opinioni e senza riuscire a consolare gli animi:

> *D.* Io muoio.
> *R.* Sei giunto dunque alla fine; non temerai più né desidererai la morte; (…). D'ora in poi non ti dorrai, né sarai soggetto ai mancamenti del corpo e dell'animo, non sarai oppresso dal tedio della vita, dalle malattie, dalla vecchiaia, dagli inganni degli uomini, dalla mutevolezza della fortuna: se questi sono mali, comunque buona è la fine del male. Tu poco prima ti lamentavi di tutte queste cose; ora ti lamenti proprio della loro fine: cerca di non essere ingiusto nel lamentarti di una cosa e allo stesso tempo della sua fine.
> *D.* Io muoio.
> *R.* Tu percorri la via dei padri, anzi percorri la via di tutti, una via larga; o tu solo avresti preferito per te alla fine non so che cosa? Percorrila tutta; non c'è paura di sbagliare: hai tante guide e compagni di strada!
> *D.* Ahimè, io muoio.
> *R.* Se è giusto morire piangendo, è sconveniente ridere vivendo, se si vede che incombe sul capo qualcosa per la quale si sa che presto si dovrà piangere; certamente questo pianto segue quel riso a distanza di poco tempo.
> *D.* Io muoio.
> *R.* È insopportabile chi piange la condizione della sua natura; in ogni caso tu non morresti, se non fossi mortale. Se ora piangi di essere mortale, non è il momento di piangere ora che cessi di essere ciò che sei tuo malgrado, ma dovevi piangere fin dall'inizio, quando cominciavi ad essere quel che non volevi: dovresti essere contento ora che cominci ad essere immortale.
> *D.* Io muoio.[20]
>
> (PETRARCA 2009: 307-309)

È scritto con chiarezza sia nel proemio del *Secretum* sia nella prefazione del *De remediis* che nessuna guarigione può compiersi se ai medicamenti il malato non consente del tutto con la mente e con il cuore. Ed è per la mancanza di questa incondizionata adesione che, nel dramma in due atti messo in scena da Petrarca attraverso queste opere, Francesco non si converte e le passioni non cambiano opinione.

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[20] "*D.* Morior. – *R.* Ad extrema perventum est. Iam nec mortem metues nec optabis (…). Iam preterea nec dolebis nec corporis animique defectibus subiacebis nec rerum tediis aut morbis aut senio aut hominum dolis aut fortune varietate, lassabere, que si mala sunt, mali finis utique bonus est. Tu paulo ante de his omnibus querebaris; nunc eorundem de fine conquereris. Vide ne sis iniquus, unam rem qui simul esse doleas et finiri. – *D.* Morior. – *R.* Iter patrum, immo omnium; latum tritumque iter graderis. Solus ne tibi nescio quid aliud demum maluisses? Perge autem, non est aberrandi metus; tot sunt vite duces comitesque. – *D.* Heu, morior! – *R.* Si quis est quem flentem mori deceat, ridere dedecuit viventem, cum instare semperque supra verticem videret, unde mox flendum sciret; risum illum haud dubie fletus hic, non longo seiunctus spatio, sequebatur. – *D.* Morior. – *R.* Non est ferendus, qui sui generis sortem luget: non morereris utique, nisi mortalis esses. Sin id defles quod mortalis sis, non est flendi locus, ubi esse desinis, quod invitus es. Flendum erat ab initio, dum inciperes esse quod nolebas; nunc gaudendum: esse enim incipies immortalis. – *D.* Morior …" (PETRARCA 2022: 217). Su queste sequenze di dialoghi e sulla intrinseca irriducibilità delle divergenze di opinione, cfr. almeno STROPPA 2014: 31-99 e FENZI 2015: 217.

3. Comunità "affettive" e tradizione dei testi

Quando si studia la tradizione manoscritta di questi testi si può facilmente constatare come i primi posteri di Petrarca, ovvero i lettori più prossimi a lui e alla sua mentalità, riconoscessero benissimo questa differenza di funzione tra il *Secretum* e il *De remediis*. Basta infatti confrontare le caratteristiche materiali dei codici e gli ambienti della loro circolazione, per riscontrare la tendenza che ho provato a descrivere fin qui.

Sappiamo che una parte importante dei cento testimoni che tramandano il testo del *Secretum* appartenne a membri di comunità religiose, cosa che lascerebbe credere a una ricezione soprattutto spirituale dell'opera. Ma quando apprendiamo che, tra fine '300 e primo '400, moltissime di queste comunità furono in qualche modo coinvolte nella riforma sublacense che, partendo dall'Italia, riguardò i monasteri benedettini in larga parte d'Europa (soprattutto in Tirolo, Austria e Baviera); o parteciparono alla nascita e alla diffusione della *Devotio moderna* (particolarmente nelle Fiandre e nelle regioni renane tra Francia e Germania), allora i caratteri di questa fortuna si precisano, rendendo meno scontato il giudizio storico. In entrambi i casi succitati, infatti, si tratta di ambienti che manifestarono fortissime istanze di rinnovamento della spiritualità cristiana, nei quali alla riforma dei costumi personali si aggiunsero la riforma dei programmi di studio (con l'introduzione massiccia della letteratura, sia classica sia contemporanea, accanto ai testi sacri e apologetici), e nuove pratiche nella didattica dei testi (lettura integrale degli 'auctores', crescente attenzione alla qualità filologica dei testimoni, introduzione di nuove tipologie grafiche tipiche della nascente cultura umanistica).[21]

Al contrario, il *Secretum* manca del tutto nelle collezioni dei principi e in quelle dei loro cortigiani (c'è un solo esemplare noto appartenuto a Isabella del Portogallo, ma è chiaro che in quel caso si tratta di una ricezione di natura devota), là dove invece è enorme la fortuna del *De remediis*, presente in decine di copie, in latino e nei numerosi volgarizzamenti (francese, italiano, catalano, castigliano, inglese, tedesco), in tutte le biblioteche signorili, tanto da diventare persino una bandiera di partito per alcune specifiche comunità politiche (penso al ramo d'Orléans della famiglia reale di Francia e ai loro clienti, laici e religiosi).[22]

Al di là del mero valore patrimoniale, evidentemente questi libri potevano avere una loro forza di gravità e costituire per i possessori un fattore di riconoscimento, come in diversi casi si evince dalle illustrazioni che li accompagnano.

Sono solo quattro, fra quelli oggi censiti, i testimoni illustrati del *Secretum* (un quinto riporta solo decorazioni minori, ad esempio nelle cornici e nei capilettera colorati); per tre di essi non si può stabilire un rapporto diretto tra le immagini e una precisa comunità culturale, mentre per il quarto questo non solo è possibile ma chiaramente atteso dal committente del codice.

A c. 153 r del ms. Palatino latino 1596 della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, copiato da mani italiane su pergamena a fine Trecento e probabilmente decorato nel centro-nord della penisola, proprio al principio del *Secretum* si trova una bella miniatura che occupa il quarto in alto a sinistra dello specchio di scrittura [Fig. 1]. Qui, seduti su una stessa panca che esorbita lateralmente dalla cornice del disegno, due uomini conversano affrontati. Entrambi hanno il volto serio e una mano levata, come a sostenere ciascuno il proprio argomento nella discussione, ma la differenza del rispettivo ruolo è ben marcata: quello a sinistra, che regge in grembo un libro aperto ed appare sensibilmente più alto, è il maestro; quello a destra, più giovane e di statura inferiore, è invece il discepolo.

Naturalmente il maestro è Agostino, rappresentato però in questa miniatura non secondo la descrizione petrarchesca – come "un vecchio dall'aspetto maestoso e venerando" che gli appare "in abito

[21] Cfr. BROVIA 2019.

[22] Cfr. BROVIA 2013: 39, 234-247.

africano"[23] – ma nelle vesti del vescovo-santo, con una tunica bianca, un mantello verde foderato di rosso e bordato d'oro (in oro è anche il grosso fermaglio), la mitra calcata sul capo da cui si irradia un'aureola. Quanto a Francesco, è presentato nei panni marroni di un chierico tonsurato, con l'aria dimessa, forse preoccupata. Lo sfondo sgargiante a losanghe variopinte (nero, bianco, rosso) e decorate con croci d'oro, e il pavimento di mattonelle rosse, comunicano l'idea che i due si trovino nella stanza sfarzosamente decorata di un palazzo nobiliare. E tuttavia qui manca il personaggio fondamentale del proemio del *Secretum*, la Verità, sicché è possibile assimilare questa raffigurazione alle molte che illustrano l'*incipit* di opere sapienziali varie, secondo uno schema iconografico ben codificato.

Molto meno convenzionale, persino in qualche misura parodistica, appare invece la scena che un miniatore francese coevo o appena successivo realizzò sulla prima carta di un codice parigino, copiato anch'esso in pergamena e contenente una miscellanea di opere morali (Paris, BnF, ms. Nouv. Acqu. Lat. 1821). Se infatti da una parte qui lo schema narrativo originale è meglio rispettato, sia per la regolare presenza di Verità al centro della scena, sia per la postura dei personaggi (intento a riflettere malinconicamente Francesco, ritti in piedi accanto a lui Agostino e Verità), i caratteri fisici degli interlocutori sono scambiati, con un effetto di vago straniamento: il discente è molto vecchio, coi lunghi capelli e barba canuti, veste una tunica rossa con sopravveste blu portando in testa uno strano copricapo, e sta seduto su di un'alta cattedra a baldacchino; mentre il maestro, che sembra entrare in scena in quel momento scortato da Verità, risulta ben più giovane e meno autorevole, malgrado gli attributi di vescovo – la mitra e il pastorale – gli siano riconosciuti. Quanto a Verità, la sua raffigurazione corrisponde esattamente al *topos* della donna celeste: è una giovane dai capelli d'oro vestita di blu, la cui purezza traspare dall'elegante contegno e dall'espressione del volto. Anche in questo caso, l'ambientazione è signorile e la posizione della cattedra, rivolta di tre quarti verso l'interno dalla pagina lascia sospettare, fuori dalla cornice, la presenza di altri uditori celati: ad una corte, per esempio, o ad una piccola comunità di sodali [Fig. 2].

Ma la rappresentazione a mio parere più significativa, perché è ad un tempo quella stilisticamente più nuova e concettualmente più vicina al testo, è quella che decora la metà superiore della prima carta nel ms. 113/78 del Grootseminarie di Brugge, realizzato per Jan Crabbe nel 1470 e probabilmente decorato dal Maestro di Margherita di York [Fig. 3]. Con evidenza, ci troviamo in questo caso di fronte a un prodotto di altissima qualità artistica, da offrire ad un committente di grande prestigio, che contrassegna con il suo stemma nobiliare le pagine del manoscritto. Lo stile della decorazione è quello tipicamente olandese, con le larghe bordature a tralci d'acanto e fiori popolate di pavoni e altri uccelli; anche gli arredi e la foggia degli abiti delle figure rappresentate riportano al gusto fiammingo dell'epoca (siamo ora nell'ultimo terzo del Quattrocento). Di certo, lo spazio architettonico ben disegnato con il punto di fuga centrato idealmente su Verità seduta in trono, il gioco delle quinte laterali oltre alle quali si intravedono paesaggi (a sinistra) o da cui si affaccia un gruppo di spettatori (a destra), i fondali sovrapposti che danno l'illusione della profondità, aggiungono alla teatralità naturale del proemio petrarchesco elementi scenici concreti. Ma ancora una volta l'artista (o il committente stesso) interpreta il testo in maniera personale, complicando a sua volta la decodificazione dei segni. In questo caso il fulcro dell'immagine è la bocca di Verità dalla quale emanano parole come raggi di luce diretti al cuore di Francesco, il giovane uomo a destra vestito con l'abito rosso orlato di ermellino come i maestri dell'università; mentre Agostino, senza mitra né pastorale ma con il capo aureolato, spiega qualcosa al discepolo pur restando a bocca chiusa. È questa, a mio parere, una efficacissima rappresentazione di ciò che Petrarca scrive nel suo proemio,

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[23] "Non fuit necesse nomen percuntari: religiosus aspectus, frons modesta, graves oculi, sobrius incessus, habitus afer sed romana facundia gloriosissimi patris Augustini quoddam satis apertum indicium referebant" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 96).

quando introduce Agostino come un comprimario, affidandogli il ruolo di portavoce della Verità. Dice infatti il santo, poco prima che il colloquio cominci:

> Sei tu la mia guida, la mia consigliera, la mia padrona, la mia maestra: perché dunque vuoi che sia io a parlare, quando tu stessa sei presente? E lei: Sia una voce umana a colpire l'orecchio di un mortale: la riceverà con migliore disposizione d'animo. Ma resterò qui, in modo che tutto quello che sentirà da te possa considerarlo come l'avessi detto io. (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 99).[24]

Raffigurerebbe invece il committente del manoscritto l'uomo in abito nero alle spalle di Francesco: ed è una figura di notevole modernità, con il suo sguardo che esce dalla pagina e si rivolge al lettore.[25]

Sono molto più numerosi gli esemplari illustrati del *De remediis*, opera della quale conserviamo più del doppio dei testimoni (circa 250). Diversi di questi testimoni ne recano un volgarizzato e Joseph Burney Trapp ha notato che sono soprattutto questi ultimi ad essere illustrati, cosa per altro coerente con la cultura e i mezzi economici degli ambienti da cui le traduzioni regolarmente provengono, cioè le corti.[26] E infatti, in un certo numero di casi, i miniatori scelgono di illustrare scene di vita cortigiana, con l'esibizione delle fortune e delle sfortune in cui possono incorrere uomini nobili e ricchi. Importantissimo, a questo riguardo, è il ms. fr. 225 della BnF, che contiene il secondo volgarizzamento francese del *De remediis* ultimato da un traduttore anonimo nel 1503, fatto decorare da Jean Pichor (e aiuti) negli stessi mesi, e offerto a Luigi XII re di Francia. Il codice in questione, che è appunto la copia di dedica, contiene quindici miniature a piena pagina relative a scene tratte dal testo. Si vedano in particolare le due immagini di apertura, che rappresentano rispettivamente il momento il cui il codice viene donato al re in presenza di tutta la corte e del probabile committente, il cardinale Georges d'Amboise (il prelato in sopravveste blu in primo piano sulla sinistra, che sollecita il paragone con Jan Crabbe nel ms. di Brugge), e quella che le sta accanto, in cui si può riconoscere una specie di compendio visivo del trattato; aggiungendo a queste prime due almeno una delle miniature concernenti temi più specifici, come quella che rappresenta Timore (notevole il dettaglio dei capelli che si rizzano in testa all'approssimarsi della Morte) mentre discute con Ragione della paura di perire lontano da casa e non ricevere sepoltura (*Rem.* II 124 e 131) [Fig. 4, 5, 6]

Molto meno stupefacente delle precedenti, ma a suo modo significativa del contesto in cui il codice fu copiato e, in una certa misura, anche della maniera in cui la sua trasmissione potrebbe essere avvenuta, è la miniatura di apertura del *De remediis* nel codice Palatino latino 1596 della Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (c. 1r), già descritto sopra [Fig. 7]. In questa piccola immagine, ricavata in un capolettera miniato, il pittore ha rappresentato, nella parte superiore della lettera (la C di 'Cum'), Petrarca che affida il proprio libro a un soldato armato perché lo consegni a Azzo da Correggio e, nella parte inferiore, lo stesso soldato che deposita nelle mani dell'illustre destinatario il prezioso oggetto. Ciò che impressiona di più, oltre allo spaccato realistico sulle reti di comunicazione dell'epoca, sono i due ritratti. Quello di Petrarca, in particolare, è realizzato secondo un cliché somatico che va consolidandosi tra Pavia, Verona e Padova negli ultimi anni di vita del poeta (i tratti del volto, i colori e la foggia dell'abito e del cappuccio sono identici a

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[24] "Ad hec ille: – Tu michi dux, tu consultrix, tu domina, tu magistra: quid igitur me loqui iubes te presente? – Illa autem: – Aurem mortalis hominis humana vox feriat; hanc iste feret equanimius. Ut tamen quicquid ex te audiet ex me dictum putet, presens adero" (PETRARCA, *Secr.*: 98).

[25] Jan Crabbe fu abate del monastero cistercense di Ter Duinen a Koksijde; fu uomo di vasta cultura e collezionista di manoscritti pregiati che poi lasciò in eredità al monastero. Oltre a una larga scelta di opere di Petrarca e di Boccaccio, possedette scritti di Virgilio, Cicerone, Sallustio, Boezio, Giovanni Crisostomo, Boncompagno da Signa. Con i suoi interessi letterari d'avanguardia, fu importante mediatore della cultura umanistica italiana nel nord Europa. Per questa figura e per il suo ruolo nella storia della fortuna di Petrarca latino, cfr. BROVIA 2013: 46-49. Per le illustrazioni dei mss. del *Secretum*, cfr. TRAPP 1997: 45-52 con relativa bibliografia.

[26] TRAPP 2003.

quelli che si ritrovano in decine di altre testimonianze soprattutto venete), il che farebbe pensare a un'origine padana del codice o, almeno, del miniatore che lo decorò.[27]

Termino con la miniatura a mio parere più interessante fra quelle fin qui proposte relativamente al *De remediis*: quella che compare nella parte alta di c. 1r del ms. AD XIII 30 della Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense di Milano, copiato negli ultimi anni del Trecento in area lombarda (Milano?) [Fig. 8]. In questa bellissima miniatura Pietro da Pavia, illustratore di fiducia dei Visconti, ha applicato uno schema narrativo tipico dell'iconografia sacra, quello del santo trionfante in Paradiso, a un tema del tutto profano. Infatti Petrarca, come Tommaso d'Aquino nel celebre affresco della Cappella degli Spagnoli in Santa Maria Novella a Firenze, è seduto qui in cattedra al centro dell'immagine, e tiene con una mano uno stilo, con l'altra, appoggiandolo in grembo, un libro aperto rivolto verso la figura che sta alla sua sinistra (non a caso un sovrano). Lui però, a differenza di san Tommaso, è vestito in abiti accademici ed è circondato non da angeli e santi, bensì da una schiera di comuni mortali; infatti ai due lati del trono stanno in piedi, l'uno accanto all'altro, dieci personaggi che, con i loro attributi, rappresentano le categorie umane prese in considerazione nel dialogo. Riconosciamo così, andando dal centro verso sinistra, un alto prelato con mitra e pastorale riccamente decorati; un professore che indossa il mantello bordato di ermellino e regge in mano molti libri; un esattore delle tasse o un banchiere con la sua cassetta piena di monete; un musico che suona il suo strumento e un'altra figura non ben definibile, forse un giullare o ammaestratore di bestie, che porta con sé una scimmia, un grosso uccello scuro, una gabbia con bianche colombe. Sul lato opposto, sempre a partire dal poeta in cattedra, riconosciamo un re con la corona e gli altri simboli della sua maestà; un soldato vestito della pesante armatura che si appoggia alla sua balestra; un cacciatore che tiene sul braccio un falcone; una donna – la sola figura femminile – vestita di rosso e elegantemente acconciata, ma priva di altri elementi che ne consentano la caratterizzazione; infine un pastore con i suoi animali, l'unica di dieci figure a non rappresentare una categoria sociale privilegiata.[28] Ecco qui squadernata l'umanità dolente della cui tassonomia si incarica il *De remediis*: un piccolo, parzialissimo catalogo della società, mediante il quale l'autore ci vorrebbe consolare.

Non posso dimostrare con prove certe se e come queste immagini, tutte realizzate sulle pagine di libri preziosi, fossero guardate da qualcuno oltre al loro rispettivo destinatario. Ho l'impressione però che almeno entro cerchie ristrette – la famiglia, il gruppo degli amici, i membri della corte – lo fossero, e che contribuissero anch'esse in una misura non irrilevante a generare un certo senso di appartenenza, una forma di riconoscimento culturale.

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[27] BROVIA 2022.

[28] Per la descrizione di questa miniatura e per il suo accostamento all'immagine di San Tommaso in gloria, cfr. ENENKEL 2011: 162-167.

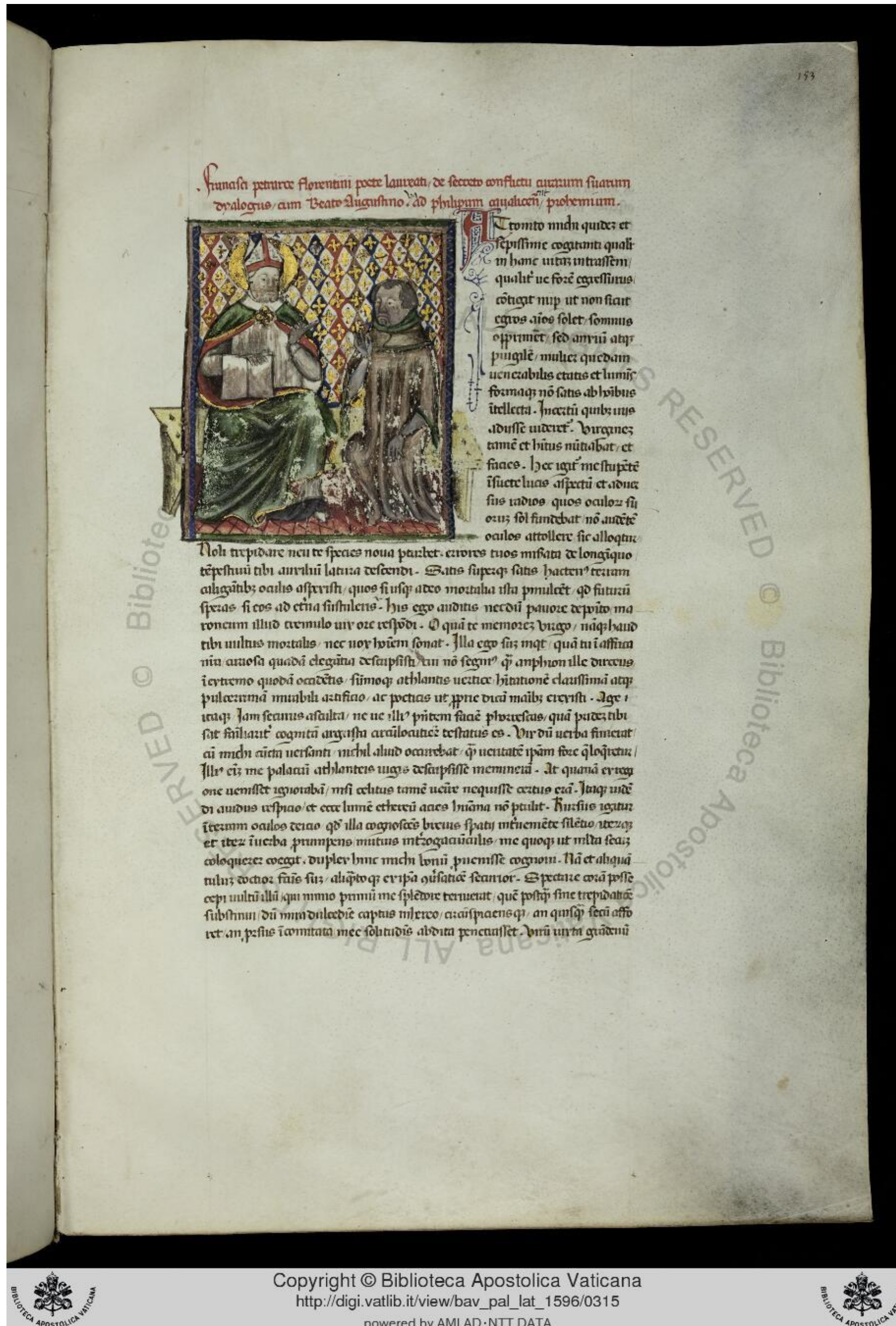
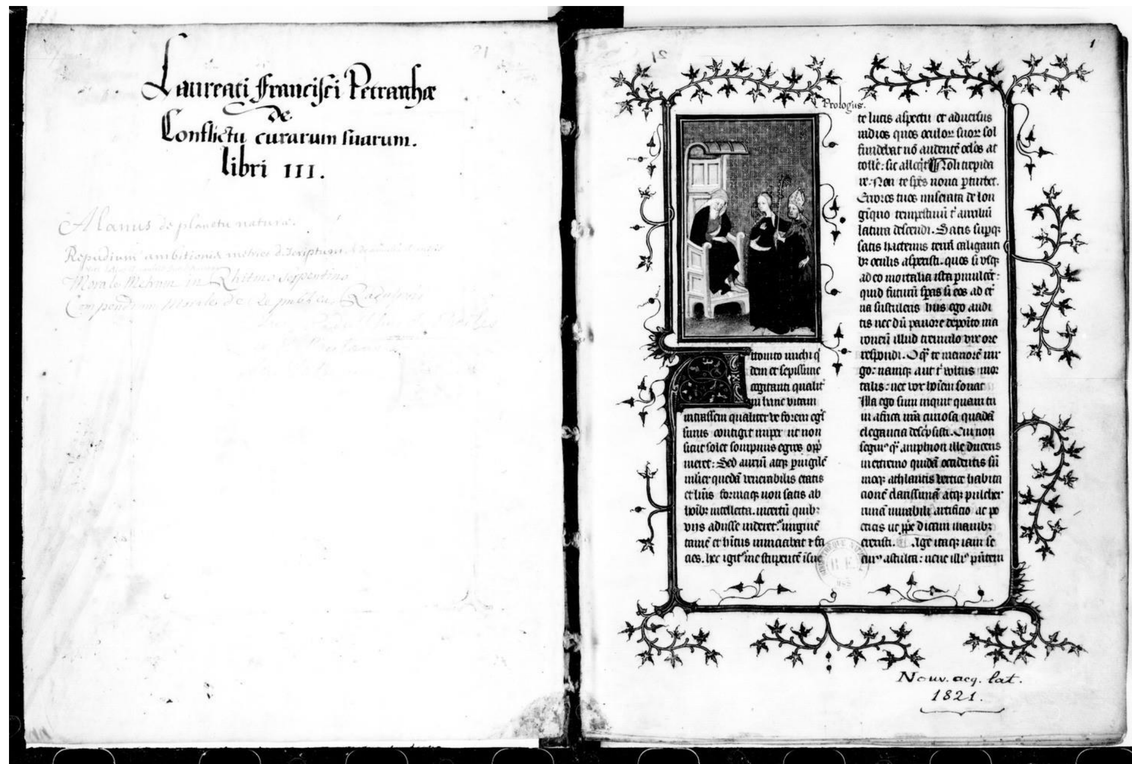


Fig. 1: Città del Vaticano, BAV, Pal.lat. 1596, c. 153r.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des manuscrits. NAL 1821

Fig. 2: Paris, BnF, ms. NAL 1821, c. 1r.

Fig. 3: Brugge, Grootseminarie, ms. 113/78, c. 1r.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Français 225

Fig. 4: Paris, BnF, ms. fr. 225, c. Av.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Français 225

Fig. 5: Paris, BnF, ms fr. 225, c. 1r.

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des Manuscrits. Français 225

Fig. 6: Paris, BnF, ms fr. 225, c. 202r.

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Fig. 7: Città del Vaticano, BAV. Pal.lat. 1596, c. 1r.

Fig. 8: Milano, Braidense, ms. AD XIII 30, c. 1r.

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Sharing in Suffering: Petrarchan Humanism and the History of Compassion

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In an essay from 2015, the historian Barbara Rosenwein has argued that the Italian Renaissance plays a surprisingly small role in studies of the history of emotions. Although she acknowledges that historians – from Burckhardt to McClure – have noted and discussed the centrality of emotions such as love and sorrow to the writings of the period, there have not been, in her view, systematic attempts to address the period's felt – or at least expressed – emotions (ROSENWEIN 2015: 15).

Rosenwein herself, alongside other scholars, is responsible for what has been called "the affective turn" in historical studies, which has taken place in the past two decades or so.[1] This turn was instigated by several developments in the fields of cognitive psychology and cultural anthropology. Broadly speaking, in these fields the traditional "hydraulic" model of the emotions, which considered them as uncontrolled drives in need of a discharge, was to a large degree replaced by a "cognitive" approach which sees emotions as an outcome of evaluative thought-processes (NUSSBAUM 2001: 19-88; ROSENWEIN 2016: 1-15). Anger, for example, is not an emotion hardwired to the psyche and in need of a discharge, but rather an outcome of unfulfilled expectations. Fear, similarly, is a result of a quick cognitive process of appraisal that alerts me to a danger nearby.

This shift from the hydraulic to the cognitive model is accompanied by a transition from universalist and essentialist approaches to the emotions to constructionist ones. Here, the underlying contention is that even if there are certain emotions that are universal and ingrained to the human psyche, there are still significant differences in the way different societies describe, understand, evaluate, and experience the emotions. According to Rosenwein, every society is dominated by particular "feeling rules" – or what she calls "emotionalities" – which determine what its members can feel. As she declares with respect to romantic love: "romantic love is privileged in one place, reviled in another, and unknown in still a third" (ROSENWEIN 2007: 15). The task of the historian, accordingly, is to reconstruct the governing emotionalities that prevailed in specific "emotional communities" of the past and defined what was emotionally conceivable.

To fulfill this historical task, Rosenwein herself gives particular attention to "emotional vocabularies", tracing the ways "emotion words", or "affective language", give us a glimpse into the emotionalities of past communities (ROSENWEIN 2007: 14; ROSENWEIN 2016: 6). In her essay on Renaissance Italy, Rosenwein also points to the performative dimension of emotional expression, claiming that emotions not only describe a state of affairs but also *act*. As she quotes the philosopher Robert Solomon: "We might say that emotions are preverbal analogues of (…) 'performatives' – judgments that do something rather than simply describe or evaluate a state of affairs (…) anger is not merely a report or a 'reaction' to an [offensive comment]; it declares that the comment is offensive" (ROSENWEIN 2015: 21). In line with this performative understanding of the emotions, scholars have examined the political and social consequences of expressions of emotions in past societies, for example the ways in which public expressions of sorrow or anger served to consolidate – or rather unsettle – the social order (ROSENWEIN 2015: 21-22). Analyses of the emotion of compassion, in a similar vein, have analyzed the ways expressions of this emotion served to construct borders between "in-groups" and "out-groups", determine who is included within one's community and who is not (IBBETT 2017).

In this article, I would like to address Rosenwein's challenge and examine the history of a particular emotion in early Italian humanism – that of compassion. Drawing upon Rosenwein's notion of "emotional communities" and her discussion of the performative dimension of the emotions, I will reflect on the

[1] For a useful introduction to the field, with a particular emphasis on the early modern period, see BROOMHALL 2017.

ways Petrarch and his followers constituted a distinct emotional community, which established an alternative vision of compassion to that which prevailed in other emotional communities of their period. As I will argue, while early Italian humanists drew upon the emotional vocabulary of scholastic, devotional, and literary communities that were dominant in the later Middle Ages, they also secularized and universalized compassion in crucial ways. This transformation of compassion, I will further argue, strongly depends on the humanists' return to classical antiquity.

Given that Petrarch and his followers were not prone to systematic theoretical expositions – in the case of emotions as well as in other aspects – my exploration will focus on a sample of literary works and letters in which scenes of compassion – of sharing in the suffering of another – are particularly prominent. Beginning with Petrarch's vernacular *Triumphi* and letter 6.3 of his *Familiares*, I will then turn to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and *Epistle* 9, before closing with an analysis of Leonardo Bruni's dialogue with both Petrarch and Boccaccio in his *Novella of Antioco and Seleuco*. Throughout, I will show how these humanists share a similar emotional vocabulary and an understanding of compassion as the foundation of both individual morality and communal ties.

While highlighting the similarities between these humanists, the following analysis will also give significant attention to conflicts and discrepancies that emerged within this community. As we will see, these humanists' writings reveal at times disagreements over the ethical value of compassion as well as over the identity of those who are particularly worthy of it. In this respect, although drawing upon Rosenwein's concept of "emotional communities", my analysis will also show that such communities are often less coherent than she allows, and that individuals within the community have the ability to question, oppose, and modify governing emotional structures.

In order to evaluate Petrarch's and his followers' approach to compassion, we must begin with a brief survey of the central attitudes to compassion that were dominant in the later Middle Ages. Compassion, as is well known, was a crucial emotion in that period. Within scholastic circles, an influential formulation of this emotion was provided by Thomas Aquinas in his discussion of 'misericordia' in the *Summa theologiae* (*ST* 2-2.30). Relying on Book 9 of Augustine's *City of God*, Aquinas defines 'misericordia' in the following manner: "[M]isericordia est alienae miseriae in nostro corde compassio, qua utique, si possumus subvenire compellimur; dicitur enim misericordia ex eo quod aliquis habet miserum cor super miseria alterius" [[Misericordia] is heartfelt sympathy for another's misery, impelling us to do what we can to help him. Indeed the word [misericordia] comes from one's heart being miserable at the sight of another's distress], *ST* 2-2.30.1 co., translation modified).[2] According to Aquinas, 'misericordia' is synonymous with 'compassio' (literally "suffering with") and indicates feeling sorrow at the sight of the suffering of another – indeed having a 'miserum cor' for another's distress. This inner commotion leads in turn to charitable 'action', which constitutes an essential part of 'misericordia'. For Aquinas, moreover, this human capacity for compassion is in essence an imitation of God's compassion for humanity; it is in feeling compassion and acting accordingly that humans imitate and come closest to the divine: "misericordia, per quam assimilamur Deo secundum similitudinem operationis" [misericordia, which likens us to God as regards similarity of works], *ST* 2-2.30.4 ad 3).

While asserting the value of compassion, Aquinas' discussion also points to its potential harmful nature and differentiates between compassion as mere passion, a movement of the "sensitive appetite", and compassion as virtue. Responding to Sallust's Stoic critique of compassion, which essentially considers it (alongside anger) as a harmful passion that should not be involved in decision making processes, Aquinas asserts that this criticism is true only for compassion *qua* passion (*ST* 2-2.30.3 ad 1). When it is guided by reason, compassion assists in performing just actions and promoting justice:

[2] AQUINAS 1971.

“misericordia servit rationi quando ita praebetur (...) ut iustitia conservetur, sive cum indigenti tribuitur, sive cum ignoscitur poenitenti” [[misericordia] obeys reason, when [it] is vouchsafed in such a way that justice is safeguarded, whether we give to the needy or forgive the repentant], *ST* 2-2.30.3 co.). For Aquinas, in other words, compassion must undergo a process of cognitive refining and fine-tuning so as to become a virtue.[3]

Whereas Aquinas sought to balance compassion and reason, other late medieval movements had much less qualms about the value of compassion and advocated for the sharing in the suffering of another as the epitome of one’s moral, spiritual, and communal life. In religious orders – primarily the Franciscans – as well as in the emerging lay confraternities of the period, compassion was seen as the basis of the Christian community and was eagerly cultivated and performed.[4] In her book *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, Sarah McNamer has argued that compassion was in fact “invented” in the high and later Middle Ages as a particularly feminine trait through devotional practices such as the meditation on the passion of Christ (McNamer, 2010). These meditations, she argues, provided nuns with “emotional scripts” that instructed them on how to imagine themselves present in the scene of the Crucifixion and “perform” compassion for the suffering Christ. Whether or not we agree with McNamer’s argument regarding the “invention” of compassion in the period (compassion, after all, was an essential part of Christianity since its inception), her analysis clearly shows the crucial role of this emotion in late medieval piety.

This crucial role is also apparent in the religious literature of the period, for example in Franciscan lauds and Marian laments. The thirteenth-century Franciscan poet Jacopone da Todi, for example, lingers on the Franciscan ideal of compassion in one of his poems in the following manner:

> Trasfórmate ll’amore, en veretate,
> ne le persone che so’ tribulate;
> en compatenno maiur pena pate
> ca lo penato.
> Quel per alcuno tempo à repusato,
> lo compatente ce sta cruciato;
> nott’e iorno con lui è ’n tormentato
> e ma’ non posa.
>
> [Love then joins love | To his suffering brethren, | And in his compassion he suffers more | Than the man whose suffering he shares. || While the brother who was suffering | Finds respite from his pain, | The compassionate man suffers anguish, | Day and night without repose.]
>
> (Jacopone Da Todi, 1974: 25, 1982: 235).

For Jacopone, interpersonal bonds among the community of brethren are based on shared-suffering (“compatenno”) – to such extent that the one who shares in the grief (“lo compatente”) in fact suffers more than the one in pain.

It is against the backdrop of these scholastic, devotional, and literary “emotional communities” that Petrarch and his followers developed their attitude to compassion in the later Middle Ages. One place in which Petrarch’s engagement with compassion emerges to the fore is his *Triumphus cupidinis*, the first triumph which Petrarch likely composed in the early 1340s in Dantean terza rima and in clear imitation of the *Commedia*. In the beginning of the poem, the poet-protagonist portrays an imaginary procession of ancient figures – drawn from both history and myth – who were captured by the god of love. At a certain

[3] On this issue, see Miner 2015, Ryan 2010: 166.

[4] On the emphasis on charity and care for others in medieval confraternities see Rosser, 2019.

point, he suspends the catalogue and turns his attention to a pair of ancient lovers, with whom he engages in conversation. The pair, as we learn, are the couple of doomed lovers Massinissa and Sophonisba, who, as recounted by Livy, fell in love during the second Punic war when the African King Massinissa, an ally of Rome, captured the city of Sophonisba's husband, Syphax. Having decided to marry on the spot, the couple's short bliss ended when the Roman general Scipio ordered Massinissa to annul the marriage and hand Sophonisba to him as his rightful prisoner. To prevent her captivity, Massinissa provided Sophonisba with a cup of poison through which she took her own life.

In the *Triumphi*, the couple's tragic story is recounted by Massinissa, who lingers on his two conflicting 'affetti' – to the Roman Scipio on the one hand and to his beloved Sophonisba on the other. Faced with Scipio's unwavering reproach of his submission to passion ("ché di nostri sospir nulla gli calse", PETRARCA, *Trium. Cup.* 2.48),[5] Massinissa was left with no choice but to sacrifice his love. When Massinissa finishes his tragic tale, the poet-protagonist Petrarch – in marked opposition to Scipio – becomes filled with compassion for the couple's plight: "Pien di pietate, e ripensando 'l breve | spazio al gran foco di duo tali amanti, | pareami al sol aver un cor di neve", PETRARCA, *Trium. Cup*. 2.73-75).

Although a great admirer of Scipio, in this passage Petrarch describes the amorous plight of the lovers as one worthy of compassion, ostensibly considering 'amor' as an insurmountable power to which all are vulnerable. His sharing in the couple's sorrow is designated through the word "pietate", which was prevalent in the courtly love tradition.[6] The entire scene – including the use of "pietate" – is of course in close dialogue with Dante's own encounter with the doomed lovers Paolo and Francesca in Canto 5 of the *Inferno*, in which the poet-protagonist also feels deep compassion – "pietade" – after hearing Francesca's tale of her illicit love and death:

> Mentre che l'uno spirto questo disse,
> l'altro piangëa; sì che di pietade
> io venni men così com' io morisse.
> E caddi come corpo morto cade.
>
> (DANTE, *Inferno* 5.139-142)[7]

'Dantisti' have long emphasized the acute tension in those lines between Dante's deep emotional identification with the plight of the lovers and the demands of divine justice, which seals the illicit lovers' fate for eternity.[8] The compassion of Dante the Pilgrim, in this respect, may be interpreted through the prism of Aquinas' discussion of 'misericordia' mentioned above and be considered as a mere passion, a movement of the sensitive appetite that is unchecked by reason. What I would like to focus on, however, is the significance of Petrarch's rewriting of the scene to his humanist vision of compassion: Petrarch, we should note, replaces Dante's dialogue with his near contemporaries Francesca and Paolo with a conversation with an ancient couple whose story is taken from a venerable ancient source. Whereas Dante extends his compassion to a couple close to him in time and place, Petrarch pities an ancient pagan couple – both, by the way, Africans. His compassion is thus universalized (even if still extended to royalty). Furthermore, while in Dante's scene of compassion his piteous response conflicts with the justice of the Christian God, in Petrarch's case the tension is between human compassion on the one hand and the unwavering Stoicism of Scipio on the other. Petrarch's engagement with compassion, in other words, is

[5] PETRARCA 1996.
[6] On the centrality of the term pietà and its cognates in the tradition of courtly love see BALL 1991: 19.
[7] ALIGHIERI 1994.
[8] See, for example, HOLLANDER 2001: 104-109.

couched in categories that are entirely secular and natural; his classicism in this passage turns compassion into an essentially secular and universal matter.[9]

Petrarch's universalization and secularization of compassion is also apparent in his Latin letters. In letter 6.3 of the *Familiares*, written to his friend and patron Giovanni Colonna probably in 1342 (around the same time he composed the *Triumphus cupidinis*), Petrarch responds to a previous letter sent to him by Colonna, in which the latter apparently complained about his recent ailments. Petrarch opens the letter with a reproach of his addressee for his 'softness' in the face of fortune: "Una michi tecum lis est, cum ceterarum rerum omnium sit tanta concordia: nimis es querulus, nimis indulges tibi sortem propriam deflere, miserari res tuas, excusare te ipsum, accusare fortunam; denique nimis molliter humana toleras" [Though we agree fully on almost everything, there is one basic disagreement between us, and that is that you are too querulous, too self-indulgent in lamenting your lot, too complaining about your affairs, excessively involved in excusing yourself and accusing fortune, and finally too soft in tolerating the human condition] (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 6.3.1).[10] Despite this opening Stoic rebuke, Petrarch goes on to admit that when he read Colonna's letter he himself could not hold back his tears: "quid enim occultare cogitem affectus meos, et ubi constantiam tuam requiro, illic propriam dissimulare mollitiem?" [why should I consider hiding my own feelings [affectus meos], and where I demand firmness from you why disguise my own softness?] (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 6.3.2). Petrarch then justifies his emotional response by suggesting that it is more noble to shed tears for the misfortunes of others than for oneself,[11] adding the following defense of compassion: "[i]dque non modo in tanta amicitia, sed ne in comuni etiam societate hominum dici posse Satyricus ait, ubi viro 'bono nullum alienum malum,' et 'humano generi' pietatis ad indicium 'datas a natura lacrimas' docet" [This is true not only in close friendships but also in the general society of men, as the Satirist said in teaching that no evil is foreign to the good man and that tears are given to human beings to indicate their natural compassion] (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 6.3.3, translation modified).

This statement not only justifies Petrarch's emotional response but also establishes compassion – the sharing in the suffering of another – as *the* essential human trait, the mark of humanity. Petrarch's use of the Latin "pietatis" to signify shared-suffering – recalling the vernacular "pietate" of the *Triumphi* – is highly significant, as in ancient Roman culture 'pietas' of course stood primarily for "duty owed to the gods, to one's parents, to one's country", as is most famously exemplified in the Virgilian epithet "Pius Aeneas".[12] Petrarch's use of 'pietas' in *Fam.* 6.3 thus points to his conflation of contemporary exaltation of compassion and his return to ancient Latin culture.

At the same time, the lines Petrarch quotes in this passage in defense of compassion are taken from an ancient source – Juvenal's *Satire* 15. In his satire, whose main topic is cannibalism, the ancient Satirist presents "soft-heartedness" and fellow-feeling as the kernel of humanity: "mollissima corda | humano generi dare se natura fatetur, | quae lacrimas dedit. haec nostri pars optima sensus" [Nature declares that she has given the human race the softest of hearts by the gift of tears. This is the finest element of our sensibility] (JUVENAL, *Satires* 15.131-133, slightly modified).[13] Praising human capacity to feel for the sorrow of the other, Juvenal goes on to add that this emotional disposition is the foundation of human community: "mundi | principio indulsit communis conditor illis | tantum animas, nobis animum quoque,

[9] In the first half of *Inferno* 5, Dante also extends his compassion to pagan figures, including Semiramis, Dido, and Cleopatra – figures who no doubt anticipate Petrarch's Sophonisba. Yet we should note that Dante's account revolves around the way those figures' illicit desire conflicted with the demands of the Christian God and led to their damnation. Dante's universalism is thus essentially Christian, whereas Petrarch's is based on natural categories.

[10] PETRARCH 1933-1942; PETRARCH 1975-1985.

[11] "[H]onestiores lacrime sunt in alienis calamitatibus quam in nostris" (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 6.3.2).

[12] See BALL 1991: 19.

[13] JUVENAL 2004.

mutuus ut nos | adfectus petere auxilium et praestare iuberet, | dispersos trahere in populum" [To them [animals], at the beginning of the world, our common creator granted only the breath of life. To us he gave souls as well. His intention? So our mutual feeling [mutuus (…) adfectus] would urge us to seek and offer help, to draw together scattered individuals into communities] (*Satires* 15.148-151). The ability to feel for the other, according to Juvenal, is what separates humans from beasts and forms the very basis of human community. By relying on this passage in Juvenal, Petrarch offers a justification for compassion that is essentially secular and natural: whereas scholastic accounts of compassion, as shown above, referred to this emotion as an imitation of Christ's compassion for mankind, Petrarch relies on an account that is entirely naturalistic. As in the *Triumphi*, Petrarch's classicism leads to the secularization and universalization of compassion, turning it into the trait that binds together the general society of man, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliations.

Two further points should be made regarding Petrarch's statement in the opening of *Fam.* 6.3: first, his assertion that "[i]dque non modo in tanta amicitia, sed ne in comuni etiam societate hominum" is highly revealing of his view of the relationship between compassion and community: for him, compassion is an important foundation of close friendships on the one hand, and of the general society of man on the other. His vision of compassion, in other words, is at once highly private and intimate – involving close friends – and abstract and "globalized", uniting all mankind. This distinction fits closely with what we know about Petrarch's own way of life, as he strongly prized solitude and the communion with a selective group of close friends who were scattered throughout Europe, avoiding crowds and the specific identification with a particular locale. His community of friends, at the same time, was in itself both intimate and abstract – as it was constructed mainly through letters written to friends distant not only in place but also time, as is most extravagantly attested by his letters to ancient authors assembled in *Fam.* 24.[14] In his famous two letters to Cicero, Petrarch regards the ancient orator as an intimate friend and asserts that it is both his anger at his all-too-human weaknesses *and* the compassion he feels for him that led him to write him a letter, forgetting, as it were, the gap of time that separates them.[15] The emotion of compassion (alongside anger) thus unites Petrarch and his ancient interlocutor, forming a connection that is at once intimate and highly abstract.

The second point is that while exalting compassion in the opening of *Fam.* 6.3, the Stoic undertones of Petrarch's discussion also problematize in certain respects his position. For the Latin Stoics on which Petrarch most often relies, namely Seneca and Cicero, compassion was highly problematic. In the *Tusculan Disputations*, which Petrarch quotes directly later in this same letter (*Fam.* 6.3.53), Cicero defines "misericordia" – the sharing in the sorrow of another – as an "animi commotio" [agitation of the mind] (CICERO, *Tusc.* 4.6.11).[16] Seneca, on his part, genders "misericordia" as a feminine trait and describes it as a "vitium est animorum nimis miseria paventium" [a weakness of the mind that is over-much perturbed by suffering] (SENECA, *De clementia* 2.6.4).[17] Coming to the aid of others, according to Seneca, should be based on the calculations of reason, not on the movement of passion. Petrarch's opening Stoic critique of Colonna's sorrow in *Fam.* 6.3 and his rather apologetic defense of his own tears thus suggest that while exalting compassion, Petrarch is also deeply conflicted over the merits of such emotionality. The statements that open *Fam.* 6.3 thereby point to the way Petrarch's Latin works are in fact torn between two types of universalism – one that relies on Juvenalian-like compassion and another which is based at its core on Stoic rationality.

[14] On Petrarch's epistolary community of friends, see FENZI 2003 and ZAK 2021.
[15] "Ego nichil in te rideo, vite tantum compatior, ut dixi" (PETRARCA, *Fam.* 24.4.3).
[16] CICERO 1950.
[17] SENECA 1958.

Let's turn now to Petrarch's close friend and chief correspondent in the second half of his life – Giovanni Boccaccio – and consider the similarities – as well as discrepancies – in their approaches. Compassion is of course a central theme throughout Boccaccio's vernacular fictions – most notably in the opening aphorism of the *Decameron*, which states that "umana cosa è aver compassione degli afflitti" (BOCCACCIO, *Decameron, Proemio* 2).[18] Employing the word "compassione" – which recalls Aquinas' use of "compassio" in his discussion of "misericordia"[19] – Boccaccio's statement closely resembles Petrarch's assertion in *Fam.* 6.3 that having sorrow for those in pain is the essence of humanity.

This valorization of compassion as the essential human trait is further apparent in Boccaccio's ensuing description of the Black Death that ravaged Florence in 1348. In his elaborate account, Boccaccio specifically lingers on the way the Plague led to the disappearance of compassion and mutual care from Florentine society: "l'uno cittadino l'altro schifasse e quasi niuno vicino avesse dell'altro cura e i parenti insieme rade volte o non mai si visitassero e di lontano" (*Decameron* 1.*Intro*.27). A little later, Boccaccio goes on to describe the disappearance of burial rites – and with it of the shedding of tears of compassion – from Florentine society: "Per ciò che, non solamente senza aver molte donne da torno morivan le genti, ma assai n'eran di quelli che di questa vita senza testimonio trapassavano: e pochissimi erano coloro a' quali i pietosi pianti e l'amare lagrime de' suoi congiunti fossero concedute" (*Decameron* 1.*Intro*.34). What these passages make especially clear is Boccaccio's stress on the *civic* nature of compassion; in a manner that recalls Juvenal's myth of origin in *Satire* 15, compassion emerges from the Introduction to Day 1 as the bond that keeps the city together. With the threat of contagion, compassion disappeared, and with its disappearance the entire social fabric collapsed.

Although sharing Petrarch's notion that compassion is the essence of humanity, the Introduction to Day 1 also points to important divergences in their approaches. Whereas Petrarch presents compassion as the foundation of close friendships on one hand and the global society of men on the other, Boccaccio considers it as the basis of local civic communities. It is for this reason, among others, that whereas Petrarch chooses to write primarily in Latin to a relatively limited audience of learned men, Boccaccio writes the *Decameron* in the vernacular, addressing a wide audience within his city and thus possibly seeking to cement the bonds of compassion among them. Furthermore, while Petrarch, as we have seen, was conflicted about the merits of compassion, it is clear from Boccaccio's account that he has no qualms about its moral value; rigid Stoicism has no room in his portrayal – a point to which we shall return.

Boccaccio's unqualified praise of compassion is not reserved only to his vernacular writings. Boccaccio, as is well known, first met Petrarch in person in 1350, when the latter passed through Florence, the city of his forefathers, on the way to Rome to celebrate the jubilee. This encounter is often considered as a major catalyst in Boccaccio's transition to write primarily in Latin about scholarly themes after the example of his mentor; his attitude to compassion, however, remains remarkably similar to that expressed in the *Decameron* – a fact that contributes to the tensions and discrepancies that existed within the humanist emotional community.

In Boccaccio's *Epistle* 9, written in Latin in 1353 to his longtime Florentine acquaintance Zanobi da Strada (another admirer of Petrarch), compassion again emerges as a central theme. Zanobi served at the time as the right hand of Niccolò Acciaiuoli, another Florentine acquaintance of Boccaccio and the powerful grand seneschal of the Kingdom of Naples. The relationship between Boccaccio and Acciaiuoli was strained at the time, and Boccaccio refers in the beginning of the letter to a mocking nickname given him by Acciaiuoli – "Iohannem tranquillitatum" [tranquil Giovanni] (BOCCACCIO, *Epistole* 9.2)[20] – a nickname which apparently referred to what Acciaiuoli considered as Boccaccio's predilection for an easy

[18] BOCCACCIO 1992a.
[19] On the etymology and genealogy of the word "compassione", see PAPIO 2000: 107.
[20] BOCCACCIO 1992b; translations are my own.

and comfortable life.[21] Deeply offended, Boccaccio offers a long refute of Acciaiuoli's characterization of him by insisting on the compassion he often felt for Niccolò's adversities: "in adversis autem compatientem ac deplorantem, persepe viderunt me plurim" [many have seen me most often showing compassion and weeping for his adversities] (*Epistole* 9.4). This compassion was especially strong, Boccaccio declares, following Acciaiuoli's recent tragic loss of his firstborn son in battle, over which Boccaccio declares to have wept day and night: "casum gravissimum, tanquam meum abundantissimo ploratu deflevi; (...) nec ut ipse resciscat ad te scribo, sed ut videas quoniam in conscientia mea iam video, non me 'tranquillitatum hominem' sed miseriarum misericordem essistere" [I wept over this gravest misfortune with so much tears as if it were my own (...) nor do I write you this so that he might come to know of it, but so that you may see what I already see in my conscience: that I am not a 'tranquil man', but rather a compassionate one, merciful of others] (*Epistole* 9.13). Filled with words that designate his compassionate nature – "compatientem", "deplorantem", "misericordem" – Boccaccio's letter, much like the *Decameron*, appears to employ the scholastic terminology of Aquinas to posit compassion as the essential human trait and this within a context that is ostensibly secularized.

Later in the letter, Boccaccio contrasts his emotional response with Acciaiuoli's own remarkable steadfastness in the face of the calamity he suffered. Acciaiuoli, according to Boccaccio, endured his wound with "incommutato vultu" [steadfast face] and "inflexo animo" [unbent soul], as if he were made of "saxeum" [stone] and "ferreum" [iron] (*Epistole* 9.25). Unable to hide his scorn of Acciaiuoli's reaction, Boccaccio refers to it as a monstrosity – "monstruosam (...) virtutem" [monstrous virtue] (*Epistole* 9.24). Boccaccio's distinction between his own compassionate response and the Stoic bravura of Acciaiuoli closely recalls Petrarch's own dramatization of a conflict between his own compassion for Massinissa and Scipio's unwavering Stoicism in the *Triumphi*. However, in opposition to Petrarch, Boccaccio's account leaves no doubt as to where his preference lies: he has no misgivings about the ethical merits of compassion and no patience for Stoic heroics. While exalting compassion within a humanistic context like Petrarch, Boccaccio thus also deviates from Petrarch's perspective on compassion in important respects.

This departure from Petrarch is further evident in the political and civic role that Boccaccio attributes to compassion within the letter. Later in *Epistle* 9, Boccaccio offers an elaborate description of the funeral of the young Lorenzo Acciaiuoli, which took place in Florence, the city of his forefathers. The entire city, as Boccaccio describes, participated in the sorrowful event – "quasi ab omnibus conclamatus atque defletus Laurentius est" [Lorenzo was lamented and mourned by practically everyone] – with the result that "reviguit pietas" [compassion grew stronger] (*Epistole* 9.38). This description, we should remember, comes shortly after Boccaccio's portrayal in the Introduction to Day 1 of the *Decameron* of the collapse of civic compassion in Florence due to the plague. Immediately following the *Decameron*, Boccaccio thus offers a description of a shared public mourning which intensifies compassion and brings about a sense of a unified civic community. In her study *Passion and Order*, Carol Lansing has argued that Italian communes of the fourteenth century strived to curb public displays of mourning – especially by men – as part of an attempt to secure civic order (LANSING 2008). Boccaccio's account, at least, does not support this claim. According to Boccaccio, such public displays of mourning continued to play a role in Florentine society and were crucial for establishing local civic identity. In his Latin letter, no less than in the *Decameron*, Boccaccio presents compassion as the civic emotion par-excellence, deviating thereby from Petrarch's globalized vision of fellow-feeling. Both in his unqualified rejection of Stoicism and in his civic bent, Boccaccio thus departs from Petrarch's view of compassion, indicating how the humanist emotional community was characterized by internal strains no less than similarities.

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[21] See BRANCA 1997: 99, BRUNI 1990: 422-424.

The last figure I would like to discuss within this analysis of humanist compassion is Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), the Florentine chancellor and the leading figure in what Ronald Witt has described as the fourth generation of the humanist movement (WITT 2000: 392-442). My discussion will focus on Bruni's relatively late literary experiment – his *Novella of Antioco and Seleuco*, which he composed in the vernacular probably in 1437. In this period, as James Hankins argued, Bruni's attitude towards vernacular composition significantly altered and he became much more appreciative of its ethical and civic importance (HANKINS 2006: 14).

Bruni's *Novella of Antioco and Seleuco* served as a companion piece to his translation into Latin of Boccaccio's novella of Tancredi and Ghismonda (*Decameron* 4.1) – a translation he had undertaken following the model of Petrarch's own translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* 10.10, the story of Griselda.[22] In the beginning of his *Novella of Antioco and Seleuco*, Bruni provides a Boccaccian-like 'cornice', in which the narrator describes a group of young Florentine men and women who gather at a villa near Florence. To pass the time pleasantly, they engage in various pleasurable activities, until at one point a woman from the group decides to read aloud a story from the *Decameron* she chooses at random – the tragic tale of Tancredi and Ghismonda, in which Prince Tancredi kills his daughter's lover and thus precipitates her own suicide. When the woman completes her tale of woe, another member of the group – a man "di grande studio e greco e Latino e molto curioso delle antiche storie"[23] (clearly Bruni himself) – decides to uplift the spirits of the 'brigata' by telling a counter-tale, one with a happy-ending – the story of Antioco, Seleuco, and Stratonica.

Bruni's narrative strategy of offsetting a tragic story with a narration of a comic one closely recalls Petrarch's own strategic choice in the *Triumphi* to follow the tragic story of Massinissa and Sophonisba with a comic tale of love.[24] The comic story Petrarch narrates in the *Triumphi* is no other than that of Antioco, Seleuco, and Stratonica (Petrarch, *Trium. Cup.* 2.88-129) – the exact same tale later narrated by Bruni. Bruni's diptych, as a result, is in dialogue with Petrarch's *Triumphi* no less than with Boccaccio's *Decameron* – a fact which is not sufficiently acknowledged in studies of Bruni's *Novelle*.[25] Furthermore, we should note that just as Petrarch narrates in the *Triumphi* the ancient stories of Massinissa and Sophonisba and Antioco and Seleuco in the Florentine vernacular, so Bruni renders an ancient tale in the vernacular and offers it as a "response" to his Latin translation of the modern tale of Boccaccio. Like Petrarch in the *Triumphi*, Bruni not only asserts thereby the value of vernacular literature, but also points to the relevance of the ancient past to his Florentine present.

Further as in both the *Triumphi* and the *Decameron*, Bruni's diptych revolves in significant ways around the emotion of compassion. When he describes the reaction of the group of listeners to the tale of Tancredi, Bruni's narrator concentrates on the compassion and tears that it elicited: "E furonvi donne e giovani assai che non poteron celare lo 'mbambolar degli occhi e le cadenti lagrime per pietà e commiseratione di sí acerbo e doloroso caso" (BRUNI 2010: 116). The allusion to "pietà e commiseratione" of course echoes the 'brigata's' response to many tales of the *Decameron*, especially those of the tragic Day 4. Following the description of this pitiful reaction, Bruni's story-teller declares that his ensuing tale will offer an example "d'umanità e di gentilezza di cuore" – traits in which "gli antichi Grechi", much in

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[22] Bruni states his reliance on the Petrarchan model in the introductory letter to his translation of *Decameron* 4.1, addressed to the Florentine nobleman Bindaccio Ricasoli. The letter and Bruni's translation are available at DOGLIO 1975: 150-160.

[23] BRUNI 2010: 116.

[24] This narrative strategy, as Marcelli notes, appears already in Valerius Maximus (see MARCELLI 2010: 26).

[25] Whereas Petrarch's account of the tale relied primarily on Valerius Maximus, Bruni's more elaborate version relies on various ancient sources, including Plutarch, Appian, Lucian, and Valerius Maximus. On Bruni's sources, see MARCELLI 2010: 15-40. Marcelli also provides a detailed account of the manuscript tradition of Bruni's tale.

contrast to "i nostri Taliani", excelled (BRUNI 2010: 117). To the cruel modern example of Tancredi, the narrator opposes an ancient example of compassion and gentleness of heart, declaring that the ancient Greeks were particularly known for their benevolent nature.

The story itself then describes how young Antioco fell in love with his step mother Stratonica, the wife of his father, King Seleuco. Suffering secretly from his illicit passion, Antioco fell gravely ill, and all the efforts of his father to find the reason for his sole son and heir's illness were in vain. While the father was on the verge of despair, an astute physician managed to find out the true cause of the son's illness and cleverly disclosed to the King the way to cure his malaise. "[M]osso da compassione" (BRUNI 2010: 131) – moved by compassion – towards his son, the father divorces Stratonica and marries her to his son, a happy union that provides him with many grandchildren. At the end of the tale, the narrator returns again to his opening praise of the father's 'humanitas': "l'umanità e gentilezza del greco signore provide nel caso del figliuolo conservando la vita al giovane e a se medesimo perpetua felicità, che tutto per contrario faccendo Tancredi nostro taliano" (BRUNI 2010: 131). Both the beginning and ending of the story therefore underscore the value of the father's compassion as its central lesson.

In his analysis of the tale, Hankins has emphasized its civic dimensions, arguing that Bruni uses the tale to deliver in the vernacular similar lessons to those that dominated his Latin works. While Tancredi, according to Hankins, adheres to chivalric values of individual honor — which bring about disaster – Bruni's Seleuco gives up on his personal honor and pleasure for the greater good of the state (HANKINS 2006: 16-17).[26] What might be added to this analysis is the fact that the father's actions, according to Bruni, were not based solely on rational calculations regarding the good of the state, but also on his compassionate emotional disposition towards his son. Rather than chiding his son for his illicit passion, the father – in opposition not only to Boccaccio's Tancredi but also to Petrarch's Scipio – acknowledges and understands his son's vulnerability to passion, becomes filled with compassion towards his plight, and ultimately finds a way to come to his aid and relieve him of his sorrows, to the benefit of all. Acknowledging human vulnerability to passion and the need for compassion thus emerges as the central ethical lesson of the tale.[27]

In his attribution of compassion to ancient figures, Bruni closely follows the Petrarchan universalization and secularization of this emotion in the *Triumphi*: much like Petrarch, Bruni utilizes contemporary terms semantically related to compassion – compassione, pietà, commiseratione – to discuss the emotional state of ancient figures. He also turns those figures into models of compassion that are strongly relevant, in his view, to his contemporary audience.[28] As in Petrarch, Bruni's return to the classics thus leads to the secularization and universalization of compassion, considering it as an attribute that pertains to humanity at large, regardless of any religious context.

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[26] Timothy Kircher emphasizes Bruni's concern with the ideal nature of paternal authority in the tale (KIRCHER 2006: 178). See also MARSH 1980: 341.

[27] Bruni's explicit reference to the father's "compassione" (BRUNI 2010: 131), it should be noted, is an addition to the ancient versions upon which he relied – a fact that further underscores his focus on compassion within the novella. The texts of Bruni's sources are neatly provided in MARCELLI 2010: 17-20.

[28] It is worth noting that Bruni employs similar terms to describe the actions and habits of the city of Florence in his most notable Latin work, *Historiarum Florentini populi* (*History of the Florentine People)*. For example, in Book 4.110 (vol. 1 p. 457), he refers to the gentleness ("mansuetudo") of the Florentines, which led them to be merciful ("misertus") towards Pistoia and save it from being ransacked by the Lucchesi. When discussing the famine of 1346, Bruni emphasizes the city's compassion towards its less privileged citizens as well as those of the surrounding areas, so much so that "Florence seemed almost to have conferred a benefit on the human race" [ut prope collatum a civitate beneficium in genus humanum videretur] (Book 7.28-29; vol. 2 p. 309). See BRUNI 2001-2007. Whether Bruni's praise of Florentine compassion had less benign aims and was meant to camouflage its expansionist tendencies is a topic for another discussion.

At the same time, much like Boccaccio and in contrast to Petrarch, Bruni does not have any qualms about compassion in the tale and he does not consider Stoic rigidity as a worthy alternative. Furthermore, by narrating the story in the Florentine vernacular, and focusing in the 'cornice' on the communal value of pietà, Bruni, further like Boccaccio, is interested in the way compassion can serve as the foundation of his local civic community – not establish a global bond that is untied to a particular place as in the case of Petrarch. Bruni, we might therefore say, brings together in fascinating ways the universalizing tendencies of Petrarch and the localized ones of Boccaccio, underscoring in the process the similarities as well as the discrepancies that existed within the humanist emotional community.

In conclusion, this article has shown how Petrarch and two of his central followers – Boccaccio and Bruni – form together a distinct emotional community, which shares a similar understanding and appreciation of compassion and transforms other late medieval uses of this emotion. In the writings of all three, compassion – the sharing in the suffering of another – emerges as the cornerstone of both individual morality and communal bonds. In the case of all three, moreover, the moral vocabulary characteristic of contemporary scholastic and devotional circles is employed within contexts that are ostensibly secular and naturalistic, in a manner that secularizes and universalizes compassion. This transformation often depends on the humanists' return to classical antiquity, as contemporary terms are employed to describe ancient figures and ancient works serve as sources for naturalized accounts of compassion.

At the same time, while these three authors share significant views of compassion, their positions also differ in certain respects: whereas Petrarch's exaltation of compassion is contested by his Stoic tendencies, Boccaccio and Bruni are adamant in their rejection of the Stoic outlook and praise of compassion; and whereas Petrarch establishes compassion as the basis of close friendships on the one hand and a global and abstract vision of humanity on the other, Boccaccio and Bruni emphasize the value of compassion as the foundation of local and inclusive civic communities. Such discrepancies suggest that emotional communities are much less coherent and one-dimensional than Rosenwein has suggested, and that we may well regard such communities as sites in which the nature, value, and role of particular emotions are frequently contested and debated.

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Gendered Mourning in the Epistolary Collections of Petrarch and Isotta Nogarola

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We speak of noble, devoted love in which devotion alone is called for,
a certain sweetness of mind, a mild sigh without passion, without sorrow,
without tears which come forth not so much from
manly devotion as from womanly weakness.

— Francesco PETRARCA, *Sen. 10.4*[2]

Ah yes, but I, who am not ashamed to be a woman, speak as a woman,
and I shall defend myself with the authority of the most male pagan and Christian writers,
saying that the above exempla should be compared to colossal marble statues rather than human beings,
since they inspire piety in men's hearts. And who is so desirous of glory, so hard, so ungentle,
so iron-hearted that he is not moved to tears by the death of his parents, his children, or his friends?

— Isotta NOGAROLA, *Ad Jacopum Antonium Marcellum eius dulcissimi filii…in obitu consolatoria*[3]

The figure of Petrarch *senex* that looms over the so-called Latin "letters of old age" (*Seniles*) presents itself as the authoritative voice of reason and a kind of hardened wisdom that comes only with age and reflection. It is a carefully curated voice that attempts to privilege reason over emotion, glimpses of which we briefly encounter in other works of Petrarch's: the wiser and older vernacular poet of *RVF* 366 who seemingly turns away from the beloved Laura towards the Virgin Mary; the self-reflective authority in *Fam.* 1.1 who promises stoicism and not sentimental writings to the reader; the compiler of biographies of illustrious men in *De viris illustribus* whose mission is to provide models of "virile" men his contemporaries and future readers should imitate; the mentor to Giovanni Boccaccio who 'corrects' the younger writer's novella about Griselda, and 'teaches' him about allegory. Yet readers of Petrarch's works,

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[1] An early version of this article was presented at the virtual workshop "Affects and Community-Formation in the Petrarchan World" (March 2021) organized by the editors of this current volume. I would like to thank Bernhard Huss, Timothy Kircher, and Gur Zak for inviting me to participate in both the workshop and volume, and for their advice and expertise throughout the process.

[2] "Nos de pio honestoque loquimur amore, in quo pietas sola requiritur et dulcedo quedam animi et rarum ac suave suspirium et iocunda memoria defunctorum, sed non passio ulla, non meror neque lacrime non tam de virili pietate quam de infirmitate feminea produentes. (PETRARCA 2014, 215-16; § 110). Latin citations from *Sen.* 10.4 are taken from PETRARCA, Francesco, *Res seniles Libri IX-XII,* edited by Silvia RIZZO and Monica BERTÉ, Florence 2014. The full letter is found on pp. 190-225. English translations are quoted from *Letters of Old Age X-XVIII,* translated by Aldo S. BERNARDO, Saul LEVIN, and Reta A. BERNARD, New York 2005: 388.

[3] "Ipsa ergo, quam non pudet esse feminam, loquor ut femina meque tamen plurimorum antiquorum gentilium et Christianorum auctoritate defendam, hos potius colossis marmoreis quam hominibus assmilandos, cum pietatem e medio tollant. Quis enim erit tam gloriae cupidus, tam durus, tam immitis, tam ferreus, ut neque obitu parentum neque filiorum morte neque amicorum moerore moveatur?" (NOGAROLA 1886: 168). All Latin citations from Isotta Nogarola's letterbook are quoted from NOGAROLA, Isotta: *Opera quae supersunt omnia; accedunt Angelæ et Zeneveræ Nogorolæ epistolæ et carmina*, volume 2, edited by Eugenius ABEL, Vienna, 1886. Nogarola's consolatory letter is found in volume 2, pp. 163-178. English translations are from NOGAROLA, Isotta, *Complete Writings: Letterbook, Dialogue on Adam and Eve, Orations,* edited and translated by Margaret KING and Diana ROBIN Chicago 2003: 194.

both in the vernacular and in Latin, know that he does not always maintain this hardened approach, no matter how convincingly he tries to argue for a clear-cut division between reason and sage reflection, one the one hand, and emotion on the other. One way in which Petrarch attempts to clearly define actions as motivated by either reason or emotion is through his descriptions of gendered behaviors. In *Sen.* 10.4, quoted above in the epigraph, Petrarch attempts to console his friend Donato Appenninigena [Albanzani] on the untimely death of his son Solone. He makes a distinction between "manly devotion" and the "womanly weakness" he finds acts of mourning like sighing, crying, and other expressions of sorrow. Even the most moderate forms of mourning are presented as womanly behavior. As will be discussed more thoroughly in this essay, Petrarch relies on the tradition of *De viris illustribus* in this letter to provide his friend with the proper virile modes of mourning, providing examples of both men and women from antiquity as well as himself as exempla 'in bono' and 'in malo'.

Petrarch's project of exemplarity is far more expansive than his catalogue of works would imply. Embedded in works not explicitly devoted to the subject we find the poet engaging with, expanding, and experimenting with the tradition beyond the folios of his *De viris illustribus,* particularly in his letters of consolation. His legacy in this respect is two-fold, and often viewed as having separate trajectories. First, Petrarch's *De viris illustribus* has been credited with inspiring the numerous famous men treatises that emerge in the centuries following his death, as well as Boccaccio's compendium devoted to illustrious women. In the opening lines of Boccaccio's preface to *De mulieribus claris* he explicitly tells us he was inspired by Petrarch's collection devoted to illustrious men, claiming to be surprised at how little attention women had received in the genre.[4] Second, as the so-called "father of humanism" Petrarch's Latin letter collections have long been considered the model for Quattrocento humanist letterbooks, his revival of classical literature the inspiration for a movement that would come to be defined by the 'studia humanitatis'. And his letters of consolation, especially, have been said to have inspired the writings of Salutati and others on this subject.

The representation of gendered mourning in consolatory letters raises several questions: How is male grief represented differently from female grief? Which models of behavior are used to describe and teach proper modes of mourning? Are the models the same or different for men and women? The answers to these questions gesture at the interrelation and intersections between male and female exemplarity, as represented in texts not explicitly dedicated to creating a genealogy or history of famous men and women. The humanist consolatory epistle is an ideal place to begin since the author has the dual function of both showcasing his or her knowledge while also comforting the addressee. Traditionally we consider compendia like Petrarch's *De viris illustribus* and Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* to be part of the tradition of exemplarity. They are open texts since the reader learns about the biographies of famous men and women directly from the author, in mini-histories of various length. In the humanist epistle, however, the mode of reading and understanding is closed. For one, the letter is both private (addressed to an individual) and public-facing since it will be included in the humanist letterbook, copied into the letterbook of the addressee, and circulated among circles of humanists. The authors subtexts and sources are interwoven into his/her discourse in a way that requires the reader to have previous knowledge of certain bodies of work. In the case of famous men and women, it is taken for granted that the recipient knows the fuller biography and will be able to contextual the author's deployment of a figure on their own. This more challenging mode of reading is what also makes humanist letters of consolation such an interesting genre for investigating the construction of gendered mourning as it is represented through the figures of famous men and women of antiquity because the broader project of exemplarity fails, and the objective of consoling someone in grief fails, if the example used is not well known, or not fully understood by the reader.

[4] BOCCACCIO 2001: 9, §§ 1-3.

This essay is divided into two parts: first, I will present a model for gendered mourning that emerges from different types of consolatory letters in Petrarch's public letter collections *Familiares* and *Seniles,* and the *Variae* (letters excluded from the other collections) wherein he measures male grief against a female model of mourning. I will then examine how this same model influences Quattrocento 'umanista' Isotta Nogarola's 1461 consolation letter to Jacopo Antonio Marcello on the death of his 8-year-old son Valerio. This is her last major work, and one that Marcello solicited for inclusion in an ambitious funerary book. Nogarola's engagement with the Petrarchan model of consolation via famous men and women challenges the Petrarchan model by highlighting its incompatibility with the affective nature of consolation. As seen in the epigraph above, Nogarola further engages with the traditions of famous men and women by revealing them to be static, marble statues devoid of human emotion and thus unable to truly serve as models of behavior. She presents herself, and her grief over her mother's death, as a more "real" model of female mourning, one that challenges the portrait created by male writers like Petrarch, and those who came before; she also nuances the model of male exemplarity by presenting the deceased child Valerio as a "famous man" better positioned to serve as his father's model to imitate. The figure of Cornelia (mother of the Gracchi) will serve as a constant point of reference in both Petrarch's and Nogarola's consolatory letters in my analysis of the intersections of gendered mourning and the broader project of exemplarity.

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In the Petrarchan letters of consolation that we will be examined in this section, masculinity is put to the test through the tribulations of loss.[5] In *Fam.* 13.1 Petrarch writes to console cardinal Guy de Boulogne (ca. 1320-1373) on the death of his mother, and to encourage him to end his crying.[6] The letter is framed in a way that pits personal experience against the art of writing a consolatory letter, which subsequently draws attention to the literariness of the letter. Petrarch tells him that the pressure of time has made him unconcerned with the style or sophistication of his letter, and that while he himself has experienced nearly all kinds of grief (including the death of his own mother as a young child), he has never had to console another son upon his mother's death. He claims this to be the only kind of "mournful subject" untried, until now, by his pen. Thus, while Petrarch is able to empathize with the cardinal's loss, his pen is inexperienced in this particular kind of consolation. This emphasis on the literary aspect of the letter is further highlighted by the way in which Petrarch describes the cardinal's mourning against the figure of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. Petrarch writes that he heard his friend was grieving, and that he had shed tears, something he approved of if done in moderation. How brief? Petrarch recommends one night of crying. As a way of illustrating why the cardinal should not cry too much, Petrarch introduces Cornelia as both an archetype of his deceased mother, and a model for his own mourning:

> Mater tibi dulcissima periit, que si nichil aliud felix aut iocundum habuisset in vita quam quod te talem filium genuit, nemo michi felicissimam negabit. Cornelia, illustris femina, Africani filia, Gracchorum mater, dum filios acerba morte mactatos cerneret, complorantibus mulieribus que aderant et illam miseram identidem feminea vociferatione iactantibus: "Ego vero nunquam me" inquit, "miseram fatebor, que tales filios genui" (PETRARCA 1933-42: vol. 3, 54)

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[5] For studies on consolation in Petrarch's works see CHIECCHI 2005 (176-263), MCCLURE 2014 [1991], ZAK 2010 and 2016. For Petrarch and mourning see especially RUSHWORTH 2016.

[6] All Latin citations from the *Familiares* are taken from PETRARCA, Francesco, *Le Familiari,* 4 volumes, edited by Vittorio ROSSI and Umberto BOSCO, Florence 1933-42. *Fam.* 13.1 is contained in volume 3, 53-56. English translations are by Aldo S. BERNARDO, *Letters on Familiar Matters, 4 volumes*, New York 2005; vol. 2, The letter to Guy de Boulogne is in vol. 2, 173-176.

[Had she enjoyed no other happiness or joy from life than giving birth to you, no one would deny that she was most fortunate. When the famous Cornelia, daughter of Africanus, mother of the Gracchi, beheld her sons crushed by a terrible death, she said to the mourning women who were with her, bewailing her misfortune with feminine laments: 'I shall never consider myself unfortunate for having borne such sons.' If she said this about her dead sons, what could your mother say about you who are alive and well?] (PETRARCA 2005a: vol. 2, 173-4).

I want to draw our attention to the representation of female mourning here: on the one hand, we have Cornelia who does not shed a tear, and instead expresses pride in having borne her now-deceased sons. On the other hand, she is surrounded by women who are wailing and crying. In this passage, the two versions of female mourning represent the cardinal and his mother. Like Cornelia, his mother has much to praise about her son, who is alive; and like the women surrounding Cornelia, the cardinal is crying and lamenting a death. His mourning of his mother is measured against the model of Cornelia, and he falls short. In case the parallel is missed on the reader, Petrarch continues by saying that if by chance his mother is not yet in Heaven, she will need his devout prayers, not tears, because that is what she should have expected of him.

Cornelia is a figure that Petrarch also recalls in *Fam.* 21.8 – his congratulatory letter to Charles IV's third wife the Empress Anna after the birth of her first child – a girl. At first glance, it might seem odd to categorize a congratulatory letter as one of consolation, but this letter is both congratulatory and consolatory based on the sex of the child born. There are three things that are striking about this letter: first, it is the only letter we know of that was addressed to a woman; second, it is Petrarch's lengthiest, explicit attempt at writing a history of famous, exemplary women; and finally, it also reads like a consolatory letter for having borne a girl instead of boy. He praises Anna's fertility and assures her that no one's joy at the birth should be lessened just because she has had a girl, because better fortune follows weak beginnings ("principium debile melior fortuna prosequitur"; PETRARCA 1933-42: vol. 4, 62). Throughout the letter he refers to women as the "weaker sex" a trope we find in treatises about women from antiquity well into the Renaissance, but also provides examples of "virile women" who defied their sex and found success in male domains, women whose intellects bettered society, women whose deeds led to Italian cities being named after them, and many others. He repeats the Cornelia myth in this context of congratulatory praise of women, adding more details that further highlight gendered mourning, and her defiance of her sex in this respect. He writes,

Quis Corneliam, Africani filiam, Gracchorum matrem, que duodecim filiis partim morbo partim ferro amissis, quorum fortissimos interfectos a populo atque inhumatos et in Tyberim abiectos oculis suis ipsa conspexerat, tantam ruinam atque orbitatem, viriles quoque animos concussuram, tam invicte pertulit, ut nullis complorantium matronarum fletibus induci posset quin se non miseram sed felicem diceret, que tales filios genuisset; digna, me iudice, mulier que tales pareret, indigna que perderet?" (PETRARCA 1933-42: vol. 4, 67)

[Who can do justice to Cornelia, daughter of Africanus and mother of the Gracchi, who lost twelve children partially to illness and partially to the sword, the strongest of whom were killed by the people and thrown, unburied, into the Tiber before her very eyes? She thus endured so bravely a catastrophe and bereavement as would have shaken even manly spirits that she could not be moved by the tears of the mourning women but instead preferred to call herself fortunate rather than wretched for having borne such sons, a lady worthy of having borne such children, in my opinion and undeserving of having lost them.] (PETRARCA 2005a: vol. 3, 179)

Here, we see again the use of the adjective "virile": she surpassed even "viriles animos" in her refusal to grieve like the other women who are described by their tears. By providing his example, I want to emphasize how adaptable the myths of "famous women" are when removed from the context of a work

like Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris.* In the context of this letter, Cornelia becomes a figure of consolation for an empress whose main task is to produce male heirs. She is not called upon to self-identify with Cornelia, but to feel reassured that even a daughter has the potential to grow into a virile woman whose virtues surpass men.

As we have seen thus far, Petrarch adapts the figure of Cornelia towards different ends: first as an exemplary mourner for a man grieving his mother, and then as a consolatory figure for a woman celebrating the birth of a daughter (rather than a son). When taken together, these letters show how Petrarch repurposes Cornelia's virtues in a gender-neutral way that makes her an example that is meaningful to addressees of both sexes. *Sen.* 10.4. is a departure from the model of consolation that we saw in *Fam.* 13.1 and 21.8.. As mentioned at the onset of this essay, in this letter Petrarch consoles the grammarian Donato Appenninigena [Albanzani] on the untimely death of his son Solone.[7] Petrarch also uses the occasion to console himself on the death of his own grandson, Franceschino, and provides other examples of grieving men who, together with Petrarch and Appenninigena, participate in a community of male mourners sharing in grief the loss of their respective male heirs.[8] Gur Zak has shown how this letter is the most explicit example of how Petrarch "attempts to care for himself no less than for his readers," highlighting that Petrarch attempts "to develop the 'firm and manly' ('virile ac solidum') quality of their minds" (Zak 2010: 99). Indeed, as I shall argue below, in this letter Petrarch delineates, describes, and prescribes the proper mourning rituals of men who have lost direct male heirs. His theorization about grief and mourning encompasses not only the example of Cornelia, but also her counter-example Octavia and men (classical and contemporary) whose grief he describes as more akin to that of Octavia.

At the onset of *Sen.* 10.4 we there is a tension between the very sentimental way in which Petrarch describes his baby grandson, the love he felt for him, and the pride he had in his daily accomplishments, and the shame he claims he feels for letters written in his youth where he was overcome with grief from the deaths of friends and loved ones. He writes, in shame, that:

> Non me igitur tenuisset sue respectus etatis, mee tenuit; nam cum virum tum precipue senem fleremmortalia turpe est, quem tempore et casum observatione similium contra omnes insultus obduruisse—utor peculiaribus meis a Tullii verbis—atque obcalluisse conveniat. Non committam sciens cuius me confestim pudeat, ut multarum hodie pudet epistolarum quas in mortibus meorum dolore animi victus nimis molliter quamvis pie evo quondam teneriore profudi; spero me deinceps muliebribus saltem malis explicitum. (Petrarca 2014: 196, §§ 28-29)
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> [It was, therefore, not any regard for his age, but for my own, that held me in check. While it is unseemly for a man, and especially an old man, to weep for mortal things, since it befits him to be hardened by time and by the experience of similar misfortune, and calloused against all blows—I use my own words and Tully's—I shall not do something I know I will promptly be ashamed of, as today I am ashamed of many letters which, overcome with grief over the deaths of my dear ones, I once poured forth in my tenderer years, too weakly, although lovingly. I hope henceforth to be free from womanish weaknesses at least.] (Petrarca 2005b: 379)

He describes the acts of grief as "muliebribus (...) malis" [womanish weaknesses, but more literally womanish ills or evils] and hopes to be able to rid himself of this weakness in his old age. Petrarch's hope

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[7] Written from Padova in 1368.

[8] In her contribution to this current volume ("*Commune dolor* or *dolore unico*? Petrarch, Mourning, and Community"), Jennifer Rushworth reads Petrarch's *RVF* and *Bucolicum carmen* through the lens of Sara Ahmed's theory of mourning, noting that "affective communities are formed by exclusion as well as inclusion; each speaker is an 'affect alien' from the perspective of the other" (see page 35 in this volume). One might also note a similar Petrarchan "affect alien" in my examples below.

that age will remedy his undesirable youthful behavior echoes the first poem of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,* and we find similar poetic tropes in his declaration later in the letter that,

> Nos de pio honestoque loquimur amore, in quo pietas sola requiritur et dulcedo quedam animi et rarum ac suave suspirium et iocunda memoria defunctorum, sed non passio ulla, non meror neque lacrime non tam de virili pietate quam de infirmitate feminea produentes. (PETRARCA 2014: 215-216, § 110)
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> [We speak of noble, devoted love in which devotion alone is called for, a certain sweetness of mind, a mild sigh without passion, without sorrow, without tears which come forth not so much from manly devotion as from womanly weakness.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 388)

Here we encounter the "altro uomo" (albeit only 'in parte') of the lyric poem *RVF* 1, who looks back on his "giovanil errore" [youthful error] and can reflect on them (PETRARCA 2010). In this letter, however, he very clearly delineates what is merely suggested in his lyric poems, where the emasculated poet-lover sighs, weeps, and is overcome with passion.

In *Sen.* 10.4 Petrarch is much more explicit in his critique of men who openly grieve. If in the lyric poems this critique is primarily turned inwards as a source of personal shame, in his consolation to Appenninigena [Albanzani] it is projected outwards towards all members of the male sex who outwardly grieve like women:

> Quid ergo? Ut humanum desiderare sic flere femineum. Nec excusat hoc nostrum desiderium natura, que nescio quid enerve et liquidumanimis nostris inseruit idque in prompt posuit ut omnibus, maxime infirmioribus, palam esset. Ex diviso natura eadem mollitem hanc accusat, que virile quiddam ac solidum ipsis nostris in mentibus posuit, sed profundius, sic ut nisi virtutis auxilio erui atque effosi nequeat ac negotiis applicari. Primum illud ultro sensibus obvium, hoc secundum sine studio vix pervium rationi; mentem scilicet a sensibus abstrahendam cogendamque in specus intimos, ubi invicta securitas et masculi habitant cogitatus. Itaque facile flemus, difficillime consolamur, etsque hec iam vetus et immobilis consuetudo suos flendi velo pietatis obsita et pietatis excusata imo laudata cogomine nec ineptiis solum vulgi sed magnorum hominum fermata sententiis atque exemplis. (PETRARCA 2014: 200-202, §§ 51-54)
>
> [And so? Just as it is human to miss them, so it is womanish to weep. That is, Nature excuses us for missing them, since she injected something listless and watery into our spirits. And she set this in full view so as to be manifest in everyone, an especially in weaker men. On the other hand, that same Nature censures this softness, since she has put certain firm, manly quality squarely in our minds, but quite deeply, so that it cannot be dug up, brought to light, and applied to our troubles, except with the aid o virtue. The former quality is by itself obvious to the senses and forced into those innermost recesses where invincible constancy and masculine thoughts dwell. Thus, we weep easily, and we are comforted with the greatest difficulty. To weep for one's dear ones is now an ancient and unshakeable custom covered by the veil of devotion; and in the name of devotion it has been excused, or rather praised, confirmed not only by the folly of the multitude but by the sayings and examples of great men as well.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 382)

Whereas in the first two examples I provided, the connection between the female sex, weakness, and female mourning were more subtle, here Petrarch seemingly does not mince his words. To weep is a sign of weakness, and of specifically "womanish" behavior. He creates a binary between the manly quality of the mind, and the womanish quality of crying. Although Petrarch admits that nature instilled tears (water) in everyone, he claims that only women and very weak men cry. He concedes that the human emotion of grief is a shared, non-gendered human affect, but delineates that the performance of grief is indeed gendered.

Petrarch further illustrates this point by creating a trilogy of exempla 'in malo', leading with the ancient, female example of Octavia grieving her son, followed by two male examples – the Greek King Nestor and Petrarch's recently departed friend Paolo Annibaldeschi [Annibaldi]. The use of a

contemporary, real-time example like Annibaldeschi creates a bridge between exemplary literature and contemporary culture, highlighting the continued usefulness of the literature of exemplarity. Petrarch laments that,

> Quantum flevit Octavia Marcellinum suum, clarissumum adoloscentem et virgiliano carmine noblem, sed mortalem tamen! Nullus illi flendi alius quam vivendi modus fuit. Ut hic sexui veniam demus nec sequamur indoctos quI nimis multi sunt, quantum sapientissimus Grecorum Nestor sum flevit Antilochum hectorea peremptum manu, quam miserabilibus comites questionibus agitans cur ad eum pervenisset diem et naturam suam nimie vivacitatis accusans! Quantum Denique noster nuper Paulus Hanibalensis suum luxit, haud ultimus procerum Romanorum sed dolentium omnium longe primus et sic omnia luctuum exempla tristi superans victoria ut ex omnibus qi nunc adsint memorie unus hic nulla extern vi adhibittta, sola vi doloris inter flendum precluso repente spiritu extinctus miser pater carum nimis filium sequeretur ad sepulcrum comes! (PETRARCA 2014: 202, §§ 55-57)

> [How much Octavia grieved over Marcellus, her pride and joy, made famous by Virgil's poetry but still mortal! If we make allowance here for her sex, and turn away from ignorant men who are too many, how much did Nestor, the wisest of Greeks, weep over his Antilochus, who was killed by the hand of Hector? He upset his comrades with his pathetic question as to why he had lived on to that day. And he blamed Nature herself for endowing him with too much vitality. How much, finally, did our dear Paolo Annibaldeschi mourn over his son not long ago; he was not the least of the Roman nobles, but by far the foremost among all who grieve; and surpassing in a sad victory all examples of mourning, he alone out of all those who come to mind, with no outside force but only his grief, in the midst of weeping, died as his breath suddenly stopped; the wretched father followed his all too dear son, accompanying him to the grave.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 382)

Petrarch provides three examples of gendered mourning that build upon each other. The first (brief) example is one of maternal mourning: Octavia the Younger.[9] Petrarch begins with Octavia who was so moved by the lines of poetry dedicated to her son's death in the *Aeneid* (6.882-886) that she fainted when Vergil read them aloud to her and her brother the Emperor Augustus. Petrarch seemingly excuses her behavior because of her female sex but what he leaves out of the Octavia example is telling. The episode of fainting that he gestures at has come down to us in two principal forms: in Suetonius' *Life of Vergil* (*Vita Suetonii* 32) and Servius' commentary on the *Aeneid.* Ioannis Ziogas has noted that the *Life of Vergil* was often copied into the beginning of early editions of the *Aeneid,* and he has thus argued for using the Octavia episode in the paratext as a lens through which to re-read *Aeneid* 6.[10] Petrarch's personal copy of Vergil's *Bucolics, Georgics, and Aeneid*, the so-called Ambrosian Virgil (Il Virgilio Ambrosiano di Francesco Petrarca) or Petrarch's Virgil with its famous frontispiece by Simone Martini (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, S.P. 10/27), does not include the *Vita* but it does include Servius' commentary to the *Aeneid* (fols. 2r-233r).[11] Despite the brevity with which Petrarch mentions Octavia in this letter, his beloved copy contains an even fuller version of the Octavia fainting episode, and one which has special relevance to his representation of gendered mourning.[12] In Suetonius' *Life of Virgil* only Octavia is overcome with

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[9] Valerie Hope has traced the many and varied representations and what she calls "manipulations" of Octavia as a maternal mourner (HOPE 2020).

[10] ZIOGAS 2017.

[11] On Simone Martini's frontispiece Petrarch's manuscript, see especially MANN 2004 : 47-71, FENZI 2011, and MARKEY 2016. Sergio Casali and Fabio Stok have argued that Petrarch's rediscovery of Servius' commentary made Petrarch the "forerunner of this revaluation of Servius" in the post-classical age, which led to a renewed popularity of Servius in Quattrocento humanist manuscripts (CASALI/STOK 2019: 99).

[12] Ziogas also notes that "Octavia's emotional reaction highlights major preoccupations of the epic tradition: the tension between the debilitating grief of women and the valorizing glorification of men and the delicate distinction between sympathizing with epic woes and suffering from personal tragedies" (ZIOGAS 2017: 435).

emotion, yet in Servius exegesis of the episode, he claims that Augustus was also subject to excessive weeping ("fletu nimio" *Servius in Aen.* 6.861), not just his sister Octavia.

While Petrarch excludes this detail about Augustus' mourning in the commentary accompanying his personal edition of Vergil, he instead provides two similar episodes of excessive male grief over the loss of male heirs, and how that grief affected their *ratio* and intellect. To return to the quotation above, Petrarch transitions from the female-gendered example of Octavia by describing how he and the reader will "turn away from ignorant men who are too many" [sequamur indoctos qui nimis multi sunt]. However, while he claims to be "turning away" from the examples of female grief and ignorant men, the descriptions that follow present intelligent men whose intellects gave in to their grief. As already quoted above, he refers to Nestor the "wisest of the Greeks" [sapientissimus Grecorum], remarking "quantum sapientissimus Grecorum Nestor sum flevit Antilochum hectorea peremptum manu, quam miserabilibus comites questionibus agitans cur ad eum pervenisset diem et naturam suam nimie vivacitatis accusans!" [how much did Nestor, the wisest of Greeks, weep over his Antilochus, who was killed by the hand of Hector? He upset his comrades with his pathetic question as to why he had lived on to that day. And he blamed Nature herself for endowing him with too much vitality.] The Greek Nestor, King of Pylos, is described in the Homeric epics as an old, wise man and source of advice for younger Achaeans fighting in the Trojan War. Here Petrarch's source for Nestor's grief over his son's death, however, is Juvenal's *Tenth Satire* on "The Vanity of Human Wishes", the section dedicated to regret over a long life (vv. 188-288).[13] Petrarch, however, amplifies the story recounted in Juvenal by adding a moral judgment upon Nestor's grief. Juvenal writes,

> rex Pylius, magno si quicquam credis Homero
> exemplum vitae fuit a cornice secundae.
> felix nimirum, qui tot per saecula mortem
> distiluit atque suos iam dextra conputat annos,
> Quique novum totiens mustum bibit, oro parumper
> attendas quantum de legibus ipse queratur
> fatorum et nimio de stamine, cum videt acris
> Antilochi barbam ardentem, cum quaerit ab omni
> quisquis adest socio cur haec in tempora durent,
> quod facinus dignum tam longo admiserit aevo.
> (JUVENAL, *Satire* 10.386, vv. 246-255)
>
> [The King of Pylos, if you believe great Homer at all, was an example of survival second only to the crow. And of course he was happy. He put off death for so many generations, counted his years by the hundreds, and so often drank the new vintage. Pay attention, please, for a moment to the complaints he himself voices about the decrees of fate and his overlong thread of life at the sign of his spirited Antilochus' beard on fire, questioning every companion present as to why he has survived to see this day and what crime he has committed to deserve such a long lifespan.] (JUVENAL 2004: 387)

In Greek mythology, after Apollo killed all the siblings of Nestor's mother Chloris he granted those lifespans to Nestor, who would live for three generations. In the passage from Juvenal Nestor laments his long life and having outlived his son to those around him, questioning his fate. In Petrarch's version of Nestor's grief, however, he highlights the emotional and irrational. He describes Nestor's (rhetorical) questions to his companions as "pathetic" [miserabilibus], claiming that these questions "upset" [agitans]

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[13] In the Homeric tradition Antilochus' death occurs at the hands of Memnon (son of Dawn) in Book 4 of the *Odyssey*. Rizzo and Berté suggest that Petrarch might have taken the detail about Antilochus' death at the hands of Hector from Ovid (*Her*. 1, 15) or from the *Fabulae* of the so-called Hyginus mythographer (Igino).

his companions, and that he blamed nature for his long life ("quam miserabilibus comites questionibus agitans cur ad eum pervenisset diem et naturam suam nimie vivacitatis accusans" [He upset his comrades with his pathetic question as to why he had lived on to that day. And he blamed Nature herself for endowing him with too much vitality.]). Petrarch's version of Nestor is emotional to the point of agitating his companions and is portrayed as irrational in his blaming of Nature for his unnaturally long lifespan that was owed not to Nature but to the god Apollo. This irrationality is further highlighted when we recall Petrarch's initial description of Nestor as "sapientissimus Grecorum" [wisest of the Greeks]. In Petrarch's version of Nestor, the so-called "wisest of Greeks" is reduced to an irrational and emotional man judged by his companions and by Petrarch himself.

The final reference in the trilogy of exemplars *in malo* is to Petrarch's contemporary Paolo Annibaldeschi.[14] Petrarch closes his lesson about excessive mourning with a recent example that bridges the exemplars from the classical period with a real-time example, and which he claims to surpass all other examples:

> Quantum denique noster nuper Paulus Hanibalensis suum luxit, haud ultimus procerum Romanorum sed dolentium omnium longe primus et sic omnia luctuum exempla tristi superans victoria ut ex omnibus qi nunc adsint memorie unus hic nulla extern vi adhibitta, sola vi doloris inter flendum precluso repente spiritu extinctus miser pater carum nimis filium sequeretur ad sepulcrum comes!" (PETRARCA 2014: 202, §§ 55-57)
>
> [How much, finally, did our dear Paolo Annibaldeschi mourn over his son not long ago; he was not the least of the Roman nobles, but by far the foremost among all who grieve; and surpassing in a sad victory all examples of mourning, he alone out of all those who come to mind, with no outside force but only his grief, in the midst of weeping, died as his breath suddenly stopped; the wretched father followed his all too dear son, accompanying him to the grave.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 382)

Petrarch here refers to his contemporary Paolo Annibaldeschi of the Roman baronial family who suffered a double tragedy. First, his son was killed in battle in 1355, his body mutilated by the enemy. Annibaldeschi's grief was so overwhelming that as he held his son's body, he himself died of sorrow.[15] In *Sen.* 10.4 Petrarch provides very few biographical or other details about Annibaldeschi, his son, or the battle in which the former died. As such, he treats the figure of Annibaldeschi as he does other classical exempla: he provides the name and general legend surrounding the figure, as though he were famous enough for a contemporary (and future) reader to recognize and to be able to fill in the missing details. Petrarch does, however, include traces of the historical record in subtle turns of phrase, parallelisms, and counter examples between father and son. He describes Annibaldeschi's death through martial terms – "tristi superans victoria" [surpassing in a sad victory] – making the father's death a victory where the son's death was a failure in battle. The son was slain and mutilated in battle, but the father died with "nulla extern vi adhibitta, sola vi doloris" [with no outside force but only his grief]. The son's blood flowing from his body finds its symbolic equivalent in the tears shed by the weeping father [inter flendum]. Ultimately, Petrarch presents the grief and actions of the father as mirroring those of the son, eventually leading to his death.

If we consider the progression of examples in *Sen.* 10.4 we note that each of the three examples is introduced in the same manner: "quantum flevit [Octavia]" | "quantum flevit [Nestor]" | "quantum luxit [Paolo Annibaldeschi]." The use of "quantum" in each repeated introductory phrase already points to the notion of excess, and as Petrarch progresses through these examples we see this excessive crying

[14] The majority of the biographical details we have about Paolo Annibaldeschi come from Fracassetti's notes in his edition of Petrarch's letters (PETRARCA 1863-1867: vol. 5, 336-38).

[15] For Petrarch's critique of the Paolo Annibaldeschi episode see LANSING 2008 (chapter 8), MCCLURE 2014 [1991] (chapter 2), and WILKINS 1958: 93.

/mourning culminate in the death of the aggrieved father Paolo Annibaledschi. This is not the only letter in which Petrarch addresses the Annibaldeschi episode, nor is it the earliest. For Petrarch, the father's desperate actions are the apex of irrationality, something he explored in a letter ultimately excluded from the official, "public" collection of letters. In his 1355 *Var.* 32 addressed to Neri Morando Petrarch is more explicit in his condemnation of Annibaldeschi's ultimately destructive type of mourning.[16] The tone of this letter is far sterner than what we encountered previously in *Sen.* 10.4, Petrarch's emotions seemingly rawer perhaps owing to the dating of the letters in question. The Annibaldeschi tragedy occurred in 1355, an event that Petrarch initially documents in *Var.* 32 that very year, and then again, in a much more muted version in *Sen.* 10.4 in 1368, more than a decade after the fact. As already noted, Petrarch only briefly describes the Annibaldeschi double tragedy in *Sen.* 10.4. The emotional impact of this particular story relies on the buildup from the examples of Octavia and Nestor, and then the parallels and counterpoints drawn between Annibaldeschi and his son. In the 1355 *Var.* 32, however, there are no subtleties in the narrative recounting of the episode, and, similarly to what he did in the Nestor story, Petrarch passes judgment on Annibaldeschi, his grieving, and his ultimate death. Early in the letter Petrarch questions who to blame for this tragedy in a series of rhetorical questions:

> Hei! mihi quid querar? Unde ordiar? Quid dicam? Accusabo Fortunam? Surda est. Accusabo mollitiem amici, qui sibi mortem, mihi mortiferum dolorem attulit? Sera est accusatio erroris, irrevocabile damnun est, quod aucturae potius inutiles sint querelae" (PETRARCA 1863: 382)
>
> [Alas! What is there for me to bemoan? where should I begin? what should I say? Shall I accuse Fortune? She is blind. Shall I blame the softness of [our] friend, which brought death to him and deadly pain to me? The accusation is late and wrong, the damage irrevocable, the useless complaints make it stronger.] (my translation)

Though Petrarch claims to blame neither Fortuna nor the recently departed Annibaldeschi, his use of *mollities* to describe him would indicate otherwise. Petrarch asks rhetorically whether or not Annibaldeschi's "softness" or "tenderness" might have been the cause of his death, an attribute used to describe weakness of the mind or character, effeminacy, and cowardice.[17] Petrarch underscores Annibaldeschi's effeminacy and cowardice, in particular, by first presenting the death of a son as not unprecedented, and then through a triple reference to 'vendetta' (Latin 'ultio') as the more appropriate response to the death of Annibaldeschi's son rather than grief and death. Playing on his departed friend's first name, he writes "Amisit Paulus [Annibaldeschi] noster filium. Rem non insolitam narras. Et alius Paulus filios amisit, Hannibalensis unum perdidit, Macedonicus duos" [Our Paolo lost a son. You are not describing something unusual. Annibaldeschi lost only one son, the other Paullus of Macedonia lost two sons] (PETRARCA 1863: 383). Petrarch compares Annibaldeschi and Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus (229-160 BC), consul of the Roman Republic who conquered Macedon. Though Petrarch does not provide any further biographical details about this Paullus, readers would know that he lost two young sons shortly after his victory against King Perseus of Macedonia at Pydna, which brought an end to the Third Macedonian War. Despite his personal loss, he continued to an even more glorious political career. As Petrarch continues, he proposes a series of rhetorical questions addressed to the recently departed Annibaldeschi, asking why he didn't simply have other sons, or,

[16] PETRARCA 1863: vol. 3, 379-393. English translations of this letter are mine.
[17] The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* notes that this use is generally presented with 'animi' [of the soul], a term missing in Petrarch's phrase but certainly implied in his description. Petrarch uses 'mollities' throughout *Sen.* 10.4, as well.

quae christianae pietatis proprium fuit, pro illius salute animae, cuius corporis praeceps et festinata mors fuerat, preces atque suffragia ad coelum mittere? Vel si qua ea dulcedo est, recolligere animum atque firmare, et in extrema solatia patri viroque forti debitae ultioni intendere?" (PETRARCA 1863: 384)

[As befits a Christian man, [why didn't you] raise your prayers and intercessions to heaven for the health of the soul that was bitterly and unexpectedly taken from his body? Or if there is any sweetness in this, collect and strengthen your soul, and enact the most soothing vendetta that is offered to fathers and powerful men.] (my translation)

Petrarch's call for 'vendetta' [ultio] is repeated in succession in two significant sections of his longer lament. He asks Annibaldeschi, "Audita primum morte filii conspectoque cadavere, quod humanitatis immemor hostilis ira discerpserat, cum et ferro posses ulcisci, et animi viribus gravem ferre fortunam, fato succumbere maluisti, et te exitialibus atque mortiferis ultus es lacrimis: cumque virorum exemplis illustrium, quae probe noveras, revocareris ad vitam et ad spem, desperatam in mortem nescio qua ferali dulcedine raptus es" (PETRARCA 1863: 385). The repetition of 'vendetta' in this passage – first as an active verb (ulcisci) and then a participle (ultus) – underscores Petrarch's disbelief that Annibaldeschi *chose* death ("maluisti succumbere...") over avenging not only his son's death, but especially the inhuman and vengeful desecration of his son's body. Although fate might have decreed his son to die, Petrarch emphasizes Annibaldeschi's choice of how to mourn, and presents 'vendetta' as the only proper and, most importantly, virile option and course of action. To further illustrate his point, Petrarch notes that Annibaldeschi had many "virorum exemplis illustrium" that he could have followed to avenge his son's death in this manner. As such, Petrarch champions the literary tradition of *De viris illustribus* as a proper and useful resource for how contemporary men can learn from and imitate the actions of their classical predecessors.

He continues with a lengthy list of male exemplars, with two standing out because they provide a middle ground for Annibaldeschi (and other men who might find themselves in a similar situation). Petrarch presents two back-to-back paternal examples from Vergil's *Aeneid,* which present an ideal model of masculine valor in fathers: the stories of Evander and his son Pallas (*Aeneid* 11) and Mezentius and his son Lausus (*Aeneid* 10). He notes that,

Flevit suum Pallanta miserabilis Evandus, sed post fletum vixit, et vindictam praestolari maluit quam filium sequi. Lausum quoque Mezentius flevit, nec immerito; nam si credimus Virgilio, pietas patris filio supervixit, tentavitque vindictam, quae cum parum succederet, non tam flendo mori voluit quam pugnando: et errant ambo sense, ita ut diutius vivere et animosius pugnare potuerit Paulus meus. (PETRARCA 1863: 388)

[Miserable Evander cried for his Pallas, but lived on after his weeping, and chose to stand ready for revenge rather than accompany his son [in death]. Mezentius too cried for his son Lausus, and not without cause; if we believe Vergil, the father's sense of duty outlived the son, and he attempted to get revenge, which he hardly survived, [but] he wanted to die fighting and not crying; and they were both old men, in such a manner they lived a while longer and my Paolo [Annibaldeschi] could have fought more boldly.] (my translation)

In this passage we note the repetition of various forms of 'fleo' [to cry], 'vindicta' [vengeance/vendetta], and 'pugno' [to fight] as Petrarch provides alternatives that Annibaldeschi could have taken. Both Evander and Mezentius cried over the deaths of their sons, normalizing the initial reaction to the loss of a son that Annibaldeschi also suffered. But both men moved on from their emotional states, with Mezentius choosing to avenge his son's death in one of the most famous battle scenes of the Vergilian epic. This is a particularly salient point since as Vergil describes in *Aeneid* 10 (the famous death scene in vv. 794-907; VIRGIL 2000 [1918]: 228-234), Mezentius (ally of Turnus) is killed by Aeneas, remaining defiant to the very end, refusing to ask for mercy. His final request is only to be buried with his son. Thus, although

Mezentius, like Annibaldeschi, died as a direct result of his son's death, he went down fighting and avenging his death, not crying.[18]

So why, we might ask, does Petrarch's treatment of his friend's death change so drastically from the 1355 *Var.* 32 and the 1368 *Sen.* 10.4? George McClure has argued that "Petrarch's shifting and sometimes ambivalent attitude toward grief can also be seen in letters excluded from his collections. As reviser and editor, he was mindful that his 'private' letters would gain a 'public' stature: they not only would represent a type of autobiography but also would constitute a larger corpus of his literature of moral healing and wisdom. Perhaps as a result, Petrarch withdrew various epistles from the official collections. Some of these letters deal with grief and are important missing pieces in any effort to reconstruct Petrarch's attitudes towards sorrow" (McCLURE 2014 [1991]: 34). He has called *Var.* 32 a "contradiction" and anomaly because of its harsh tone of condemnation that toes the line between commemoration and damnation. Indeed, the second and much later recounting of the Annibaldeschi episode that is included in the letters of "old age" (*Seniles*) reads much more like a brief biography that might be included in a collection like *De viris illustribus* rather than a shared tragedy between friends like we find in *Var.* 32 written shortly after the tragedy. Though Petrarch does not include any contemporaries in his famous men cycle (as Boccaccio did in his *De mulieribus claris*), as Benjamin Kohl has noted, Petrarch began the first phase of project in 1337-1338 (the so-called "Republican Rome plan"), returning to it again in 1350 for phase two (Christian figures), and completing the third phase of work in 1351-1353 ("all-ages plan").[19] The death of Annibaldeschi and Petrarch's first writing about it thus occur a mere two years after he had (re)devoted himself again to the project of male exemplarity and lessons of morality. Perhaps with the passage of time and more reflection, Petrarch began to see the Annibaldeschi episode as less of a personal tragedy and more of an exemplary story 'in malo'. It was a tragedy that did not need to end as it did if only Annibaldeschi had been more virtuous and 'masculine' in his response to his son's death, and if only he had he followed the examples of classical heroes rather than women. As such, the version we encounter in the public-facing letter included in the *Seniles* is stripped of its original personal condemnation, its power as a story owing primarily to its juxtaposition with the stories of Octavia and Nestor.

While the version of the Annibaldeschi tragedy in *Sen.* 10.4 is admittedly toned down, its importance is underlined by Petrarch's repetition of the story later in the letter. Petrarch the 'senex' returns to the story of his departed friend, this time adding the figure of Cornelia as a counterexample to his original trilogy of excessive mourners. In the lead up to the repetition of his previously discussed Octavia-Nestor-Annibaldeschi triad Petrarch again refers to the difference between 'manly devotion' and 'womanly weakness' that we saw earlier in the letter, noting again that weeping is a result of the former.[20] To prove his point that feminine weakness results in (excessive) tears he writes,

> Utque ita esse pervideas, inconsolabiliter, ut diximus, Octavia flevit, inconsolabiliter flevit Nestor: at non sic Cornelia, non sic Cato et fuit par ubique amor parque amandi causa, par gemendi, paritas Denique sexuum ac damnorum, nisi quod Octavia unum, Cornelia autem plures amiserat. Flendi ergo diversitatem fecit sola diversitas animorum, unde actuum nostrorum pendet ac vultuum tota diversitas. Fevit etiam, ut audisti,

[18] Scholars have long noted that although Mezentius is hardly a sympathetic character (he is the 'scorner of the gods,' and a violent tyrant, not to mention the antagonist to the hero pious Aeneas), his death scene as a grief-stricken father avenging his son's death elicits high levels of pathos readers of the *Aeneid.* See especially GLENN 1972. H.C. Gotoff has argued that at Mezentius becomes a tragic figure at the end of *Aeneid* 10 and that "his death makes demands on the sympathy of the audience and leaves Aeneas speechless" (GOTOFF 1984: 192).

[19] KOHL 1974.

[20] "Nos de pio honesto que loquimur amore, in quo pietas sola requiritur et dulcedo quedam animi et rarum ac suave suspirium et iocunda memoria defunctorum, sed non passio ulla, non meror neque lacrime non tam de virili pietate quam de infirmitate feminea produentes" (PETRARCA 2014: 214-216, § 110).

usque in perniviem Paulum Hannibalensis, et non Stephanus Columnensis, vir hac unicus etate, qui genere et patria vicinus Paulo exemplum illi esse debuerat ne merori succumberet. (PETRARCA 2014: 216, §§ 111-113)

[And that you may clearly see that it is so, Octavia wept inconsolably, as we have said, as did Nestor; but it was not so with Cornelia, nor with Cato, and yet in each case it was the same love, the same reason for loving and the same for grieving. They were of the same sex, and their loss was the same, except that Octavia lost one but Cornelia lost more. What, therefore, made the difference in weeping was only the difference in spirit, on which depend all the differences in our behavior and appearance. As you heard, Paolo Annibaldeschi also wept until he died, but not Stefano Colonna, that unmatched man of our time, who, as Paolo's relative and fellow citizen ought to have served him as an example of how not to succumb to sorrow.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 388)

There are several important lessons and parallels embedded in this second retelling of the Octavia-Nestor-Annibaldeschi example. First, in his comparison of Octavia and Cornelia Petrarch makes a distinction between biological sex [sexus] and spirit [animus], claiming that though they share the same sex ("paritas sexuum") they are different in spirit ("diversitas animorum"). Petrarch does not provide any details about Cornelia, expecting the reader to know her story well enough to fully understand the comparison. In *Fam.* 13.1, previously examined, Petrarch attributed a 'masculine spirit' to Cornelia in his lengthier engagement with her story. There he claimed that Cornelia surpassed even the manliest of spirits concluding that, "tantam ruinam atque orbitatem, viriles quoque animos concussuram, tam invicte pertulit, ut nullis complorantium matronarum fletibus induci posset" [She thus endured so bravely a catastrophe and bereavement as would have shaken even manly spirits that she could not be moved by the tears of the mourning women.][21] (PETRARCA 1933-42: vol. 4, 67).

Keeping this earlier characterization in mind, the distinction that Petrarch draws in *Sen.* 10.4 is thus between biological sex and a gendered spirit: Octavia only lost one child yet she wept excessively like a woman, while Cornelia lost many children (twelve) and did not weep because of her 'manly spirits' ("viriles animos"). This sex-spirit distinction sets up the second reference to Annibaldeschi in *Sen.* 10.4 and important parallel: Paolo Annibaldeschi and Stefano Colonna il Vecchio. Petrarch's inclusion of a second contemporary male friend who had lost male heirs further underscores the moral failure of Annibaldeschi, and plays on the notion of excess that founds the Octavia-Cornelia example. If in *Var.* 32 he laments that Annibaldeschi failed to learn how to grieve from the ancient heroes, here in the *Seniles* he laments that Annibaldeschi had a contemporary example to follow in Colonna but did not imitate him. Both Annibaldeschi and Colonna share the same sex, and similarly to the Octavia-Cornelia comparison, Annibaldeschi only lost one son in battle (though grieved to the point of death), while Colonna il Vecchio lost his son Stefano Colonna il Giovane and grandson Giovanni Colonna in the battle against Cola di Rienzo in 1347 (this after having already suffered the deaths of other sons).[22] The parallels are striking between the men, something Petrarch further highlights when he notes that Colonna was both

[21] "She thus endured so bravely a catastrophe and bereavement as would have shaken even manly spirits that she could not be moved by the tears of the mourning women" (PETRARCA 2005a: vol. 3, 179). It is worth noting that in *Variae* 32 Petrarch describes Cornelia's exclamation that no one should call her "misera" since she was the mother of such great sons as "non femineam sed virile, et vere paterna gloria dignam vocem!", attributing both a male spirit and voice to Cornelia is her most tragic moment of grief (PETRARCA 1863: vol. 3, 386).

[22] "Is enim iam tribus annis continuis totidem clarissimis filiis amissis tandem paulo ante Pauli obitum audito primogeniti sui, viri ingentis, et nepotis ex eo, incomparabilis adolescentis, interitu, qui in illo civili motu simul oppetierant, nec lacrimulam unam fudit nec verbum miserabile nec accentum tristitie, sed ad primum nuntium defixis parumper terre oculis ad extremum dixit: 'Fiat voluntas Dei: et certe satius est mori quam unius rustici iugum pat', Nicolaum significans, tribunum Urbis Rome, quo tunc populi duce ea clades accepta erat ipso Urbis limine" (216, § 114). Petrarch also makes brief mention of Stefano Colonna il Vecchio in *Var.* 32.

Annibaldeschi's "fellow citizen" and blood relative ("vir hac unicus etate, qui genere et patria vicinus Paulo"). Petrarch pays homage to the Colonna by calling their patriarch "vir hac unicus etate," something he often does in the lyrical poems devoted to the various members of that family.

By holding up Stefano Colonna il Vecchio as an example for mourning fathers to follow, Petrarch bridges classical and contemporary examples of mourning, thereby illustrating the power of the literature of exemplarity. If Vergil's *Aeneid* could bring Octavia and her brother the emperor Augustus to tears, then literature dedicated to virtuous and virile men and women could also strengthen the masculine resolve of his readers. Sorrow could be mediated and indeed remedied by reading and hearing about examples from the past and present. And both biologically male and female examples are helpful. Indeed, Petrarch hints at this when he begins to close his list of exemplary figures *in bono* and *in malo* when he writes

> Pauca ecce et antiquitatis et nostre etatis et virorum et feminarum acta recenso ut uterque sexus patientie et equanimitatis exemplum habeat." (PETRARCA 2014: 216, § 115)
>
> [Here I survey a few things done by men and women of antiquity and of our time, so that both sexes would have a model of endurance and composure.] (PETRARCA 2005b: 388)

Although Petrarch refers to both biological sexes twice (the actions done by "virorum et feminarum" which serve as a model of behavior for "uterque sexus"), the male and female models are combined into one "patientie et equanimitatis exemplum" – a [singular] model of patience and endurance. Mourning and sorrow are universal, as is crying. But the mourner can be taught to regulate his/her mourning by learning from the examples of famous men and women who controlled their emotions. In the letters examined above we see how Petrarch as a consoler and griever himself holds the literature of exemplarity up as a model for bereavement that can mediate proper modes of mourning. For him it is not a theoretical model void of contemporary or real-life applications. It is a model with a documented history, a lived and seen presence, and a future.

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Scholars have long noted the popularity of funerary collections in the Quattrocento and Petrarch's influence on the genre.[23] As George McClure has shown, Petrarch's two explicitly consolatory works *De remediis utriusque fortune* and *Secretum meum* were important models and source texts for humanist funerary collections. In his discussion of the dedicatory letters of the *Familiares* and *Seniles,* where Petrarch promised to conduct himself as a mature and strong stoic, McClure notes that, "Petrarch the editor of his public letters was also the curator of his personal *persona*. In the last analysis, he decided that his permanent collection should reaffirm his intention to show a Stoic face to the world. Thus, though his emotional instincts sometimes fought it, the mature Petrarch sought to replace the remedies of the poet with those of the moral philosopher. His greatest effort toward that end came in his psychological encyclopedia *De remediis*" (MCCLURE 2014 [1991]: 45). While this might have been Petrarch's publicly stated intent behind *De remediis,* as Bernhard Huss shows in his contribution to this current volume, Petrarch does not maintain his stoic approach between books I and II. As Huss notes, Petrarch depicts himself as stoic doctor of the soul in the preface to *De remediis* I and promises the reader emotional

[23] George McClure has shown how the works of self-consolation dealing with parental bereavement by prominent Petrarchan humanists Coluccio Salutati, Gianozzo Manetti, Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna, and Francesco Filfelfo between 1400-1460 pushed the boundaries of the classical tradition of *consolatio* to create a Renaissance "art of mourning". Of the four humanist's studies, he notes the highest degree of Petrarchan influence in Filelfo's writing on the loss of a son (MCCLURE 1986). The scholarship on the topic of funerary collections and orations is vast. I would highlight the following: BANKER 1976, DEPETRIS 1979, MCMANAMON 1989.

reassurance. But in the preface to *De remediis* II, we find ourselves in the same position as the doctor, as a sufferer; a position opposite what we were promised. Petrarch is no longer on the side of Reason, and as readers we are left is a state of confusion about our rational existence. The point, argues Huss, is that *De remediis* is not a hierarchical dialog between Master and disciple; rather, it takes up the contradictions of life experiences so that an early modern public can discover themselves through reading.[24] The oscillation between a more stoic and rational approach to human experiences, and the emotional, affective reactions to them, is similar to what we examined in the letters from the *Familiares, Seniles,* and *Variae.* While we acknowledge that Petrarch's letter collections inspired and formed the model for Quattrocento humanist letterbooks, we have tended to privilege the works Petrarch explicitly claimed were "consolatory" (like *Secretum meum* and *De remediis*) as the privileged models for individual works of consolation and collections like funerary books. Yet a closer look at a case study like Isotta Nogarola (1418–66) reveals a more complex and nuanced Petrarchan legacy with regards to the relationship between reason and affect and the role of illustrious exempla from history when it comes to both mourning and consolation.

In the remainder of this essay I am going to discuss the last major work by female humanist Isotta Nogarola, the consolatory letter *Ad Jacopum Antonium Marcellum eius dulcissimi filii…in obitu consolatoria* (Verona, 9 August 1461), for the Venetian nobleman Jacopo Antonio Marcello in honor of the death of his 8-year-old son Valerio on 1 January 1461. Nogarola's letter was one of 23 that were assembled into an elegant collection in Valerio's honor and included works by 19 humanists that were part of Marcello's circle, including, most notably, Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481).[25] Nogarola is the only female humanist included in the collection, a testament to her standing in humanist circles as well as Venetian society and the surrounding area.[26] As Margaret King has noted in *The Death of the Child Valerio*, which uses the death of Valerio and its aftermath as a study of childhood, career, patronage, and death – the funerary book itself was never completed, and although Marcello commissioned the consolatory works included within it, he never took their advice, and continued in his deep sorrow and grief.[27]

The Petrarchan echoes in Nogarola's letter are striking because of the similar contradictions and oscillations present which we earlier traced in Petrarch's letters. Much like Petrarch's *Sen.* 10.4*,* Nogarola's letter is constructed as a double remembrance: it is both a public letter of consolation for Marcello's loss (and a humanist showpiece for her) and a more personal letter of self-consolation for Nogarola whose mother Bianca had also died in 1461. In addition, Nogarola urges Marcello to keep the length of his mourning in check, and to mind the struggle between reason and affect. While she takes up similar themes encountered in Petrarch's letters, as we will examine in this section, she alters the role of exemplary figures as models of mourning, making her work of consolation and the depiction of gendered mourning starkly different from what we find in Petrarch's works.

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[24] See the conclusion of Huss' chapter ("Affectivities of Reason, Rationality of Affects: Strategies of Community-Building in Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortune*") in this volume (see page 76).
[25] Glasgow University, Hunterian Museum Library, MS 201 (U.1.5). Nogarola's contribution was copied into the second volume of her letterbook as letter LXXXII, "Ad illustrem et magnificum militem Venetum patritium D. Iacobum Antonium Marcellum in obitu eius dulcissimi et inclyti filii Valerii Mercelli Isotae Nogarolae Consolatoria", which is the copy to which I will refer in this essay (NOGAROLA 1886: vol. 2, 163-178). English translations are by Margaret King (NOGAROLA 2003).
[26] Margaret King's early critical work on Isotta Nogarola, and later translations of the works into English (KING/RABIL 1992, KING 2004), set the stage for subsequent studies of Nogarola. See especially KING 1978, 1980, 1991, 1994. For analyses of Nogarola's Latin writings, her place in the intellectual history of women and in the broader history of humanism see ALLEN 2002 (944-969), BROAD/GREEN 2009 (43-46), COX 2008, FENG 2017, HOLT 2002, JARDINE 1985 and 1986, ROSS 2009, SMARR 2008, STEVENSON 2005 (156-176), BORŠIĆ/KARASMAN 2015.
[27] KING 1994.

Nogarola opens her letter by recounting a story she read in Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Apollonium* (from the *Moralia*) about how a philosopher ultimately consoled Queen Arsinoë who was suffering over the death of her son.[28] He told her the story of Mourning [Luctus] and how he received the honor of overseeing the dead, so that humans would offer their pain, sorrow, and tears to him. The philosopher told her that the more sacrifices she made to him (that is, the more cried) the more often he would visit her. Nogarola then interprets the story from Plutarch, writing that,

> Quae cum philosophus dixisset, omnem illum moerorem reginam deposuisse ferunt, quod itidem a magnanimis viris faciendum intellexit, ne in luctu et lacrimis mideri vitam ducant, cum a sapientissimis philosophis et sanctissimis viris ille minime vituperetur qui doleat, sed qui modum in dolendo excedat" (NOGAROLA 1886: 162)
>
> [When the philosopher told her this, they say the queen put away all her grief, which she now understood was also what great men must do, lest they should spend their lives mourning and weeping like wretches, although the wisest philosophers and holiest men never censured the man who grieved, only the one who exceeded moderation in his grieving.] (NOGAROLA 2003: 191)

Nogarola's recounting of the story adds a detail we do not find in Plutarch, namely the gendered lesson aimed at "great men" (magnanimis viris) on how not to grieve: they should avoid behaving like the "miseri" by mourning and crying (in luctu et lacrimis). On the one hand, the story's protagonist is a ruling queen, thus her tears and mourning are couched in political terms traditionally associated with "great men." Thus, the end of her mourning results from being presented with and then understanding a male exemplary model. As Petrarch did in his consolatory letter to Cardinal Guy de Boulogne, here too Nogarola uses an example of a famous woman to call Marcello back to reason ("ad rationem revocare") since she had heard from both his writings and from others that his period of mourning had gone on for far too long:

> cum ex multorum relatione tuisque piissimis scriptis intellexerim, te pro obitu dulcissumi filioli tui Valerii in dolore ac moerore longe magis ac par est versari, temptare decrevi, si qua ratione dolorem hubc tuum, quo non possum admodum non dolere, aliqua ex parte lenire possem teque ad rationem revocare" (NOGAROLA 1886: 163)
>
> [Therefore, on learning from your own pious writings and the reports of many other people that you were sunk in grief and mourning for your sweetest little boy far longer than is right, I who loved you as though you were my own father from the earliest years of my childhood, who have cherished you as my lord and master, and who hoped you would always be happy, decided, as if by some guiding principle, to try to soothe, in so far as I could, this sorrow of yours, in which I cannot but grieve myself, to call you back to reason.] (NOGAROLA 2003: 191)

Like Petrarch before her, the emphasis is not on outright denying mourning, but putting a limit on it; and it is the work of the friend to be a consoler (here, Nogarola), and to call the mourner "back to reason". While this early part of the letter follows Petrarch's example of consolation, as she continues on she slowly begins to depart from her model. She empathizes with Marcello's pain and suffering, recalling her own

[28] PLUTARCH, Moralia*, Volume II: How to Profit by One's Enemies. On Having Many Friends. Chance. Virtue and Vice. Letter of Condolence to Apollonius. Advice About Keeping Well. Advice to Bride and Groom. The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men. Superstition,* translated by Frank Cole BABBITT, Cambridge, MA, 1928 [Latin and English] 105-213.

grief at her mother Bianca Borromeo's death in 1461, five years before composing this consolation for Marcello[29]:

> Sed quod modo te consolabor, cum ipsa eadem consolatione egeam et omnis philosophiae ac religionis oblita terga dare visa sim, meque dolor et moeror, quem ex mote sactissimae ac dulcissimae matris meae cepi, captivam ducant, ex qua incredibilem ac graviorem quam unquam existimassem concepi dolorem?" (NOGAROLA 1886: 164)
>
> [But how shall I console you when I am in need of this consolation myself, when I have seemed to retreat, forgetful of all philosophy and religion, a prisoner of the sorrow and mourning that overwhelmed me when my dearest and most pious mother died, since which time I have suffered incredible sorrow, more profound that any I ever imagined?] (NOGAROLA 2003: 192)

Here Nogarola describes the failure of consolation philosophical and religious literature in preparing her for and aiding her in the grief she continues to feel over her mother's death. The parallel between "te consolabor" and "consolatione egeam" highlights their shared experience with sorrow and mourning and privileges the lived experience of mourning over depictions of it, or lessons surrounding it, as found in the literature she claims failed her. Indeed, she continues by explaining that she decided to write to him "ut mediocritatem simul amplexemur" [so that we both might embrace moderation]. Nogarola thus presents herself as having something to gain by consoling him: the act of consolation serves as self-consolation as the two mourners learn to "moderate" their emotions and grief together. She acknowledges that there are two spheres – the mind and emotions – and continues using the first-person plural narrative voice when she writes "mentem et rationem revocemus" [let us call on the mind and on reason]. Given the sustained grief they both are enduring, Nogarola intends to call Marcello (and herself) back to reason – as stark contrast from what we examined in Petrarch's letters, where he presented his grief as something shameful from the past that he was able to overcome. Yet like Petrarch she acknowledges the naturalness of tears, writing that,

> Non enim assentior poetis qui nos e silice aut duro rbore natos fingunt, sed potius Satiro illi cum dicat mollissima corda hominibus dedisse naturam "Quae lacrimas dedit. Haec nostri pars optima sensus; Naturae imperio gemimus, cum funus adultae Virginis, vel terrae clauditur infans." (NOGAROLA 1886: 165)
>
> [For I agree not with the poets who claim we originated from stone or hard oak, but with the satirist who says nature gave humans the softest hears: "What tears she [Nature] gave. The emotions are our best part. We sigh at the power of nature, when the death of a maiden occurs or an infant is enclosed in the earth."] (NOGAROLA 2003: 192)

As we saw previously with Petrarch, Nogarola admits to tears being a very human reaction. By quoting Juvenal 15.131-139 she emphasized that the emotions and tears gifted to man by Nature are her greatest gifts.

Moderation is needed, however, a point she illustrates with a lengthy list of illustrious men of antiquity who wept for the loss of their sons but who continued on with their political and public duties. She cites Horatius who continued to officiate in the dedication of the temple of Jupiter even when he learned his son had died; Quintus Martius who went straight from his son's funeral pyre to the curia to convene the Senate since it was scheduled to meet that day; Xenephon who simply removed his crown rather than stop conducting the solemn sacrifices to the gods; and Pericles did not cry even though he

[29] After the death of her mother, Nogarola moved into Foscarini's household. Margaret King suggests that Foscarini might have been the one to suggest Nogarola to Marcello for the funerary volume (KING 1994). For the relationship between Foscarini and Nogarola see King & Robins introduction to NOGAROLA 2003, KING 1994, and GOTHEIN 1943.

lost two sons, his sister, and the majority of his friends in a short span of time – he too carried on, donned his robes and incited the Athenians to go to war. Though she quickly runs through these examples, providing details from their biographies without interpreting them, she takes more time with the example of Lucius Aemelius Paullus – the other "Paullus" from Petrarch's *Variae* 32 who showed more valor than Annibaldeschi. Nogarola provides more information about Paullus and his tragedy than Petrarch, and provides a precise timeline for the interplay between his personal grief and his political duties: when he returned to Rome after battle he conducted funeral rites for his two sons, burying one son four days before the triumphal parade, and the other son three days after. By being precise about the timing of the Roman Triumph and the two funerals, Nogarola emphasizes how Paullus held strong to his political obligations. She describes him as having born the tragedy with "summa constantia, summa animi magnitudine, summon denique robore" (NOGAROLA 1886: 167; "the highest constancy, the highest magnitude of mind, and finally with the greatest strength," NOGAROLA 2003: 194). To further the point, she quotes from Paullus' speech to the Roman people, a public pronouncement of his higher duty to the Roman people that to his personal tragedy:

> Cum admirabilem successum nostrae felicitates, Quirites, animaverterem, semper veritus sum, ne fortuna, quae prosperis rebus invidere solet, mali aliquid rependeret. Quapropter Iovem optimum, Iunonem reginam ac Minervam precatus sum, ut quidquid adversi populo Romano immineret, id omne in nostram domum converterent. Itaque bono animo estote, Quirites; rem enim bene se habet, nam dii immirtales nostris votis annuerunt. Egerunt enim, ut vos potius nostro casu doleatis quam ego aliqua vestra calamitate ingemiscerem." (NOGAROLA 1886: 167)

> [I have always feared, citizens, that Fortuna, who is usually envious when things go well in my observation, would strike back with some evil. Therefore, I prayed to almighty Jove, Queen Juno, and Minerva that they would cause any evil that ever menaced the Roman people to fall wholly on my house. And so, be of good cheer, citizens. For things have gone well: the immortal gods have agreed to fulfill my prayers. For they have seen to it that you will grieve for our tragedy rather than that I should weep for your calamity.] (NOGAROLA 2003: 194)

In this speech by Lucius Aemelius Paullus we find the example of a man's ultimate dedication to and fulfillment of his political duties, before, during, and after suffering a personal a tragedy. He tells the Roman people that he had prayed that anything bad that should happen to the Roman people should happen to him instead, essentially saying that he not only accepts but invited this tragedy upon himself in order to spare his fellow citizens. The final line is powerful: he would rather the Romans grieve for his personal loss of two sons instead of him grieving the downfall of the Romans. Nogarola's list of illustrious men who put reason and the fulfilment of their duties ahead of his personal sorrow thus ends with the most extreme example of moderating one's emotions in order to return to reason.

To this list of men who did not outwardly grieve or allow their emotions to lead them astray from their duties, Nogarola adds Cornelia, but with marked differences from Petrarch's use of her story in her consolatory letters. She writes,

> Corneliam matronarum decus, quae multum filiorum eloquentiae contulisse dicitur, tam infauste amissis duobus liberis tanto animo, tanta eloquentia praeditis, Nunquam, inquit dicam me infelicem, quae Grachos peperi. (NOGAROLA 1886: 168)

> [We are told that Cornelia, the glory of mothers, who is said to have contributed much to the eloquence of her sons, when she tragically lost two sons who were endowed with such courage and such eloquence, said, "Never will I, who bore the Gracchi, call myself unhappy."] (NOGAROLA 2003: 194)

Generally, when Cornelia is evoked as an exemplary figure the emphasis is on her maternal strength and ability to focus on maternal pride rather than grief, as we see in Petrarch. Here, Nogarola combines the classic and more frequent portrayal of Cornelia as grieving mother with her role as the educator of her sons, described in Plutarch's *Life of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus* 1.5 where we learn that it was believed that her sons owed their virtues (including eloquence) to their education rather than Nature.[30] Nogarola makes reference to 'eloquentia' twice in her brief introduction of Cornelia, first emphasizing her role as educating her sons in eloquence, and second showing how they learned their lessons of eloquence well from their mother. The emphasis on the mother instilling education in her children is reminiscent of Nogarola's mother Bianca Borromeo's role in the education of her daughters, Isotta and Ginevra. In fact, in at least one letter sent to the Nogarola sisters, Bianca was compared to Cornelia and credited with fostering her daughters' education.[31] Nogarola was trained in the 'studia humanitatis' by a private tutor, Martino Rizzoni, the former student of Guarino Veronese.[32] She highlights her education and authorial voice, and calls into question the very nature of exemplarity when she states,

> Ipsa ergo, quam non pudet esse feminam, loquor ut femina meque tamen plurimorum antiquorum gentilium et Christianorum auctoritate defendam, hos potius colossis marmoreis quam hominibus assmilandos, cum pietatem e medio tollant. Quis enim erit tam gloriae cupidus, tam durus, tam immitis, tam ferreus, ut neque obitu parentum neque filiorum morte neque amicorum moerore moveatur?" (NOGAROLA 1886: 168)
>
> [Ah yes, but I, who am not ashamed to be a woman, speak as a woman, and I shall defend myself with the authority of the most male pagan and Christian writers, saying that the above exempla should be compared to colossal marble statues rather than human beings, since they inspire piety in men's hearts. And who is so desirous of glory, so hard, so ungentle, so iron-hearted that he is not moved to tears by the death of his parents, his children, or his friends?] (NOGAROLA 2003: 194)

The image of the "colossis marmoreis" in this passage is striking. Margaret King reads the reference to these "colossal marble statues" as the statues on the Capitoline Hill and throughout Rome, since many do depict some of the same figures from antiquity. I would also argue that there is a metaliterary and Petrarchan reference here that needs to be considered, as well. Namely, Petrarch's theory of the power of poets and writers in his letter to Horace (*Fam.* 24.10) where he claims that Horace's pen "sculpunt que rigido marmore durius | Heroas veteres sique firent" [carves ancient heroes into something harder than marble]. Nogarola has spent the bulk of this letter thus far presenting exemplary men and women to Marcello, while also discounting the efficacy of their models. Here, she more explicitly calls out the failure of exemplarity in the case of mourning, by referring to these exampla as statues and not human.

When Nogarola finally begins to describe the child Valerio, she does so in religious terms – the child was merely on loan to Marcello from God; he was always only on earth temporarily until he could return to God. She also emphasizes his eloquence and education, recalling what she had previously said about Cornelia, and also begins to set him up as an example to his grieving father. She describes him as having possessed the "highest powers of reason, greatness of mind, moderation, prudence, and eloquence beyond his years that he seemed like a new and unheard miracle to everyone who knew him" (196-197). She describes him as being brave and possessed a 'virilius animus' when faced with death. Nogarola holds him up as the exemplum that his father should follow:

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[30] PLUTARCH, *Lives, Volume X: Agis and Cleomenes. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Philopoemen and Flamininus,* translated by Bernadotte PERRIN, Cambridge, MA 1921.

[31] See Giorgio Bevilacqua's letter to the Nogarola sisters in NOGAROLA 1866: vol. 1, 18-24.

[32] On Bianca's role in her children's education see especially Maragret King's introduction to Nogarola's works (NOGAROLA 2003: 2-5, 29-30). See also ROSS 2009.

> Te igitur senem Valerium filium tuum puerum imitari non pudeat, qui tibi viam praescripsit, qua mortem suam caeterorumque tuorum ferre debes. Recordare, quibus verbis, quanta eloquentia, quanta gravitate, dum extremum sibi diem instare videret, te partem consolabatur, hortabatur, ne eum muliebri veste indutus lugere velles, cum luctus et lugubris lamentation ad mulieres imbecilles, non ad viros fortes atque magnanimous pertinere divintus intelligeret. (NOGAROLA 1886: 172)
>
> [You, therefore, old man, should not be ashamed to imitate this child, your son Valerio, who has shown you the way, and thus you must bear his death and those of your other loved ones. Remember, while he watched his last day pressing to a close, how expressively, eloquently, and gravely he consoled you, his father, urging you not to mourn him or to put on the mourning that women wear, since Valerio knew that mourning and mournful lamentation are suitable for weak women, not for strong and noble-hearted men.] (NOGAROLA 2003: 197)

Here we note that Nogarola, like Petrarch before her, associates mournful lamentation with women. But, in ventriloquizing the voice of Valerio, she describes female mourning as something that women "wear" ("muliebri veste indutus"). This could be read as a reference to the actual clothing worn by women during their period of 'lutto', but it also gestures at the possibility that some women might choose the vestments of mourning, while others do not. [33] Thus, the subsequent reference to the "mulieres imbecilles" who mourn and lament are not indicative of the entire female sex, as they had been portrayed in Petrarch's letters, but they are a subset of women.

The remainder of the letter calls Marcello back to his official duties, to the administration of his offices. After she holds up Valerio as the model to imitate, Nogarola ceases to name any other classical figures in her letter. Instead, she focuses on reminding Marcello of the honors he has received for his service to the 'res publica', listing his political accomplishments, and naming Verona, Brescia, and Italy as witnesses to his virtue as a soldier and an administrator. In her consolatory letter to Marcello, Nogarola highlights the failure of classical exampla to provide consolation to those in mourning, to those suffering from perhaps the most universally human emotions. She also brings attention to the literary, artistic, and humanist nature of the consolatory letter, gesturing at the public that will read her letter as part of a literary monument built for Marcello's deceased son. While her letter is a brilliantly written showcase of her talent – we see her mastery of classical and biblical texts, not just through direct citations of them, but especially through her intellectual engagement and dialog with them – the novelty of her consolation is in how she replaces the "monumental" classical exempla of antiquity with the most meaningful model for Marcello – his son.

Furthermore, while throughout her letter she weaves in conventional tropes couched in familial terms – she refers to Marcello as her "father" and to herself as his daughter – these terms take on a new meaning within her consolatory program when we re-consider the role Cornelia has in both this letter and her life. While she does not have the personal experience of losing a son – she was unmarried and had no children – she has the experience of being a woman whose mother educated her, and she lost that mother. In this respect, her use of Cornelia pays respect to her mother, functioning as a kind of self-consolation even though she critiques figures like Cornelia as marble statues rather than humans endowed with emotion. As with the case of presenting the child Valerio to his father as a meaningful model of imitation, so too was Bianca Borromeo a real-life Cornelia to her daughter. In this respect, Nogarola takes a similar approach to what Petrarch did in *Sen.* 10.4 when argued that Stefano Colonna il Vecchio should have served as an example to Paolo Annibaldeschi. Though Nogarola's and Petrarch's tones could not be more

[33] During the virtual workshop "Affects and Community-Formation in the Petrarchan World" (March 2021), Natalie Chamat also suggested that the "mourning the women wear" might refer to the religious exemplar of Mary fainting under the cross at the Crucifixion, making Nogarola's example one of secularization.

different, both open up the possibility of contemporary examples of illustrious men (and women) surpassing their ancient exemplars and becoming more meaningful models.

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The letters by Petrarch and Nogarola examined in this essay also speak to the broader project of exemplarity in early modern Italy. In the Petrarchan letters he holds onto the idea that classical exempla still hold relevance in the project of exemplarity. But elsewhere, he contradicts this approach to the ancients. One of the reasons Petrarch gives for writing the epic poem *Africa* was his belief that Vergil's *Aeneid* was no longer inspiring men to great deeds. The Italy of his lifetime needed a new Vergil and a new epic, and he was hardly modest in placing himself into the position of the poet who would write Italy's new epic, and revive Italian letters from exile, as he illustrates in Book 9 of the *Africa*, where he describes Homer pointing out to Ennius a young "Franciscus" seated under a laurel tree, crowing himself with its fronds. So here we see the "contradictions" in his writings that he himself highlighted in *Fam.* 1.1, addressed to his Socrates. There he admits that he met many people in his lifetime because he never "threw his anchor" anywhere for very long:

> Multis itaque multumque animo et conditione distantibus scribere contigit; tam varie ut ea nunc relegens, interdum pugnantia locutus ipse michi videar. Quod propemodum coactum me fecisse fatebitur quisquis in se simile aliquid expertus est. Primum quidem scribentis cura est, cui scribat attendere; una enim et quid et qualiter ceterasque cicrumstantias intelligent. (PETRARCA 1933-42: vol. 1, 8-9)
>
> [I had to correspond a great deal with many of them [ordinary friends] who differed considerably in character and station. As a result, the letters were so different that in rereading them I seemed to be in constant contradiction. Whoever has had a similar experience must confess that to be contradictory was my only expedient. Indeed, the primary concern of a writer is to consider the identity of the person to whom he is writing.] (PETRARCA 2005a: 9)

While classical exempla may, to a certain extent, fail to hold relevance in certain cases, in mourning he still holds onto these powerful examples, like Cornelia. Petrarch creates binary distinctions between, on the one hand, measured "virile" grief and, on the other, the weakness of women in mourning that is symbolized by their gendered "female" laments and floods of tears. These binary descriptions are powerful topoi that reinforce the prescriptive lessons of mourning as a determining factor in one's performance of proper, gendered behavior. While some of these lessons recall the more explicit ones that make up *De viris illustribus* – a catalogue of illustrious men who serve as models for the (male) reader – what we encounter in Petrarch's letters of mourning are more subtly engagements with theories of exemplarity where the repetition of gendered behaviors across multiple letter collections gesture at the blurred lines between descriptive and prescriptive literature. While Nogarola engages, even traffics in these kinds of gendered representations throughout her letterbook, the result is an exposure of the failure of static, classical exempla when the task of the humanist is to console a member of their community. She corrects, in a certain sense, the role of exemplarity in consolation, and creates new, more meaningful models of imitation that are directly linked to the addressee of her letter. She puts into compassionate practice (a term Gur Zak uses in his contribution to this volume[34]) what Petrarch said in *Fam.* 1.1 about considering the identity of the addressee. She also exposes herself as human, vulnerable, and subject to emotion regardless of her studies. More broadly, her letter to Marcello pushes us to rethink the tradition of

[34] My use of the term "compassionate practice" reflects Gur Zak's analysis in this volume ("Sharing in Suffering: Petrarchan Humanism and the History of Compassion") of Petrarch, Boccaccio and Bruni's writings wherein, he concludes, "compassion – the sharing in the suffering of another – emerges as the cornerstone of both individual morality and communal bonds" (see page 111 in this volume).

measuring male grief against a female model as we find in Petrarch's letters, and to reconsider how humanist texts not explicitly dedicated to the "famous men" and "famous women" cycles have an important place in this tradition, and a meaningful role in the earliest conceptions and theorizations of how gendered behavior – in this case, proper responses to emotion – is taught as a kind of performance, and reinforced by these texts.

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