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Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition

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CHAPTER 7

Dante *Estravagante*, Petrarca *Disperso*, and the Spectre of the Other Woman

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It has been more than twenty years since Marco Santagata, in his article "Dante in Petrarca," lamented that the history of Dante and Petrarch studies can for the most part be summed up as Dante versus Petrarch.[1] Although they were near contemporaries, inhabiting contiguous worlds, as brilliantly illustrated by Giuseppe Billanovich in "Tra Dante e Petrarca," it is difficult today to view both Dante and Petrarch as poets of the Trecento. More often, Dante and Petrarch are removed from history and relocated on a metahistorical plain where, in its crudest version, Dante represents all that was and Petrarch all that would be—medieval versus modern, theological versus humanist, collective versus individual, and so on. In large part, this allegorization of the relationship between Petrarch and Dante is the outgrowth of an already de-historicized treatment of Petrarch's texts. In this treatment, Petrarch is portrayed as a poet "senza storia" (without history)—in Umberto Bosco's famous formulation—whose continuous crises and contradictions make it impossible to trace any development in his work.[2]

Even in his important revision of Bosco's "senza storia" thesis, Santagata limits his analysis to chronicling the influence of Dante on Petrarch

during the various phases in the making of the *Canzoniere.* For Santagata, historicizing Dante in Petrarch means above all examining the changing attitudes of the latter toward the former as part of a literary biography and study of influence.[3] What is missing from this account, as well as from the other studies mentioned above (and even from more conceptually-driven studies on the relation between the two poets, such as those by Robert Durling, John Freccero, and Nancy Vickers),[4] is an analysis of how the historical conditions in which Dante's texts circulated might have affected Petrarch's reception of the famous poet. Petrarch would have in fact encountered many different versions of Dante's works: in written form or through oral tradition, in authorized self-collections or as scattered rhymes, in completed texts or as fragments. Given contemporary practices of literary production and dissemination, a proper understanding of the relation of Dante to Petrarch would thus entail first asking the question, "which Dante?" and even, as we shall soon see, "which Petrarch?" In this essay, I argue that in his innovative methods of collecting and preserving his poetry, Petrarch was influenced by the chaotic transmission of Dante's texts and his experience with the various Dantes. As a consequence, the poets differ in how they anthologized their own poetry, and these differences are most evident in their treatment of the "other woman," in how they reframe poetic interludes with ladies other than Beatrice and Laura.

Petrarch and the Circulation of Dante's Collected and Uncollected Poetry

Since Santagata and Paolo Trovato first published their groundbreaking findings on Dante *comico* in Petrarch,[5] the importance of Dante's *Commedia* for Petrarch's *rime* has become generally accepted. In spite of this, some aspects of studies on Dante and Petrarch have remained stagnant. Perhaps these studies would be in an altogether different place had scholars looked more closely at Petrarch's *rime disperse,* those poems that, for one reason or another, the poet decided to exclude from his final version of the *Canzoniere,* now Vaticano latino 3195.[6] What is immediately evident even after a cursory reading of the *disperse* is that Dante is ubiquitous in Petrarch's unanthologized poetry. Almost every single poem in the slight corpus cites, tropes, alludes to, or re-invents a situation or passage from Dante's

oeuvre. In fact, the question of Petrarch's knowledge of the *Commedia* is easily answered when we glance at the *disperse,* which reveal a Dante-centric Petrarch at every stage of his poetic career.

Petrarch seems, moreover, remarkably unanxious about the influence of Dante in the poems he leaves out of the *Canzoniere,* which complicates the repression thesis for the relationship between the two poets.[7] Scholars often cite artistic rivalry or even Oedipal struggle as the underlying reasons why there are not more explicit references to Dante in the *Canzoniere.* But one critical aspect of Petrarch's uncollected poems casts doubt on these explanations. Many of the *disperse* were exchanged with other poets and form part of poetic exchanges or *tenzoni.* If the critics are right about Petrarch's dark secret, then how does one explain his willingness to expose his debt to Dante to those readers from whom, presumably, he would have especially desired to hide his influences?[8]

Petrarch himself denies that he was jealous of Dante in two important letters to Boccaccio, *Familiares* 21.15 and *Seniles* 5.2. Of course, it would be naive to take Petrarch at his word. No doubt Dante loomed uncomfortably large on the literary scene for the egomaniacal Petrarch. And no doubt the elimination of certain obvious traces of Dante's poetry from the *Canzoniere,* when compared to similar poems among the *disperse,* was the result of careful elaboration and revision, consistent with Petrarch's frequent critiques in his letters of slavish imitation.[9] Still, the current consensus that Petrarch deliberately suppressed his reliance on Dante, both in his poetry and his prose, probably overstates the case. As a result of this critical stance, while scholars have been suspicious (for good reason) of Petrarch's declarations of neutrality toward Dante in his letters to Boccaccio, they have perhaps underestimated the seriousness and significance of what Petrarch does explicitly critique in his great Florentine rival. Judging from these letters, the issue is not so much Dante the individual, or even Dante the poet, but what the overwhelming success of his works had wrought for the contemporary literary field.

In fact, in both of the famous letters, Dante is specifically associated with the problematic circulation of vernacular texts. Speaking, in *Familiares* 21.15, of the contemporary reception of Dante's poetry, Petrarch attacks not the poet, but his readers, whom he observes "illius egregiam stili frontem inertibus horum linguis conspui fedarique" (with their stupid mouths befouling and spitting upon the noble beauty of his lines) (*Fam.* 21.15.17).[10] He is

particularly concerned with the increase in textual corruption caused by the widespread popularity and transmission of Dante's work, which has infiltrated even the taverns and public squares. These admirers "et qua nulla poete presertim gravior iniuria, *scripta eius pronuntiando lacerant atque corrumpunt*" (*so mispronounce and lacerate his verses* that they could do no greater injury to a poet) (*Fam.* 21.15.16).[11] Considering the inherent unreliability of this new urban readership, Petrarch worries about the circulation of his own poetry: "Timui enim in meis quod in aliorum scriptis, precipueque huius de quo loquimur" (I feared for my own writing the same fate which I had seen overtake those of others, especially those of the poet of whom we are speaking) (*Fam.* 21.15.17).[12]

In *Seniles* 5.2 the veiled yet unmistakable reference to Dante, "ille nostri eloquii dux vulgaris" (that master of our vernacular literature) (*Sen.* 5.2.30), is similarly framed by discussions of the "market conditions" of vernacular poetry—characterized, on the one hand, by the courtly jongleurs, who traffic in the poetic word, and, on the other, by an increasingly vast and hence untrained general public.[13] Once again, reflection on the mass circulation of Dante's poetry leads Petrarch to a concern for the fate of his own work. In particular, in a passage that echoes the earlier letter to Boccaccio in both content and language, Petrarch explains that—after observing the popular reception of contemporary Italian literature—he has decided to abandon a major project in the vernacular lest he and it suffer the incomprehension of the public:

> Dum ad nostram respiciens etatem, et superbie matrem et ignavie, cepi acriter advertere quanta esset illa iactantium ingenii vis, quanta pronuntiationis amenitas, ut non recitari scripta diceres sed discerpi. Hoc semel, hoc iterum, hoc sepe audiens et magis magisque mecum reputans, intellexi tandem molli in limo et instabili arena perdi operam meque et laborem meum *inter vulgi manus laceratum iri.*
>
> ———
>
> I then began to observe attentively our age, mother of pride and laziness, and to notice the great talent of the show-offs, the charm of their elocution, so that you would say the words were not being recited but torn to pieces. Hearing this once, twice, many more times, and repeating it to myself more and more, I finally came to realize that it was a waste of effort to build on soft mud and shifting sand, and that I and my work would be *torn to shreds by the hands of the mob.* (*Sen.* 5.2.53–54)[14]

Finally, even more forcefully than in the letter from the *Familiares,* where Petrarch simply regretted that his vernacular poems had already circulated, the poet here remarks anxiously, several times, that his poems are no longer under his control; they have slipped from his hands and now belong more to the crowd than to him: "non mea amplius sed vulgi potius facta essent" (*Sen.* 5.2.55).

Petrarch's association of the chaotic dissemination of Dante's poetry with his own irretrievable "published" *rime* is highly suggestive for our discussion of the *disperse* and will be examined further below. But first it is worth considering, however briefly, just how Petrarch would have experienced the material circulation of Dante's texts in this period. Simply put, Dante's poetry and especially the *Commedia* revolutionized contemporary reading practices and created a new demand for literature and literary books. Facilitated by a dramatic increase in urban literacy in central and northern Italy, Dante's masterpiece enjoyed a vibrant transmission through a variety of channels—learned and lay, written and oral, public and private.[15]

The demand that drove the production of *Commedia* manuscripts even spawned the creation of a new type of literary book. The elegant "register-book" was written in book-quality cursive handwriting by lay scribes for lay readers. The most famous of these lay scribes was Francesco di ser Nardo da Barberino, whose scriptorium was behind the equally famous series of Dante manuscripts known as the "Danti del Cento."[16] While highly readable and produced in large formats, these Dante manuscripts remained typically unadorned—lacking commentary or glosses—unlike the books created in university and religious environments.[17] In the context of such dramatic changes in contemporary habits of reading and writing, Petrarch must have recognized that Dante's vernacular masterpiece, among many other things, was also a new type of literary commodity. After all, although this fact is easy to overlook among the multiple themes treated in *Familiares* 21.15, the discussion of Dante in the letter originates in the question of why Petrarch, an assiduous collector of rare books, had until then failed to acquire a physical copy of the readily available *Commedia.*

In some sense, the name of Dante functions as an example of synecdoche in the letters for the full range of innovations in the production and consumption of literary texts that Petrarch was forced to negotiate. In a cultural climate where market forces trumped authorial intention and textual integrity (at least according to Petrarch), the artistically possessive poet must have seen the risk for gross misinterpretation of his own work everywhere. Dante of course was already familiar with such risks, and had attempted to mitigate them by collecting his previously disseminated poems into organic narrative accounts. Nevertheless, despite these efforts at self-anthologization, the rapid and doubtless often disorderly reproduction of Dante's texts in the fourteenth century must have made his heterogeneous poetic output seem at odds with a cohesive authorial corpus. According to the initial investigations of Domenico De Robertis, Petrarch likely encountered a manuscript of Dante's *rime* in which the selection and ordering of compositions differed a great deal from the authorial collections of the *Vita Nuova,* the *Convivio,* and the *Commedia.* For example, Petrarch almost certainly encountered the poems from the *Convivio* as *estravaganti,* anthologized alongside Dante's other *canzoni* without narrative context or commentary.[18] Moreover, poems such "Deh, Violetta, che in ombra d'Amore," "I' mi son pargoletta bella e nova," and even the *petrose* to an extent must have always appeared to him as similarly "extravagant," at least in Contini's expanded use of the term to indicate all *rime* excluded from Dante's ideal literary biography.[19]

At several points in his letters, Petrarch similarly discusses the possibility of reframing one's published work in order to regain control over its interpretation. In *Seniles* 5.2, one of the primary reasons Petrarch admonishes Boccaccio for allegedly burning his own Italian poems is that now he will not be able to modify or correct them. That, of course, is exactly what Petrarch does in the *Canzoniere.* He repossesses his published poems (often quite literally requesting their return), reworks them, and reframes them within a penitential narrative that at times dramatically changes their original meanings. In a letter to Pandolfo Malatesta (*Seniles* 13.11) accompanying one of the public redactions of the *Canzoniere,* Petrarch justifies the limited publication of his authorial collection as a response to the appropriation and laceration of his poems by the crowd ("vulgus habet et lacerat").[20] The conspicuous reference to "laceration" recalls the description of Dante's texts being torn to pieces in *Familiares* 21.15 and *Seniles* 5.2. Since this passage was added to the original letter when it was revised for inclusion in the

Seniles collection, the similar language seems intentional. For our purposes, it is crucial that Petrarch's apology for the *Canzoniere* that gradually emerges in *Seniles* 5.2 and 13.11 is based on a dialectic between poems circulated individually in the past and the necessity of collecting and reworking them in the present. I would suggest, moreover, that this apology is articulated in the shadow of Dante because by observing the success and failure of the latter's process of revision, collection, and exclusion, Petrarch learned what to follow and what to avoid in order to preserve his own works for posterity. In the relationship between Dante *estravagante* and Dante *organico* thus lies one of the keys to understanding the relationship of the *disperse* to the *Canzoniere.*

The Other Woman in Dante and the Poetics of Conversion

In many ways, this dialectic between anthologized and unanthologized poems can be observed most clearly in how Dante and Petrarch treat the question of the other woman or women in their poetry. In various poems, Dante and, to a lesser extent, Petrarch were influenced by the troubadour poetic traditions of the *pastorela* and *chanson de change,* in which, in contrast to the poet's lady—lofty and unattainable—the new love interest is often concrete and approachable.[21] Thus in addition to his beloved Beatrice, Dante also addresses poems to "Violetta," an unnamed "pargoletta" (young girl), and "Lisetta," whereas Petrarch falls in love with a woman from Ferrara, just as Guido Cavalcanti had with a lady from Toulouse. Once these poems were published and circulated among contemporaries, they posed an awkward problem for Dante and Petrarch as they constructed their autobiographical personae in the *Commedia* and the *Canzoniere.* Specifically, the high degree of conventionality characteristic of poems about other women, together with the relativism of devotion these poems imply, threatened to undermine the authenticity of their idealized literary autobiographies and the absoluteness of their transcendent love stories.

Dante most directly negotiates the problem of the other woman in his work through the figure of the *donna gentile,* who will serve as an important model for Petrarch as well. As first recounted in the *Vita Nuova,* some time after the first anniversary of Beatrice's death, Dante notices a beautiful young noblewoman watching him from a window, seeming to take pity on

him as a result of his downcast condition. Dante's mourning for Beatrice soon comes into conflict with his attraction for this new *donna gentile,* on to whom his subjective desire projects semblances of love, "Color d'amore e di pietà sembianti" (the color of love and semblances of compassion).[22] As with Cavalcanti's "donna di Tolosa," Dante's fascination with the new lady depends on and is justified by her resemblance to Beatrice; she reminds him of Beatrice because both ladies share an amorous pallor (*VN* 36.1). The conflict is decided in favor of Dante's beloved only through the prodding of a visual memorial aid, a waking vision ("una forte imaginazione" [*VN* 39.1]) of Beatrice in her prime.

The *Vita Nuova* is only Dante's first attempt at using narrative to reinterpret lyric poems addressed to other women as a means for integrating them into a coherent literary autobiography. In the *Convivio* we learn that the *donna gentile* was not a lady at all, but an allegorical personification of Lady Philosophy. More important for Petrarch, who most likely was unfamiliar with the prose commentary of the *Convivio,* is the monumental literary self-fashioning Dante accomplishes in the last cantos of the *Purgatorio.* At the end of his "journey to Beatrice," Dante's character is chided by his long departed beloved for having gone astray after her death and interment:

> Sì tosto come in su la soglia fui
> Di mia seconda etade e mutai vita,
> Questi si tolse a me, e diessi altrui.
> (*Purg.* 30, ll. 124–26)[23]

> As soon as I was on the brink of my second age and
> I changed life, this one took himself from me and gave
> himself to another/others.

Beatrice specifically accuses him of forsaking the guidance of her visage for false images of the good ("imagini di ben seguendo false" [*Purg.* 30, l. 131]) and of having betrayed her with an unidentified "pargoletta" (young girl) (*Purg.* 31, l. 59).

Scholars have long sought after the identify of this "pargoletta" (suggesting "Violetta," "Lisetta," the *donna pietra,* the *donna gentile,* etc.). However, the dense series of allusions in these cantos to a variety of early poems

suggests that Dante intended to leave the identity of the other woman and the exact nature of his betrayal vague. He intended, in other words, to cast a wide net with these allusions, trying to evoke as many poems as possible. In this way, he could incorporate, through a narrative of conversion, the largest number possible of his scattered poetic experiments into a single unifying matrix, a virtual anthology. Paradoxically, these occasional and conventional poems are recovered as the motivation behind a heartfelt confession, thus playing a crucial role in Dante's autobiography and rendering it extraordinarily convincing. Although we need not doubt the sincerity of the existential crisis at the top of Mount Purgatory, it is equally important to recognize that along with saving himself, Dante saves those early poems that might seem to run counter to the salvific narrative of the *Commedia* and the truth claims of his poetic enterprise. The palinode, in essence, allows Dante to suggest that those elements of his work that might seem occasional, conventional, and even inauthentic are in actuality all pieces of an intelligible literary corpus and a cohesive, if fraught, autobiography.[24] (In fact, at least as far back as Boccaccio, who created the first "collected works" of Dante,[25] readers have tried to integrate the unanthologized poems into the moral and artistic framework set out in the autobiographical narratives.)

The Other Woman in Petrarch's Uncollected Lyrics and the Poetics of Exclusion

One of the most striking aspects of Petrarch's poetic exchanges with his contemporaries is the frequency with which he refers to the motif of the other woman, at times closely recalling Dante's treatment of the *donna gentile.* In "Se Phebo al primo amor non è bugiardo,"[26] a response to a poem by Pietro Dietisalvi of Siena, Petrarch alludes to a new pleasure, *novo piacer* (l. 2), that resembles his old love. In "Per util, per diletto o per onore," he jokes in a response to Antonio Beccari of Ferrara that, thanks to love's gifts, he has fallen in love not once, but more than twenty-two times.[27] In "Antonio, cosa à fatto la tua terra," written after Laura's death in about 1350, Petrarch marvels to Beccari that a woman from his city, Ferrara, has made him love again, something he never thought possible. Finally, in "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse," a response to a lost poem by Jacopo da Imola, Petrarch comes the closest to reproducing Dante's encounter with the *donna*

gentile, in both content and language. In this sonnet, Love once again tempts the poet with a *nova belleza* (new beauty) (l. 5) after the first bond of love has been loosened by Laura's departure from her terrestrial body. Yet he ultimately resists.

Although none of these *disperse* were incorporated into any of the phases of the *Canzoniere,* it would seem clear that outside the confines of his author's book, the autograph manuscript Vaticano latino 3195, Petrarch felt safe to experiment with the destabilizing idea of multiple loves. In his treatment of the other woman, Petrarch specifically focuses on the power of semblances, a key problem already brought out by Cavalcanti's "donna di Tolosa" and Dante's *donna gentile.* In "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse," the memorial image of the first love actually facilitates the new love, instead of coming into conflict with it as in the *Vita Nuova.* Although Petrarch declares in the sonnet that after Laura's death he withstood all temptations, as Ulysses withstood the call of the Sirens, he nonetheless acknowledges that if he did feel any of the old fire, it was because the new objects of his interest recalled the image of a sweetly unyielding Laura:

> Né poi nova belleza l'alma strinse
> né mai luce sentì che fésse ardore,
> se non co la memoria del valore
> che per dolci durezze la sospinse.
> (ll. 5–8)[28]

> Since then no new beauty has grasped my soul, nor has it felt
> any light that could make it burn, unless with the recollection
> of that worth which rebuffed it with sweet hardness.

Even more explicitly Dantean (and Cavalcantian) in its evocation of the other woman is "Se Phebo al primo amor non è bugiardo." At the beginning of the sonnet, Petrarch explains that if Apollo is not disloyal to his first love, namely Daphne-Laurel-Laura, then he always has her image in his mind, regardless of any new temptation, *novo piacer* (l. 2), that might come along. Yet the last tercet allows for a potential exception (marked by the adversative "ma" [l. 12]): when this new love object happens to resemble in appearance, "sembianza è forse alcuna de le viste" (l. 13), the first love.

While there are several references to infidelity in Petrarch's poems, they should not be overstated. "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse" only hints at the possibility ("se non co . . .") of other love objects. A negative hypothetical statement similarly introduces the potential of wayward desire in "Se Phebo al primo amor non è bugiardo" (If Phoebus is not a liar toward his first love), distancing the statement from present fact. Still, for readers familiar with Petrarch's monumentalizing of his love for Laura, even the hint that Apollo might be dishonest, "bugiardo," is remarkable, and the term *bugiardo,* of comic origin, is never used in the *Canzoniere.* In the last line of this poem, "so ben che 'l mio dir parrà sospetto" (I know that what I say will seem suspect), Petrarch appears to acknowledge the slippery slope between erotic and literary deceit, how other loves might undermine the authenticity of his love story with Laura, rendering his autobiography "suspect." Indeed, in the *disperse* he seems willing to explore or at least suggest, in a conversation with other poets, the notion that Laura was in fact simply an elaborate myth, a brilliant simulacrum, a "fantasma" as Billanovich put it.[29]

Given the importance of the figure of the other woman in the *disperse,* it is all the more striking that Petrarch excludes references to a similar affair from the *Canzoniere*—an exclusion that is especially conspicuous in the final forms of the collection. Furthermore, he locates his rejection of a potential *donna gentile* at a crucial moment in his autobiographical narrative, shortly after Laura's death, using it to mark his distance from Dante.[30] In the canzone "Amor, se vuo' ch'i' torni al giogo antico" (*Rvf* 270),[31] Petrarch informs Love that the attempts to reclaim him are in vain since Laura is now dead and buried: "Indarno or sovra me tua forza adopre, / mentre 'l mio primo amor terra ricopre" (In vain now you exert your force on me, when the earth covers my first love) (ll. 44–45). The canzone thus firmly contradicts the evidence of a betrayal of Laura recounted in the *dispersa* "Antonio, cosa à fatto la tua terra," where Antonio's *terra*—here used in the sense of "area of provenance"—facilitates the illicit love. Petrarch claims, moreover, that for him to love again, Love would need to disinter and reanimate Laura's dead body—a ghoulish parallel to Dante's reunification with Beatrice in the *Commedia.* The next poem in the *Canzoniere,* the sonnet "L'ardente nodo ov'io fui d'ora in hora" (*Rvf* 271), is even more explicitly in dialogue with Dante and the episode of the *donna gentile.* In this sonnet, Love once again attempts to ensnare Petrarch with the lure of another woman: "un altro lacciuol fra l'erba teso" (another snare set among

the grass) (l. 6). However, the poet's recent exposure to the finality and inevitability of Death—with *Morte* emphasized as the first word of verses 2 and 12—has freed him from this and other future erotic temptations. In essence, in *Rvf* 270 and 271, Petrarch claims to have learned from Laura's death what Dante confesses in *Purg.* 30–31 to have failed to grasp from Beatrice's—namely, that all mortal love objects can offer only false promises of happiness.[32] Even the beautiful members of the beloved end up, as Beatrice tells Dante, scattered in the ground.

Within the economy of the *Canzoniere, Rvf* 270 and *Rvf* 271 directly follow the laments for Laura's death (*Rvf* 267–69), reproducing the rapidity with which Dante strayed toward the *donna gentile* after Beatrice's death. Scholars have recently demonstrated the extent to which Petrarch modeled the opening poems of the second section of the *Canzoniere*—especially the lament for Laura "Che debb'io far? Che mi consigli, Amore?" (*Rvf* 268)—on the laments for the departed Beatrice in the *Vita Nuova.*[33] Yet the obvious similarities between Petrarch and Dante in their respective poetics of mourning only serve to highlight how decisively the poets' stories diverge in what happens after the death of their beloveds—namely, Petrarch resists the temptation of a new love while Dante, at least for a time, yields to it. This ideological and narratological divide reverberates, in fact, throughout the second half of the *Canzoniere,* where Petrarch insists on the singularity of his love for Laura in death as in life: "dal mondo a te sola mi volsi" (from the world to you alone I turned) (*Rvf* 347, l. 13). Instead of struggling, like Dante, with the false images of good found in other women ("imagini di ben seguendo false" [*Purg.* 30, l. 131]), he must contend with the non-false images ("imagini non false" [*Rvf* 335, l. 3]) of Laura herself. And while Dante, at the end of the *Purgatorio,* displaces the darker aspects of eros onto his other loves, Petrarch, at the end of his own journey, rejects his own beloved as a petrifying Medusa.

Of course, the differences between how Petrarch and Dante treat the problem of profane love have long been recognized, most notably Petrarch's rejection of a stilnovist reconciliation between *eros* and *caritas.*[34] Yet with respect to the question of other women, Petrarch's bypassing of the *donna gentile* episode also has implications for how the two poets differ in their approach to anthologizing their own poetry. In Dante's conversion narrative, the moral detour toward other women at once helps explain and incorporate into a single authorial corpus numerous poems that might otherwise be seen as simply occasional, conventional, and unrelated to the autobiographical narratives found in the *Vita Nuova,* the *Convivio,* and the *Commedia.* Petrarch was similarly concerned, if not more so, with collecting the fragments of his poetic experience. The penitential narrative constructed by ordering his poems according to biographical criteria—instead of simply according to meter or theme—demonstrates how carefully he studied Dante's model. At the same time, he likely observed, in the haphazard dissemination of Dante's works, the inherent limitations of a purely narrative reconstruction. The unprecedented popularity of reading and copying Dante in the Trecento no doubt led at times to a partial disintegration of the author's carefully constructed anthology of the self.

Petrarch dealt with his anxiety about the uncontrolled circulation of Dante's (and hence his own) vernacular compositions—an anxiety revealed repeatedly in his letters—in two primary ways. On the one hand, beyond the integrating role of narrative, he added the stability of the autograph manuscript, Vaticano latino 3195, as a means of dictating what can and cannot be considered "Petrarch." At the same time, perhaps due to his greater control over the material conditions of his literary production, Petrarch decided to exclude from his official autobiography an entire episode from his literary life, as if it had never happened. Unlike Dante, he did not seek to reconcile the poems written about other women, especially when these compositions, often exchanged with contemporaries, were in conflict with the reconstructed narrative of the *Canzoniere.*[35] For certain already published poems, he was willing to cede authorial rights to the crowd ("non mea amplius sed vulgi potius facta essent"), effectively allowing them to be forgotten with time. Or, to put it another way—borrowing Petrarch's own terminology from a marginal note in his working papers, the so-called *codice degli abbozzi*—in order to "save" many of the poems about Laura from oblivion, some compositions, such as those about other women, were "damned."[36]

Although the differences in Petrarch's attitude toward the *donna gentile* in the *disperse* and in the *Canzoniere* are evident, the borders between his anthologized and unanthologized poems are not entirely seamless. In particular, the *dispersa* "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse" stands at a curious midpoint in the development of Petrarch's thinking about the motif of the other woman. On the one hand, the association of the new love object with the memorial image of Laura places the sonnet firmly in the tradition established by Cavalcanti's "donna di Tolosa" and Dante's *donna gentile.* In the last tercet, moreover, recalling Beatrice's outburst at

the top of Purgatory, the poet compares the lure of the new women to the call of the Sirens:

> Et pur fui in dubbio fra Caribdi et Scilla
> et passai le Sirene in sordo legno,
> over come huom ch'ascolta et nulla intende.
> (ll. 12–14)

> And yet I wavered between Charybdis and Scylla, and I passed the Sirens in a deaf ship, or like a man who listens without comprehending.

The references to the perils of Ulysses—the sirens and the obstacles of Scylla and Charybdis—also recall the sonnet "Passa la nave mia" (*Rvf* 189), which concluded the first part of the Chigiano redaction of the *Canzoniere.*[37] However, at the end of the penitential narrative of the Chigiano form, the threat of Ulyssean shipwreck represents the dangerous tension between love for Laura and love for God. In the *dispersa* it instead still indicates a potential crisis between the love for Laura and love for other women, more in the spirit of Dante's autobiography.

On the other hand, the primary message of the poem is that Petrarch, unlike Dante, has not succumbed to the lure of the other woman, despite fierce temptation. He has already sailed successfully through the dangerous waters of erotic multiplicity. More specifically, Petrarch claims that, as an old bird, he no longer fears love's net: "nova rete vecchio augel non prende" (a new net does not catch an old bird) (l. 11). This is exactly the lesson from Proverbs 1.17 that Dante failed to learn, according to Beatrice, despite the experience of her death:

> Novo augeletto due o tre aspetta
> ma dinanzi da li occhi d'i pennuti
> rete si spiega indarno o si saetta.
> (*Purg.* 31, ll. 61–63)

> A young bird waits for two or three, but before the eyes of fully-fledged birds, a net is spread or an arrow is shot in vain.

Petrarch's old bird appears to be in direct opposition to Dante's fully-fledged one. In this light, "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse," although perhaps still too ambiguously tied to the figure of the other woman for inclusion in the *Canzoniere,* can nonetheless be seen as an early attempt by Petrarch at distancing his own penitential narrative from Dante's conversion poetics, foreshadowing the narrative turn of *Rvf* 270 and 271.

Further evidence of the transitional nature of "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse" is provided by its redactional history. From a marginal note accompanying the poem in the *codice degli abbozzi,* we learn that, before it was returned to him through a friend, the poet had for a time lost possession of the sonnet and had struggled to recompose it from memory.[38] The attempt to regain control of an already circulated poem, sent out *in mundum* to both Jacopo da Imola (the addressee) and Francesco da Carrara (the friend mentioned in the note)—if not to others—represents part of a larger struggle in Petrarch between the public and private nature of his literary output.[39] In fact, one of the variants of "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse," stemming, most likely, from an earlier version of the poem, gives us a glimpse of the potential significance behind this anxious process of repossession and revision. In the 1544 Aldine *Canzoniere,* the last line of the sonnet reads "com'uom che par ch'ascolti et nulla intende" rather than "over come huom ch'ascolta et nulla intende" as is found in Vaticano 3196.[40] The difference between a man who listens but does not fully comprehend and a man who only appears to be listening is admittedly subtle—yet it is revealing in this context. For, it is the difference between an author glossing his own outward behavior—in this case Petrarch only seemed to be in love with another woman, as Dante claims he only seemed enamored of the screen ladies in the *Vita Nuova*—and an author struggling internally with irrational desire. The contrast in the final version of the sonnet is thus no longer between public perception and individual experience but between a subject and his desires—a psychologizing inward turn that typifies the shift from *rima dispersa* to *rima sparsa.*

The Spectres of the Other Woman and the Literary Marketplace in the *Canzoniere*

If "Quella che 'l giovenil meo core avinse" anticipates the rejection of the figure of the *donna gentile* in *Rvf* 270 and 271, the treatment of the

other woman in "Movesi il vecchierel canuto et biancho" (*Rvf* 16) is oddly reminiscent of the *disperse.* Built around an extended simile, the first eleven lines of the sonnet describe an aged pilgrim as he makes his way toward Rome in order to see the holy relic of the Veronica, the cloth that purportedly represents the true image, the *vera icon,* of Christ. Only in the last tercet does Petrarch introduce the second term of comparison, how in the same fashion he seeks in other women, "altrui" (l. 13), the true form, "forma vera" (l. 14), of his lady. As in the *Vita Nuova,* "Movesi il vecchierel" combines the problem of other women with the question of true and false semblances.[41] More specifically, the pilgrim's journey to view the Veronica at the end of his life recalls the pilgrims Dante encounters at the conclusion of his *libello,* recorded in the sonnet "Deh peregrini che pensosi andate" (*VN* 40.9), who are similarly en route to visit the Veronica—that likeness, "exemplo," whose source, "figura," Beatrice now beholds in heaven.[42] "Movesi il vecchierel," however, as one of the earliest poems in the *Canzoniere,* replays the cognitive journey of the *Vita Nuova* in reverse. While Dante organizes the iconic semblances of the *Vita Nuova* into a clear hierarchy of ascent, moving from screen ladies to his lady, from the *donna gentile* to Beatrice in her glory, from the drawing of angels to the Veronica, and from all of these to the beatific vision of Christ, Petrarch spirals downward into multiplicity in "Movesi il vecchierel," descending, in a pattern endemic to the *Canzoniere,* from the face of Christ and his true semblance, to the desired form of Laura, to the memory of her image evoked by other women.

Critics have long recognized the potentially blasphemous nature of Petrarch's simile, of comparing explicitly the images of other women to the Veronica, and implicitly Laura to Christ. Indeed, in a letter to Carlo Gualteruzzi in 1569, Ludovico Beccadelli went so far as to rewrite the last tercet, which he found "troppo ardita e quasi impia" (too bold and almost profane).[43] When read together with *Rvf* 3 and 4—which compare, respectively, Petrarch's first vision of Laura to Christ's passion and her birth to His nativity—"Movesi il vecchierel" can be seen as continuing a dangerous trend of appropriating sacred images and language for profane love.[44] Yet what distinguishes this poem from others that provocatively exploit Christological parallels (and what, I propose, has caused so much anxiety for critics, beginning with Beccadelli) is the suggestion of other illicit loves beyond the narrative of the *Canzoniere.* Various studies of medieval art and literature have demonstrated that, while never officially sanctioned, cross-pollination did occur in this period between religious and secular art, especially between Marian imagery and devotional texts and the courtly love tradition.[45] However, the introduction of plural, indefinite others, "altrui," into the *Canzoniere* threatens the delicate symbiotic relationship between model and antimodel, sacred and profane in the anthology—a system built upon a dialogue, however unorthodox, between two abstract and absolute structures of feeling. Even the suggestion of a plurality of possible loves opens the door to history and relativism, to a Cavalcantian tryst with a woman from Ferrara and to the worldview of "Per util, per diletto o per onore," where "guardando altrui" (looking at others) (l. 14) rhymes comically with "ventidue" (twenty-two) (l. 15). Once the illicit, yet singular love for Laura loses its theological foundation, constructed painstakingly through exclusivity and absoluteness of devotion, it is quickly transformed into just one of many possible human experiences, where the "other" woman becomes simply "another."

As is perceptible—if not conspicuous—in "Movesi il vecchierel," the walls of the *Canzoniere* are surrounded by the ambiguous world of the *disperse,* with their accompanying shadow of erotic and poetic inauthenticity. For our purposes, it is particularly intriguing that in *Rvf* 16 Petrarch situates his problematic relationship to the other woman within the visual discourse of images and likenesses. On the one hand, the veil known as the Veronica represents an authentic portrait, unmitigated by human hands (an *acheiropoieton*), of Christ—nothing less than His true face. Although frequently reproduced as a popular icon, the singularity and sacred presence of the Veronica was guaranteed against any subsequent deflation by its status as a holy touch-relic, a *sudarium.*[46] The semblances of Laura belong to the other end of the iconic scale. Constructed out of subjective human desire and projected onto the form of other women, they are indefinite copies of a distant original.

The rapid pace of image production in this period, combined with the competition among patrons regarding the size, materials, and artistry of commissions, provides an important context for understanding the contrast between the localized, singular, and unreproducible aura of the Veronica and the multiple, scattered copies of Laura. This is not the place to examine how the economic transactions involved in late medieval painting and sculpture breathed new life into the centuries-old debate about the proper role of religious art.[47] However, it is worth noting that Petrarch—as an

ardent collector of paintings, rare books, vases, Roman coins, and other aesthetic objects—was at the forefront of changing notions toward the consumption of art in society.[48] The owner of both a portrait of Laura by Simone Martini and a Madonna by Giotto was supremely aware—as evident in numerous passages from the *De remediis utriusque fortunae*—of how easily religious and artistic objects (whether paintings, sculptures, or books) could be translated into market value.[49]

Petrarch must have recognized that his poetry and even his own carefully constructed poetic self risked a similar process of commodification. In his letters to Boccaccio, he bemoans the crowds' appropriation of his poetic property and the base economic uses of his words by the jongleurs. A similar anxiety about how poetry is contaminated by the economic sphere is expressed in "Poco era ad appressarsi agli occhi miei" (*Rvf* 51). Transformed into a statue of jasper by his beloved Medusa, the poet in this sonnet laments that the public will now value him only as an expensive object of exchange: "pregiato poi dal vulgo avaro et sciocco" (prized later by the greedy and ignorant crowd) (l. 11). As critics have rightly noted, the theme of petrification within the *Canzoniere* functions almost as an authorial signature.[50] In this light, Petrarch's attack on the incomprehension of the crowd when faced with an iconic statue (a *petra-arca*) can be read as a critique of the economic debasement of his poetic message. Alongside these more articulated misgivings about the reductive effects of the marketplace on Petrarch's poetic art, the motif of the other woman also hints at the potential arbitrariness of the poet's primary love story—now viewed as a mere simulacrum, reproduced at will for an eager public.

One of Petrarch's responses to the threat of reproduction and commodification of the poetic word is to withdraw to the private sphere, physically repossessing his published work and de-authorizing in his letters those compositions that were no longer under his direct control. In this light, Petrarch's invention (together with his "disciple" Boccaccio) of the autograph, authorial manuscript is even more revolutionary than previously thought,[51] especially when viewed in the context of concurrent phenomena in the visual arts. Just as the proliferation of religious images during the same period was matched by a new role for the irreproducible icon-relic, Petrarch counters the uncontrolled reproduction of his works with the authenticity of his carefully prepared author's book, Vaticano latino 3195. The ultimate, crystallized form of the *Canzoniere,* like a touch-relic emanating from the

pen of the author, functions as a sort of profane Veronica, guaranteeing the true face of the artist regardless of the various copies in circulation. The epochal success of Petrarch's strategy is amply demonstrated by the scholarly cult surrounding his autograph papers, dating back at least to Bembo and the sixteenth-century humanists,[52] while the *disperse,* now scattered in libraries throughout the world by the global literary market, lack a proper critical edition.

At the same time, until the very end of his life, Petrarch seems unsure of the best way to deal with those already published poems that engage the theme of the other woman. The traces of the other woman even within the *Canzoniere* show how Petrarch considered incorporating his earlier occasional poems into an all-embracing narrative—as Dante did with his poetics of conversion—instead of solely excluding them from his author's book. In this respect, the excision from the *Canzoniere* of the *ballata* "Donna mi vène spesso ne la mente" marks a final stage in Petrarch's thinking about the motif of the other woman, and is thus a crucial symbolic moment in the making of the *Canzoniere.* Occupying the 121st position in all versions up to the Queriniana, Petrarch decided to remove the *ballata* only in 1373, replacing it with the madrigal "Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna." Although throughout his life he continually added poems to Vaticano latino 3195, this is the only one, as far as we know, that he permanently removed.

"Donna mi vène" recounts a battle in the poet's heart between two ladies, his "donna," presumably Laura, and an "altra donna," whose identity is unknown. Often compared to allegorical poems by Dante such as "Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute" and "Due donne in cima de la mente mia," it has even more in common with a sonnet from the *Vita Nuova,* "Gentil pensero che parla di vui" (*VN* 38.8), in which Dante's heart wavers between Beatrice and the *donna gentile.* In contrast with *Rvf* 270 or 271, in "Donna mi vène" Petrarch voluntarily consents to the love for another woman just as Dante does in "Gentil pensero"; the verb *consentire* is in fact used in both poems. Nowhere else in his corpus does Petrarch come closer to challenging the exclusivity of his love for Laura.

Though Petrarch was willing to explore the idea of an other woman throughout his career, especially in dialogue with fellow vernacular poets, he decided one year before his death to banish this ambiguous counter-narrative from the final redaction of the *Canzoniere.* Yet having removed "Donna mi vène," the poem he replaces it with, "Or vedi Amor," is no less

problematic.[53] Inspired by the first stanza of "Amor, tu vedi ben che questa donna" and the last stanza of "Così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro," two of Dante's *rime petrose,* it expresses a desire for revenge, "vendetta" (l. 9), against a young disdainful Laura. A similar fantasy of revenge toward an unresponsive beloved, expressed in the language of the *petrose,* can also be found in two *disperse* sent to Giovanni Colonna, especially the violent "Tal cavalier tutta una schiera atterra." The substitution of *Rvf* 121 for "Donna mi vène" evidently represented a choice between two moral low points in Dante's corpus, between the erotic frustration with the *petrosa* and the disloyalty and self-deception involved with the *donna gentile*—two problematic motifs that also characterize the unanthologized Petrarch. The decision to emphasize the pessimism and violence implicit in the *petrose* is consistent with the late inclusions, near the end of the 1360s, of "Geri, quando talor meco s'adira" (*Rvf* 179) and "L'aura celeste che 'n quel verde lauro" (*Rvf* 197), two poems which solidify the idea of Laura as a petrifying Medusa. Both of these poems echo in turn an earlier *dispersa,* "Quando talor, da giusta ira commosso," and Petrarch appears to have long reflected upon their inclusion.[54]

It is not possible, here, to explore all the repercussions of Petrarch's final treatment of these two differing aspects of Dante *estravagante* and Petrarch *disperso.* What seems clear, however, is that at the very least the substitution of *Rvf* 121 for "Donna mi vène" complicates the traditional dichotomy between Laura-Medusa and the Virgin that critics often see as indicative of the end of the *Canzoniere.* Although it now seems evident that Petrarch reinforced the identification of Laura with Medusa in these last stages in the making of the *Canzoniere,* as recently confirmed by Theodore Cachey,[55] that this identification should be read as a conflict between the deadly sensuality of Laura and the divine love for the Virgin is less obvious,[56] especially when we consider not only what Petrarch included in the book, but also what he removed. In fact, a simple contrast between *eros* and *caritas* would have been more effective if Petrarch had left in a *donna gentile* episode, since the worldliness and multiplicity traditionally associated with a figure of the other woman would have stood out against the last prayer to the exalted and singular Virgin.

Petrarch's exact intentions in substituting "Or vedi, Amor" for "Donna mi vène" are, of course, ultimately unknowable. One of its effects, however, can be briefly observed. Unlike the figure of a *donna gentile,* the representation of a Laura *petrosa* need not rely on extratextual references. While allusions to other women send critics searching Petrarch's other works—especially the historically-contingent *disperse*—for context, Laura's stony harshness toward the poet is already one of the primary narrative threads of the *Canzoniere.* In the background of "Or vedi Amor," astute readers may very well be able to detect traces of Dante's *petrose,* or even of the *disperse* exchanged with Giovanni Colonna. More importantly, however, these echoes can be absorbed seamlessly into the macrostructure of Petrarch's conflicted love for Laura. By privileging the intratextual over the intertextual in the last stages of the *Canzoniere,* Petrarch ensures the strikingly modern autonomy of his work, especially when compared to the integrating function of self-citations in Dante's corpus. With an eye, increasingly, on the vast yet unpredictable audience posterity might bring him, Petrarch apparently decided, in the end, to relinquish control over those experimental moments in his poetic career deemed incongruous with the penitential narrative of the *Canzoniere.* He must have assumed that with time they would be forgotten or at least irretrievably dispersed.

Notes

1. In Marco Santagata, *Per moderne carte: La biblioteca volgare di Petrarca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 79–91, but originally published in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 157 (1980): 445–52.

2. Umberto Bosco, *Francesco Petrarca,* 3rd ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1965), 7: "Il vero è che noi non possiamo in alcun modo ravvisare una linea di sviluppo, uno svolgimento, non solo nel canzoniere, ma in tutto il Petrarca. Egli è senza storia, se lo si considera, come si deve, nel concreto di tutta l'opera sua." (The truth is that we cannot in any way perceive a line of development or evolution, not only in the *Canzoniere,* but in all of Petrarch. He is without history, if we want to consider him, as we must, in the concrete terms of his entire corpus.) Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

3. Santagata, "Presenze di Dante 'comico' nel *Canzoniere* del Petrarca," in *Per moderne carte,* 25–78, but originally published in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 146 (1969): 163–211. In this essay the author traces the frequent borrowing from Dante's texts at the beginning of the *Canzoniere,* to an obscuring of obvious debts in the middle section, to a revival of Dantean poetics in the last section—a trajectory from youthful unselfconsciousness to repression to a return of the repressed.

4. See Robert M. Durling, "Petrarch's 'Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro,'" *MLN* 86 (1971): 1–20; John Freccero, "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," *Diacritics* 5 (1975): 34–40; and Nancy J. Vickers, "Re-membering Dante: Petrarch's 'Chiare, fresche et dolci acque,'" *MLN* 96 (1981): 1–11. Also highly suggestive is Durling's introduction to his translation of Petrarch's *rime* in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The "Rime sparse" and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

5. Santagata, "Presenze di Dante 'comico' nel *Canzoniere*," and Paolo Trovato, *Dante in Petrarca: Per un inventario dei dantismi nei "Rerum vulgarium fragmenta"* (Florence: Olschki, 1977).

6. No doubt in part the scholarly neglect of the *disperse* depends on their ambiguous canonical status; they lack an exhaustive critical edition. For this essay I have opted to examine only the poems found in Laura Paolino's highly selective edition of the *disperse* in *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi,* ed. Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), rather than run the risks of using Angelo Solerti's unreliable, all-encompassing collection of 214 poems in *Rime disperse di Francesco Petrarca o a lui attribuite* (Florence: Sansoni, 1909). For a summary of the textual question of the *disperse,* see the excellent *postfazione* by Paola Vecchi Galli in the reprint of Solerti's edition (Florence: Le Lettere, 1997), 325–401, as well as her entries in *Petrarca nel tempo: Tradizione lettori e immagini delle opere,* ed. Michele Feo (Pontedera [Pisa]: Bandecchi & Vivaldi, 2003), 159–68. See also on the same subject, Santorre Debenedetti, "Per 'le disperse' di Francesco Petrarca," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 56 (1910): 98–106; and Alessandro Pancheri, *"Col suon chioccio": Per una frottola 'dispersa' attribuibile a Francesco Petrarca* (Padua: Antenore, 1993), 3–22.

7. See, for example, the first section of Santagata's *Per moderne carte,* entitled "Dante, il maestro negato," or the section "La rimozione di Dante" in *I frammenti dell'anima: Storia e racconto nel Canzoniere di Petrarca* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 199–204.

8. In this light, the relatively high number of explicit occurrences of Dante in the early Correggio form of the *Canzoniere*—as underlined by Santagata in "Presenze di Dante 'comico' nel *Canzoniere*"—can in part be explained by the large number of poems this redaction contains (roughly 23 percent) written for and about historical figures. On the "choral" aspect of the Correggio, see Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima,* especially 158–62.

9. Most famously in *Fam.* 20.2 and 23.19, both to Boccaccio.

10. Latin citations for the *Familiares* from Petrarch, *Le familiari,* ed. Vittorio Rossi, 4 vols. (Rome and Florence: Sansoni, 1933–42). English translation (slightly modified) from Petrarch, *Letters on Familar Matters, Rerum familiarum libri,* trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, 3 vols. (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982–85), 3:205.

11. English translation in Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters,* 3:204. Italics mine.

12. In ibid., 3:205.

13. Latin text of *Seniles* 5.2 from Petrarch, *Senile V 2,* ed. Monica Berté (Florence: Le Lettere, 1998). English translation based on Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age, Rerum senilium libri,* trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1:160.

14. English translation from Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age,* 1:162. Italics mine.

15. For a brief discussion, with important bibliography, of the various channels involved in the reception of the *Commedia,* see Corrado Bologna, *Tradizione e fortuna dei classici italiani,* 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1993), 1:181–99.

16. See Bologna, *Tradizione e fortuna,* 1:194–95, and Armando Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture,* ed. and trans. Charles M. Radding (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 183–89.

17. For the register-book and other urban vernacular books of the period, see the discussion in Petrucci, *Writers and Readers,* 179–89.

18. See Domenico De Robertis, "A quale tradizione appartenne il manoscritto delle rime di Dante letto dal Petrarca," *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s. 2 (1985): 136–37. This essay is a significant contribution toward better contextualizing Petrarch's reception of Dante.

19. In Dante, *Rime,* liii, ed. Gianfranco Contini (Turin: Einaudi, 1995). All citations of Dante's *rime* from this edition.

20. "Invitus fateor hac etate vulgari iuveniles ineptias cerno; quas omnibus mihi quoque si liceat ignotas velim. Et si enim stilo quolibet ingenium illius etatis emineat: ipsa tamen res senilem dedecet gravitatem. Sed quid possum? Omnia iam in vulgus effusa sunt: legunturque libentius quam que serio postmodum validioribus animis scripsi. Quomodo igitur negarem tibi sic de me merito tali viro: Tamque anxie flagitanti que me invito vulgus habet et lacerat?" (At this age, I confess, I observe with reluctance the youthful trifles that I would like to be unknown to all, including me, if it were possible. For while the talent of that age may emerge in any style whatsoever, still the subject matter does not become the gravity of old age. But what can I do? Now they have all circulated among the multitude, and are being read more willingly than what I later wrote seriously for sounder minds. How then could I deny you, so great a man and so kind to me and pressing for them with such eagerness, what the multitude possesses and mangles against my wishes?) Latin text in Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizione di storia e letteratura, 1951), 177; translation in Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age,* 2:500.

21. For Dante, see the discussion in Michelangelo Picone, *"Vita Nuova" e tradizione romanza* (Padua: Liviana, 1979), 73–99.

22. *Vita Nuova* 36.4. All citations from Dante, *Vita Nuova,* in *Opere minori* I/1, ed. Domenico De Robertis and Gianfranco Contini (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1984), 27–247.

23. All citations for the *Commedia* from Dante, *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata,* ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 2nd rev. ed., 4 vols. (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994).

24. For a suggestive discussion of the function of the palinode in Dante's work, see Albert Russell Ascoli, "Palinode and History in the Oeuvre of Dante," in *Dante Now: Current Trends in Dante Studies,* ed. Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 155–86.

25. See the facsimile edition, Boccaccio, *Il codice Chigiano L.V. 176,* ed. Domenico De Robertis (Rome and Florence: Alinari, 1974), with an important introductory essay by Domenico De Robertis.

26. All citations for the *disperse* from Petrarch, *Trionfi.*

27. The attribution of "Per util, per diletto o per onore" to Petrarch has been recently called into question. See the discussion of the complex question in Gianfranco Contini, "Postilla dantesca," in *Un'idea di Dante: Saggi danteschi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 231–33.

28. Critics are not unanimous in their interpretation of these verses, especially as to whether Petrarch claims to have been moved by other women. See the discussion in Petrarch, *Trionfi,* 651.

29. See also Giuseppe Billanovich's argument that Petrarch invented the character of Laura in a conversation with other poets, in particular with Sennuccio: Billanovich, "Laura fantasma del *Canzoniere,*" *Studi petrarcheschi* n.s. 11 (1994): 149–58.

30. For the importance of the *donna gentile* in the *Canzoniere,* see also Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima,* 204–7.

31. Citations for the *Canzoniere* from Petrarch, *Canzoniere,* ed. Marco Santagata, 2nd ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 1997). All translations are based on Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems.*

32. In particular, it is Beatrice's corrupting body ("carne sepolta" [buried flesh], "le belle membra . . . che so' 'n terra sparte" [the lovely members . . . that are scattered in the earth] [*Purg.* 31, ll. 48, 50–51]) that Dante fails properly to acknowledge, unlike Petrarch, who underlines, throughout the second part of the *Canzoniere,* that Laura's body is now underground.

33. See, among others, Rosanna Bettarini, "'Che debb'io far? (RVF CCLXVIII)'," *Lectura Petrarce* 7 (1987): 187–99; Ronald J. Martinez, "Mourning Laura in the *Canzoniere*: Lessons from Lamentations," *MLN* 118 (2003): 1–45; and Laura Paolino, "'Ad acerbam rei memoriam': Le carte del lutto nel codice Vaticano Latino 3196 di Francesco Petrarca," *Rivista di letteratura italiana* 11 (1993): 73–102.

34. Petrarch's ultimate rejection of a stilnovist perspective on love and Laura is discussed in Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima,* 313–16. But these distinctions are by now commonplace. See, for example, Durling's introduction in *Petrarch's Lyric Poems,* 18–26, or Kenelm Foster's influential essay, "Beatrice or Medusa," in *Italian Studies Presented to E. R. Vincent,* ed. C. P. Brand, K. Foster, and U. Limentanti (Cambridge: Heffer, 1962), 41–56.

35. On the fictionalized treatment of time and narrative in the *Canzoniere,* see Teodolinda Barolini, "The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,*" *MLN* 104 (1989): 1–38.

36. Petrarch appropriates the language of salvation and damnation to talk about his own poetry and his own editorial decisions in a marginal note in the *codice degli abbozzi* next to the sonnet "Voglia mi sprona, Amor mi guida et scorge": "Mirum, hunc cancellatum et damnatum, post multos annos casu relegens absolvi et transcripsi in ordine statim" (Amazing. Rereading by chance this crossed out and condemned poem, after many years, I immediately absolved and transcribed it in order). Transcription from Petrarch, *Trionfi,* 809–10. The poem was in fact "saved," anthologized as *Rvf* 211.

37. For the importance of *Rvf* 189 within the macrostructure of the *Canzoniere,* see Theodore J. Cachey, Jr., "From Shipwreck to Port: *Rvf* 189 and the Making of the Canzoniere," *MLN* 120, no. 1 (2005): 30–49. For the theme of Ulysses, see Picone, "Il sonetto CLXXXIX," *Lectura Petrarce* 9 (1989): 151–77.

38. "ex amici relatu, qui eum abstulerat, et ex memoria primum cui tamen aliquid defuerat." The term "amici" in the note is glossed by Petrarch himself as "d. ca." Critics have tentatively identified Francesco da Carrara as the "domini carrariensis" behind "d. ca." See discussion in Petrarch, *Trionfi,* 649–50.

39. See the chapter "Tra pubblico e privato" in Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima,* 253–94.

40. Alternative readings are listed in Petrarch, *Trionfi,* 650.

41. For this section of the essay, I owe a particular debt to Enrico Fenzi's article, "Note petrarchesche: *RVF* 16, *Movesi il vecchierel,*" now in Fenzi, *Saggi petrarcheschi* (Fiesole [Florence]: Cadmo, 2003), 17–39.

42. For a discussion of the visual semiotics at the end of *Vita Nuova,* see the chapter "Peregrinus amoris: La metafora finale" in Picone, *Vita Nuova,* 129–92.

43. Cited in Petrarch, *Canzoniere,* 71.

44. See Fenzi, *Saggi petrarcheschi,* 24–26, and Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima,* 226.

45. See, for example, Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 311–16.

46. See Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art,* trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 208–24.

47. See at least the fundamental discussions in the chapters "The Image in Urban Life" and "The End of the Private Image at the End of the Middle Ages" in Belting, *Likeness and Presence,* 377–457.

48. Gianfranco Contini underlines Petrarch's aesthetic consumerism in "Petrarca e le arti figurative," in *Francesco Petrarca, Citizen of the World,* Proceedings of the World Petrarch Congress, Washington, D.C., April 6–13, 1974, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo (Padua: Antenore; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 126–27. For additional discussions of Petrarch and the visual arts, see

Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 51–66; and Bettini, "Tra Plinio e sant'Agostino: Francesco Petrarca sulle arti figurative," in *Memoria dell'antico nell'arte italiana,* ed. Salvatore Settis (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 1:221–67.

49. The recent commodification of books, which is related to similar phenomena in the visual arts, is expressed most succinctly by a personified Reason in the *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1.43): "Nam ut quidam disciplinae, sic alii voluptati et iactantiae libros querunt. Sunt qui hac parte suppellectilis exornent thalamos, quae animos exornandis inuenta est, neque aliter his utantur, quam Corinthiis vasis aut tabulis pictis ac statuis, caeterisque de quibus proxime disputatum est. Sunt qui obtentu librorum avaritiae inserviant, pessimi omnium non librorum vera pretia, sed quasi mercium aestimantes. Pestis mala sed recens, et quae nuper divitum studiis obrepsisse videatur, quae unum concupiscientiae, instrumentum atque una ars accesserit" (Some seek books for study, others seek them for pleasure and for ostentation. There are those who decorate their rooms with furniture devised to decorate their minds, and they use books as they use Corinthian vessels or paintings or statues and the like, which we discussed before. There are those who by obtaining books satisfy their greed. They are the worst of the lot who do not appreciate the true value of books but regard them as merchandise—a foul and recent pest which now seems to have infected the desires of the rich, providing avarice with yet another tool and another trick). Latin text from *Francisci Petrarchae operum: Tomus I–VI* (Ridgewood, N.J.: Gregg Press, 1965). The English translation is from Petrarch, *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul,* trans. Conrad H. Rawski, 5 vols. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1:138.

50. See Remo Ceserani, "'Petrarca': Il nome come auto-reinvenzione poetica," *Quaderni petrarcheschi* 4 (1987): 121–37.

51. See the highly suggestive discussion on the relationship between Petrarch and the autograph manuscript in Petrucci, *Writers and Readers,* 145–68 and 189–94, where the author suggests that the private "author's book" was in part a reaction to the uncontrolled and amateurish quality of manuscript production at this time.

52. Beccadelli succinctly characterizes this sacral approach to Petrarch's autograph papers: "sono come reliquie sante conservati" (they are preserved like sacred relics). Text cited in Pancheri, *"Col suon chioccio,"* 12.

53. By relocating "Or vedi, Amor, che giovenetta donna" from its original position between sonnets 243 and 244, Petrarch further ensures that the "giovenetta donna" named in the madrigal is identified with Laura and not some new *pargoletta* (since in canzone 127 Laura *giovenetta* has already become a "donna"). See Laura Paolino, "Sui madrigali di Petrarca (RVF 52, 54, 106, 121)," *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana* 30 (2001): 318–19. Paolino's discussion of how Petrarch transforms the meaning of his occasional madrigals when they are included in the *Canzoniere* has several parallels with the process discussed in this essay.

54. See Rosanna Bettarini, "Perché 'narrando' il duol si disacerba. (Motivi esegetici dagli autografi petrarcheschi)," in *La critica del testo: Problemi di metodo ed esperienze di lavoro* (Rome: Salerno, 1985), 317–18; Cachey, "From Shipwreck to Port," 44–48; and Petrarch, *Trionfi,* 665.

55. Cachey, "From Shipwreck to Port," 44–48.

56. As in Foster, "Beatrice or Medusa."