

CHAPTER 5

Petrarch as the Metaphysical Poet Who Is Not Dante

*Metaphysical Markers at the Beginning of
the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta (Rvf 1–21)*

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THE FUNDAMENTAL PETRARCHAN PROBLEMATIC, APPARENT IN all his work, is the metaphysical issue of the one and the many. Singular versus plural, whole versus fragment, the one versus the many: this is Petrarch's abiding theme, and it is a metaphysical one. My argument is that Petrarch is a metaphysical poet, and that metaphysical concerns, defined as first principles and ultimate grounds, such as being and time, are Petrarch's abiding concerns. The *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* is a metaphysical text, in that it engages a metaphysical problematic in both its form and its content. With respect to form, the metaphysical template is built into the shape of the lyric sequence: a form that is based on a dance of part vis-à-vis whole reflects the metaphysician's universal dance of the many vis-à-vis the One.¹ With respect to content, the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, which thematizes fragmentation or multiplicity in its very title (a title that not coincidentally poses the dilemma: do we refer to this text in the plural, as suggested by the plural "fragments," or do we use the singular, as indicated by its being one work, one *canzoniere*?), is a text obsessed with time, the medium that

robs us of ontological stillness and wholeness, that subjects us to constant incremental change, and that constitutes the experiential prism through which we humans most emphatically confront multiplicity. I am not suggesting that Petrarch subscribed to a metaphysical system in the sense of a philosophical solution, but I am suggesting that the problems that tugged at him ceaselessly—in particular the nature of time and the existence of the self in time—are metaphysical in nature.²

Petrarch's unremitting focus on the one versus the many takes various poetic shapes. Experientially, in terms of lived experience, his one/many focus expresses itself in his intense awareness of how the self gets lost in multiplicity; colloquially, we call this Petrarch's hyper-awareness of the passing of time. Moreover, for Petrarch, steeped in Augustine and having pored over the *Confessions*, it is second nature to link time and language. The self that is lost in the web of time is replicated as the self dispersed through the *rime sparse*: Petrarch self-consciously fashions a spider's web of language—"opra d'aragna" (spider's web [*Rvf* 173.6])—that mirrors the web of time, of multiplicity. In a text that sets out to harness language's temporal properties, and that carefully deploys narrativity—time in its textual dress—it is not surprising as well to find the poet dramatizing narrative categories. The first of these is the category of beginning.

In this essay I will make the case that the opening poems of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*—by which I mean poems 1–21—air the major metaphysical concerns of the collection. Poems 1–21 form a unit, together with sestina 22 and canzone 23, that in turn belongs to the larger unit of initiation, poems 1–129; poems 1–23 form a beginning that is itself part of a larger beginning, a micro-*canzoniere* within the larger *canzoniere*.³ By the time we have reached poem 129, the last canzone of the spectacular sweep of canzoni that begins with 125, we have experienced most of the collection's signature tropes and themes, as well as all of its metrical forms (five of the seven ballate are located between poems 1 and 129, as are all four madrigals). The opening set of 23 poems, which contains at least one subset devoted to beginningness—the introductory sequence 1–5—is marked off from the larger set of poems 1–129 by its own spectacular culmination: the back-to-back presentation of the collection's first sestina, poem 22, and its first canzone, poem 23 (whose metaphysical depth precludes their treatment here). The conclusion of this set, canzone 23, "Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade," is a micro-text that thematizes firstness—"la prima etade" of the

incipit—and whose paradoxical theme is that firstness and lastness collapse into the same point, a key theme of a cyclical macro-text that plays the part and the whole against each other in such a way as to problematize the nature of all beginnings and endings.

Many readers have noted that the *Fragmenta* open with a sequence of poems that possesses a narrative thrust, that poems 1–5 provide a prologue to the collection as a whole: poems 2 to 5 provide plot information regarding first the lover’s enamoration, the cause and the time of it (2 and 3), and then the beloved, her place of origin and name (4 and 5).⁴ Most significantly, this narrative sequence introduces the problematic of time and multiplicity into the text. Poems 1 to 5 are about first things, first times, and first (birth) places: the poet’s “**primo** giovenile errore” (first youthful error [1.3]), Love’s “**primiero** assalto” (first assault [2.9]), the day when “i miei guai / nel commune dolor s’incominciaro” (my misfortunes began in the midst of the universal woe [3.7–8]), the place where “sì bella donna al mondo nacque” (so beautiful a lady was born to the world [4.14]). Sonnet 2’s formulation of Love’s “first assault” will recur within the micro-*canzoniere* of poems 1–23: while in sonnet 20 “nel **primier** assalto” (line 14) does not refer to Love, “**primo** assalto” of canzone 23 (line 21) is a precise evocation of the first encounter detailed in sonnet 2. All these “firsts”—including the sound of the first sweet letters of Laura’s name (“il suon de’ **primi** dolci accenti suoi” [5.4])—find their first epilogue and consummation in canzone 23’s “dolce tempo de la **prima** etade.”

There are other markers in this prologue sequence of the poet’s subjection to multiplicity. The existential significance of “rime sparse” in the *incipit* of sonnet 1, “Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono,” is, as is well known, glossed by the *Secretum*’s “et **sparsa** animae fragmenta recolligam” (I will gather the dispersed fragments of my soul [Book 3, 214]), where we see the metaphor of dispersion used in an explicitly spiritual context, echoing Augustine in the *Confessions*.⁵ Moreover, the poet’s contrite acknowledgment in the first sonnet of having become a subject of discussion among the populace, in other words of having become famous—“favola fui gran tempo” (10)—is also a way of signifying that he allowed himself to become ever more dispersed, rather than working to stay gathered, to “collect his soul” in the *Secretum*’s language (“Colligere animum” [Book 3, 162]).⁶ For fame is nothing but being talked about by the multitude, and as a result the famous person is literally multiplied: “**sparsum** per ora multorum” (dispersed

through the mouths of the many [*Secretum*, Book 3, 190]. The word “multorum” in this passage in the *Secretum*, with its suggestion that the self has been utterly consigned to multiplicity, is reinforced by Augustinus in his next remark, in which he defines fame as the breath of the many, “hominum plurimorum” (Book 3, 190). Given this context, the presence of the word “tempo” itself in the phrase “favola fui gran tempo” is only the most explicit of its signifiers of the self’s subjection to multiplicity.

Time is the prime agent of our multiplicity. Particularly important for Petrarch—and profoundly metaphysical—is the metaphorical antithesis established in these passages and throughout his writings between whole and gathered versus dispersed and scattered: God is the former, while he is “nusquam integer, nusquam totus” (never whole, never all in one [*Secretum*, Book 1, 68]). In metaphysical terms, *integer* and *totus* versus *sparsus* are metaphorical terms that serve as a description of eternity versus time. We can approach time through the adjective *altro* in verse 4 of sonnet 1, “quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono,” frequently read as a trope of conversion (or conversion manqué). We can go further with *altro*, into as it were the metaphysical subsoil of the moral garden of conversion, by remembering that alterity is a key component of time.

Dante cites Aristotle’s definition of time from the *Physics* in the *Convivio*: “Lo tempo, secondo che dice Aristotile nel quarto de la Fisica, è ‘numero di movimento, secondo prima e poi’” (*Conv.* 4.2.6). “For time is just this,” writes Aristotle, “number of motion in respect of ‘before’ and ‘after’” (*Physics* 4.11.219b1): “numerus motus secundum prius et posterius.”⁷ Time, therefore, comports otherness, difference, nonidentity, nonsimultaneity. To the question, “does [the ‘now’] always remain one and the same or is it always other and other?” (*Physics* 4.10.218a9–10), Aristotle replies, “if the ‘now’ were not different but one and the same, there would not have been time” (4.11.218b27–28): “si non esset *alterum* nunc, sed idem et unum, non esset tempus.”⁸ For there to be time, there must be the other: the *alterum* as compared to the *unum*, the *prius* and *posterius* as compared to the *nunc*. Time confers motion, change, absence of being, as Aristotle continues to make clear “nel quarto de la Fisica”: “For time is by its nature the cause rather of decay, since it is the number of change, and change removes what is” (4.12.221b1–2); “But of time some parts have been while others have to be, and no part of it is” (4.10.218a5–6).

Time and multiplicity are causally related to desire, which we experience because of what we lack, as Dante explains in the *Convivio*: “ché nullo

desidera quello che ha, ma quello che non ha, che è manifesto difetto” (for no one desires what he has, but what he does not have, which is manifest lack [*Conv.* 3.15.3]). Desire is lack, but also the motion in which we engage in order to fill the lack: “disire, / ch’è moto spiritale” (desire, which is spiritual motion [*Purg.* 18.31–32]). Temporal existence is governed by these laws, by absence of being, by its radical unplenitude, as beautifully expressed in Dante’s thirteenth Epistle: “Omne quod movetur, movetur propter aliquid non habet, quod est terminus sui motus [. . .] Omne quod movetur est in aliquo defectu, et non habet totum suum esse simul” (Everything that moves, moves because of what it does not have, which is the end of its motion [. . .] Everything that moves exists in some defect, and does not possess all its being at once [*Ep.* 13.71–72]).

Opposed to the constellation of time/multiplicity/alterity/desire is God, who is precisely not difference but sameness; in the language of the *Confessions*, God is never *aliud* but always *ipsum*, never “other” but “the same and the very same and the very self-same”: “qui non es **alias aliud et alias aliter**, sed id ipsum et id ipsum et id ipsum” (who art not another in another place, nor otherwise in another place, but the same and the very same and the very self-same).⁹ Petrarch’s use of the word *altro* throughout the *Fragmenta* bears the consciousness of God as sameness—*id ipsum*—and also of conversion as a process that is profoundly temporal, working through time to go beyond time, marked by a “before” and an “after,” a “prius” and “posterius.” The archetypal instances of *altro* in this sense are to be found in the *Secretum*’s “Transformatus sum in **alterum** Augustinum” (Book 1, 40), and in the *congedo* of penitential sestina 142, “A la dolce ombra de le belle frondi”: “**Altr**’amor, **altre** frondi et **altro** lume, / **altro** salir al ciel per **altri** poggi / cerco, ché n’è ben tempo, et **altri** rami” [Another love, other leaves, and another light, / another climbing to Heaven by other hills / I seek (for it is indeed time), and other branches].¹⁰

Another word from “Voi ch’ascoltate” with a metaphysical valence is *vario* in the fifth verse, “del **vario** stile in ch’io piango et ragiono” (the varied style in which I weep and speak), an adjective whose *va-* opening reinforces the sonnet’s dominant Augustinian message regarding the vanity of all earthly objects of desire, carried by *vano/vaneggiar*: “le **vane** speranze e ’l **van** dolore” (vain hopes and vain sorrow [6]), “et del mio **vaneggiar** vergogna è ’l frutto” (and of my pursuit of the vain, shame is the fruit [12]). Forms of *vario/variare* are a marker of multiplicity in Petrarch’s lexicon, as we can see from the *Triumpho*, where they occur almost entirely in the final

metaphysically charged *Triumphus Eternitatis* (and, interestingly, in one of the four usages, we find it again closely connected to *vaneggiar*: “la qual **varietà** fa spesso altrui / **vaneggiar**” [TE 73–74]).¹¹ In a passage that reads like a Petrarchan take on Augustine’s discussion of time in Book 11 of the *Confessions*, Petrarch conjures an eternal present in which the inflection of time into past, present, and future will not exist, and there will be none of the temporal markers that “make human life varied and infirm”: “né *fia*, né *fu*, né *mai*, né *inanzi*, o *ndietro*, / ch’umana vita fanno **varia** e *nferma*!” (neither *will be*, nor *was*, nor *never*, nor *before*, nor *after*, which make human life varied and infirm! [TE 32–33; italics in original]). Here Petrarch makes explicit the link—a metaphysical link—between time and multiplicity: the inflected forms of the verb “to be” (*fia* and *fu*) represent the inflection of ontology. They signify that being itself is subject to change, while *mai* stands in for the ubiquitous little time-words to which Petrarch, like Augustine, assigns metaphysical importance, and finally, *inanzi* and *ndietro* are signifiers of time, as we remember from Aristotle’s definition of time as “numero di movimento, secondo prima e poi” (*Conv.* 4.2.6).¹²

To say that human life is *varia* is to say that it is subject to multiplicity. Petrarch characterizes multiplicity as that which makes *umana vita* not just *varia* but also *inferma*, for, as the *Secretum* puts it, we are subject to “tanta **varietate** successuum” (such a variety of events [Book 2, 116]). We can appropriately compare Petrarch in this regard to Dante, who has a more robust appreciation for the benefits of multiplicity as an expression of God’s sublime act of differentiation, called by theologians *opus distinctionis*. Petrarch, on the other hand, consistently shows that “unease and suspicion in the presence of multiplicity,” characteristic of Neoplatonism, which Patrick Boyde claims, mistakenly in my view, for Dante.¹³ For Petrarch, as we have seen, a natural linguistic pairing for *vario* is *vaneggiar*, and to be *varia* is also to be *inferma*. Indeed, *inferma*, the adjectival form of the *infermitas* that characterizes human life in its variety and multiplicity, is in rhyme with its antithesis, *ferma*, the epithet for the eternal present in which past, present, and future time are collapsed: “E le tre parti sue vidi ristrette / ad una sola, e quella una esser ferma” (And its three parts I saw compressed to one alone, and that one was still [TE 28–29]).

Stability and immobility, the quality of being *ferma*, are key features of the eternal as compared to the temporal: while the temporal is flux and change, that which never stays still (“quel che mai non stette” [TE 26]),

the eternal is stable (“stabile e ferma” [*TE* 2]), immobile (“in etate immobile et eterna” [*TE* 21]), and—most important for the maker of a collection of lyric poems—it is collected, gathered. Thus, the *Triumphus Eternitatis* defines eternity as “raccolta e ’ntera” (gathered and whole [69]). This characterization of eternity begins by negating the existence of time, which Petrarch does with a spate of the same little time words that litter the *Fragmenta*. Time’s cessation is registered linguistically by its hyper-presence, as the poet declares that time and its partitions—“*dianzi, adesso, ier, deman, matino e sera*” (*before, right away, yesterday, tomorrow, morning and evening* [65; italics in original])—will pass away. There will be no past or future, but only the present. Again, as in the similar passage at *Triumphus Eternitatis* 32–33, Petrarch expresses himself through forms of the verb “to be” and temporal signifiers. He moves from the past and future tenses of “to be” to “only is,” and from “*before, right away, yesterday, tomorrow, morning and evening*” to time words that signify *now*, thus attempting to replace the linearity of time with the simultaneity of the moment: “non avrà loco *fu, sarà, ned era, / ma è solo, in presente, et ora, et oggi, / e sola eternità raccolta e ’ntera*” (there will be no place for *was*, nor *will be*, nor *was being*, but only *is, in the present, and now, and today, and only eternity* gathered and whole [67–69; italics in original]).

The hyper-presence of time in Petrarch’s definition of eternity bespeaks anxiety: his language betrays that his focus is on what eternity is not, more than on what it is. The form of this definition of eternity is working against its content. In its substance, however, Petrarch’s definition of eternity partakes of the classic theological definition of Boethius, who, in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, notes that God, by definition eternal, is therefore simultaneous. Acknowledging Aristotle’s doctrine of infinite time, Boethius yet claims that even if time has no beginning or ending, it cannot be called “eternal”—“aeternum”—because it does not comprehend and embrace all the space of its life at the same time: “simul.” Eternity requires simultaneity: “Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae *tota simul* et perfecta possessio” (Eternity therefore is the perfect possession *altogether and at the same time* of an endless life [*Phil. Cons.* 5.6.9–11; italics mine]).¹⁴ Boethius stresses that what is not *simul* is not eternal: endless life is one thing, and God’s ability to embrace the whole presence of an endless life together and at the same time is another. Endlessness should be called “perpetual”—“perpetuum”; while only the plenitude of presence in a never fading instant may be called

“eternal” — “aeternum.” Augustine too had contrasted the still presentness of eternity to the constant movement of time: “But in eternity nothing moves into the past: all is present. Time, on the other hand, is never all present at once” (“non autem praeterire quicquam in aeterno, sed totum esse praesens; nullum vero tempus totum esse praesens” [*Conf.* 11.11]). And for Aquinas, following both Boethius and Aristotle, eternity is a unified and simultaneous whole: “aeternitas est tota simul” (*ST* 1a.10.4).¹⁵

Philosophically, human life is *varia* for Petrarch not because he is celebrating its infinite variety, but because it is not gathered, simultaneous, and whole. From a philosophical standpoint, in terms of his stated philosophical positions, Petrarch is quite consistent about rejecting the particular for the universal, the creature for the Creator (in the language of the *Secretum*). This is not to say that the particular does not make itself felt — quite the contrary. The *Triumphs* themselves, although describing human life as “*varia e ’nferma*,” end with a vision of Laura: a particular culled from the variety of human life. But, from a philosophical standpoint, *varia e inferma* is a fair representation of Petrarch’s consistent stated view (as compared to his practice). In terms of stated positions, in other words, Petrarch does not follow Dante as he walks a tightrope between unity and multiplicity, relishing both the one and the many, keeping always in mind that the one made the many, that “*distinctio et multitudo rerum est a Deo*” (the difference and multiplicity of things come from God [*ST* 1a.47.1]). As I have tried to show, Dante’s is a double allegiance: he works to synthesize Aristotelian sympathy for difference with the Neoplatonic One.¹⁶

Dante embraces paradox. Both in form and in content he embraces the paradoxes of metaphysics, as dramatized by the vision of *Paradiso* 28, which forces us to conjure the universe as simultaneously “both center and circumference, both the deep (Augustinian) within and the great (Aristotelian) without,”¹⁷ or in modern terms, as both quantum mechanics and general relativity. Petrarch does not embrace paradox, but he does embody it: his form is the vehicle for an anxious celebration of multiplicity that his content attempts to deny. Already we can see the famous Petrarchan *dis-sidio*, built into the very texture of the web he weaves, in which the warp contradicts the woof and vice versa.

The adjective *vario* appears again in the *Triumphs*, and in a way that reinforces its connection to the many by linkage to another of Petrarch’s key metaphysical markers, a usage that is essentially shorthand for evok-

ing the one and the many: constructions based on the contrast of *un* (the one) and *mille* (a thousand). The lovers in *Triumphus Cupidinis* II are “**varii** di lingue, e **varii** di paesi, / tanto che di **mille un** non seppi il nome” (so various in tongue and nation that of a thousand I did not know one name [TC II.139–40]). *Mille* is a Petrarchan *senhal* for the many: for the multiplicity of created existence that is contrasted linguistically to the holistic simplicity—the non-variety—of the one. We think, for instance, of the postilla to the draft of *Rvf* 77 and 78, where in order to say that the poems were copied into the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* long after their composition, Petrarch writes that they were transcribed “post **mille annos**” (after a thousand years).¹⁸ The repetition of *mille* signifies hyperbolic quantity: in *Triumphus Temporis* the temporal duration of great fame is such that some men are “dopo **mille anni**, / e **mille e mille**, più chiari che ’n vita” (after a thousand years, and a thousand and a thousand, more famous than in life [25–26]). We find a similar usage in the sonnet “Vinse Hanibàl”: “che vi può dar, dopo la morte anchora / **mille et mille anni**, al mondo honor et fama” (that can give you, even after death, for a thousand and a thousand years, honor and fame in the world [103.13–14]). Conversely, *mille* can be used to single out the one from the many: Augustinus in the *Secretum* is addressed as “Care michi ex **milibus** Augustine” (Dear to me among thousands, Augustine [*Prohemium*, 24]).¹⁹ Love is frequently connected to the *un/mille* marker, as we saw with the lovers of *Triumphus Cupidinis*. Thus, in *Rvf* 2, in which Petrarch recounts Love’s attack on him, Love is said to have punished “in one day a thousand offenses”: “Per fare una leggiadra sua vendetta, / et punire in **un dì ben mille** offese” (2.1–2). This association of Love’s incursion into his soul with the *un/mille* marker is a primal instance of Laura’s metaphysical associations.²⁰

The *un/mille* marker is significant because—like Laura herself, as we shall see—it suggests both the one and the many and the dialectic between them. Laura’s association with multiplicity—and hence with mortality—is made clear in *Rvf* 5. We noted the series of firsts in the prologue sonnets; we stopped short of noting that with firstness, with beginnings, come also endings and death, implied in the reference to Christ’s death in *Rvf* 3 (the cause of the “commune dolor”) and fully introduced as early as *Rvf* 5, “Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi.” This sonnet, perhaps not coincidentally the first poem to begin with “Quando,” is also the first poem to contain the words “il fine”: the end. *Rvf* 5 is a famous play on the beloved’s

name, parsed as LAU-RE-TA, and—far from being a frivolous gesture toward rhetorical virtuosity—it instructs us that narrativity resides in *her*, in her name, represented here as syllabified by time:

LAUdando s'incomincia udir di fore
 il suon de' primi dolci accenti suoi.
 Vostro stato REal, che 'ncontro poi,
 raddoppia a l'alta impresa il mio valore;
 ma: TAci, grida il fin, ché farle honore
 è d'altri homeri soma che da' tuoi.
 (5.3–8)

When I move my sighs to call you and the name that
 Love wrote on my heart, the sound of its first sweet accents
 is heard without in LAU-ds. Your RE-gal state, which
 I meet next, redoubles my strength for the high enterprise;
 but “TA-llk no more!” cries the ending, “for to do her honor
 is a burden for other shoulders than yours.”

In *Confessions* 13.15, angels are able to look upon God's face and read in it “sine syllabis temporum”—“without the syllables of time.” The syllabification of Laura's name, by contrast, recalls Augustine's syllabification of the hymn *Deus Creator omnium* as an analogue for time in *Confessions* 11.27. As Augustine sounds out the syllables of the hymn in order to try to grasp the nature of time, so Petrarch's *sospiri* sound out the nature of Laura as a being inexorably temporal. Moreover, Augustine describes his return from ecstatic simultaneity in the vision at Ostia as a falling back into sound, language, and therefore time, in the form of beginnings and endings: “et remeavimus ad strepitum oris nostri, ubi verbum et incipitur et finitur” (we returned to the sound of our own speech, in which each word has a beginning and an ending [*Conf.* 9.10]). Learning from Augustine, who returns from extra-temporal vision at Ostia to the sound of language, and thus to time, in the form of beginnings and endings, Petrarch understands the textual and the temporal to be parallel modalities.

Rvf 5 dramatizes the enmeshedness of time and narrative. Particularly noteworthy are the narrative markers that the poet has linked to the syl-

lables of the beloved's name: LAU with "s'incomincia," RE with "poi," and TA with "il fin." The first syllable corresponds to beginnings, the middle syllable to middles, and the last syllable to endings; thus, to the extent that the text engages a being defined as existing in time, such as Laureta, it engages the temporal/narrative problems of beginnings, middles, and ends. The anomalous spelling of her name as Laureta evokes—in the mature lexicon of the *Fragmenta*—*l'aura* and *rete*, the evanescent caught in the net of time and text, as in *Rvf* 239: "In rete accolgo l'aura" (In a net I catch the breeze [37]). The ominous "TAci, grida il fin," where *il fin*—the end—shouts "Be silent" to the poet, suggests the ultimate ending and the ultimate silence: the silence of death. The subordination of the poet to the violence of *il fin* also foreshadows the poem's final tercet, where we find that Apollo may disdain the mortal poet's presumptuous attempt to write of the god's evergreen boughs: "se non che forse Apollo si disdegna / ch'a parlar de' suoi sempre verdi rami / lingua mortal presumptüosa vegna" (except that perhaps Apollo is incensed that any mortal tongue should come presumptuous to speak of his eternally green boughs [5.12–14]). The poet's mortality, his non-eternity—his "lingua mortal"—is thus firmly established by *Rvf* 5's conclusion, as well as the link between the last syllable of the beloved's name with finality and with all the many finite things of the world: the opposite of the non-finite plenitude of God.

Laura indeed *is* multiplicity. Her hair (in Italian, we should not forget, *capelli* is plural, like *fragmenta*), scattered to the wind in "mille dolci nodi" in *Rvf* 90 (a thousand sweet knots [2]), is the chief of many poetic signifiers of her function as carrier of multiplicity. Unlike Beatrice, who exists in an iconic present tense until she dies, when she is reborn into an even more potent present tense, Laura exists primarily in the past. Her poet does not keep her immune from the passage of time; rather, he uses her to mark the passage of time. Let us consider a paradigmatic sonnet like *Rvf* 90, "Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi." Here, as frequently throughout his lyric collection, Petrarch uses the traits and motifs of stilnovism—of theologized courtliness—to achieve very different goals from those of Guinizzelli or Dante.

The key to those goals is Petrarch's use of the imperfect tense—a past tense—to capture Laura's traits. Indeed, *Rvf* 90 begins, very subtly but very strongly, with the imperfect of the verb "to be," *Erano*: her hairs of gold *were* scattered by the wind. The imperfect tense, the tense of ongoing incomplete

action in the past, is the tense of memory par excellence; it is the tense of narration, in which the “I” captures and caresses the past as he conjures it and holds it in his memory. The “I” and his thought process are the poem’s subject (and the only matter to exist in the present); the lady—evanescent, transient, mortal—is the vehicle for catching the “I” in the process, catching him in the web. The imperfect tense that defines Laura in this poem—“Non *era* l’andar suo cosa mortale, / ma d’angelica forma” (Her walk *was* not that of a mortal thing but of some angelic form [9–10; italics mine])—is the marker of her mortality, which functions as a catalyst for the poet to meditate on his own mortality. Her step may not seem mortal, but mortal is precisely what it is, and the “angelic form” she possesses is claimed in a spirit of elegiac hyperbole, not in a spirit of genuine mystical affirmation. She is no longer the Lady as Manifestation of the Transcendent—who exists in a syntactic eternal present, as we can see in Dante’s sonnet “Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare”—but the Lady as Measurer of My Mortality.

For Petrarch, desire is more important as a modality through which to experience the passing of time than it is as an experience in itself. In this respect too he differs from Dante, who is primarily a love poet, in the sense that he is a poet for whom love is a primary experience and for whom understanding the workings of love in human life and in the universe at large is a primary goal. Dante’s definition of desire as spiritual motion, “disire, / ch’è moto spiritale” (*Purg.* 18.31–32), is a primary entrance into Dante’s thought, glossing the path of life on which we find ourselves in the *Commedia*’s first verse as the path of desire, a path on which we move because propelled by desire, and ultimately showing us that the love and desire that move the individual—“amor mi mosse” (love moved me [*Inf.* 2.72])—move the cosmos as well: “l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stelle” (the love that moves the sun and the other stars [*Par.* 33.145]). Petrarch is a poet for whom understanding the deep springs of desire is secondary to his meditation on what it is to be a self that is caught in the flux of time. Petrarch is in fact always doing what Augustinus in the *Secretum* exhorts him to do: he is always meditating on death, and for him love and desire are merely a means for furthering such a meditation.

Simply stated, my point is that the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* are not primarily erotic: erotics are secondary in the *Fragmenta* to multiplicity and time and the subjection of the self to these forces. This is not to say that eros is nonexistent in the *Fragmenta*, but that it is subject to time, which super-

sedes and vanquishes desire in precisely the way that is dramatized by the *Triumphs*. The *Triumphs* represent existence as a succession of great forces which overcome each other in sequence: love is overcome by chastity, chastity by death, death by fame, fame by time, and finally—in a tellingly flawed bid to step outside of the succession and to trump all successiveness—time is overcome by eternity. In Petrarch's inward-centered lyric sequence, as in the more outward-focused world-historical sequence of triumphs, the object of desire is finally most important as a signifier of the passing of time.

This subordination of eros to a meditation on mortality is already abundantly clear in *Rvf* 12, where Laura's blond hair, which first appears in the preceding poem, the ballata "Lassare il velo," as an erotic fetish, is turned—so early in the *Fragmenta!*—into a marker of mortality.²¹ In fact, *Rvf* 12 presages *Rvf* 90, where the captivating tableau of her hair in its sweet knots of multiplicity immediately plunges us into contact with her mortality: "Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi / che 'n mille dolce nodi gli avolgea, / e 'l vago lume oltra misura ardea / di quei begli occhi ch'or ne son sì scarsi" (Her golden hair was loosed to the breeze, which turned it into a thousand sweet knots, and the lovely light burned without measure in her eyes, which are now so stingy of it [1–4]). The mortality that is explicit in verse 4 of "Erano i capei d'oro," where we confront the dimming of Laura's eyes, and thus the change that has brought about the diminished present tense of "ch'or ne son sì scarsi," is already inscribed into the caressing and elegiac imperfect with which the sonnet begins.

Rvf 12, the sonnet "Se la mia vita da l'aspro tormento," picks up and elaborates on *Rvf* 5's positioning of Laura as a function of time. *Rvf* 12's golden hairs, its "capei' d'oro," are the threads of time, as throughout the *Fragmenta*. Here Petrarch imagines them, in a precise anticipation of "Erano i capei d'oro," where her hair does not change color but the luster of her eyes is dimmed, in the process of changing from gold to silver: "e i cape' d'oro fin farsi d'argento" (and your hair of fine gold made silver [12.5]). This sonnet is threaded with time, and with the language of time, even more densely packed than usual because of the premise: the poet imagines himself and Laura grown old. The result is that we find a language of time that covers the spectrum from the intertextually evocative (the "verdi panni" that the aging Laura puts aside along with her garlands evoke the "green" youth of the lady in Dante's sestina) to the most quintessentially Petrarchan: *Rvf* 12 contains both *oro* (gold) and *ora* (hour), talismanic lexical choices

that cluster around the adverb *ora/or* (now), one of the *Fragmenta*'s most frequently used words.²²

The syllable *or* is ubiquitous, and it functions in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* like the ticking of a clock or the sound of one's breath: it is the very sound of time. (Thus, when in the *Triumphus Eternitatis* Petrarch makes *ora* one of his synonyms for the eternal, he is not only emulating the Boethian *totum simul* but also literally bundling up time into the folds of eternity.)²³ *Or* is also a sound that we encounter immediately, in *Rvf* 1, whose "Ma ben veggio **or** sì come al popol tutto" (9) is reinforced by rhyme words—some of the most common of the *Fragmenta*—that contain the *or* sound: "core" in verse 2, "errore" in verse 3, "dolore" in verse 6, and "amore" in verse 7.²⁴

In *Rvf* 12, the poet imagines a future of at least qualified fulfillment, not of eros in the most obvious sense but of a perhaps even greater longing: the desire to speak of himself to her. He imagines a future when he and Laura will have grown old (a motif that recurs in the *Secretum* as well),²⁵ in which he will be able to unburden himself of the weight of living in time. This he will do by revealing himself to Laura, recounting to her the story of his sufferings, unraveling for her his existence as a being in time: "ch'i' vi discovrirò de' mei martiri / qua' sono stati gli anni e i giorni et l'ore" (I shall disclose to you what have been the years and the days and the hours of my sufferings [10–11]). In these verses Petrarch conjures a future in which his past—made discrete and quantified through the temporal intervals that mark it, from years, to days, to hours—will be literally "dis-covered" for Laura. And if, concludes the sonnet with a flourish of temporality, age (expressed as "tempo," the passing of time) will no longer permit the satisfaction of eros ("se 'l tempo è contrario ai be' desiri"; if time is hostile to my sweet desires [12]), by communicating with her in this way he will at least receive from Laura some succor of "tardy sighs": "alcun soccorso di tardi sospiri" (some little help of tardy sighs [14]).

We can better gauge the significance of the phrase "alcun **soccorso di tardi sospiri**" when we analyze it as a reconfiguration of Beatrice's fear that she will be too late to help the pilgrim in *Inferno* 2: "e temo che non sia già sì smarrito, / ch'io mi sia **tardi al soccorso** levata" (I am afraid that he may be already so lost that I have risen too late to help him [*Inf.* 2.64–65]).²⁶ For Dante, lateness is a narrative tool for depicting urgency: he uses lateness—against theological protocol, according to which a blessed soul like Beatrice

who sees the future in the mind of God would know full well that she is not too late—to conjure the urgency of Beatrice’s willed intervention. Thus, “tardi” is an adverb modifying Beatrice, who fears she is late in offering her “soccorsio.” For Petrarch, lateness itself has become the topic, as witnessed by the transferral of the epithet, with “tardi” now an adjective modifying “sospiri”: “soccorsio” will come—if it ever does come—from the “late sighs,” the “tardi sospiri.” Tardiness takes center stage, while Laura’s agency and concern are diminished.

The “tardi sospiri” of *Rvf* 12’s conclusion offer our first sighting of the Petrarchan adjective/verb cluster *tardo/tardare*, perhaps the poet’s quintessential means for conjuring belatedness: regret for time lost and for a future forever tarnished by what we failed to do in the past. Not for Petrarch the can-do optimism and psychological good health of staying focused on what we can control in the present, of leaving behind what is past and hence irreparable. Deep springs of regret nourish his poetry. They are frequently visible; for me they are most poignantly captured in one of the poet’s spare annotations. Above the draft of the sonnet “Mai non vedranno,” which became *Rvf* 322, Petrarch wrote: “Responsio mea sera valde”—“My response, late indeed.” “Mai non vedranno” was written as a response to Giacomo Colonna’s sonnet congratulating Petrarch on receiving the laurel crown in 1341; Giacomo himself died in August 1341, before Petrarch was able to reply to his congratulations. All the regret and belatedness that mark human interactions—all the things we wish we had said before it was forever too late to say them—are contained in the phrase “Responsio mea sera valde.”

“Se la mia vita” is an important poem: it inaugurates the lateness that hovers always in the air of the *Fragmenta*, as well as the fusing of future and past, which in the great canzone *Rvf* 126, “Chiare, fresche, et dolci acque,” will be compellingly used to create an aura of timeless present. It also works strongly against its predecessor, the ballata *Rvf* 11, “Lassare il velo,” to redefine the erotic as the temporal: to temporalize eros. The dynamic between *Rvf* 11 and *Rvf* 12 is worth attending to, for the temporalizing of eros is a signature move of the *Fragmenta*. The care to isolate the metaphysical component of eros, capturing it in his metaphysical net—“In rete accolgo l’aura” (*Rvf* 239.37)—is one that distinguishes Petrarch from other lyric love poets.

One could fairly make the case that Petrarch uses the ballata, as do his predecessors, to import some physicality—in this poem highly deflected by

the “veil” whose continual covering presence the lover deplures — into his poetry collection. “Lassare il velo” is the first ballata in the *Fragmenta* (most of the collection’s seven ballate are concentrated at the beginning, with five strung between 11 and 63), and it does for erotic physicality what *Rvf* 3, “Era il giorno,” does for falling into love: it constructs eros *ab initio* as an exercise in counterproductive behavior and frustration. In “Era il giorno,” the poet constructs a literal double bind that trumps the courtly use of *preso* as an expression of being captured by love: he is caught by love on the very day that the sun’s rays are discolored out of pity for their Maker (“Era il giorno ch’al sol si scoloraro / per la pietà del suo Factore i rai, / quando i’ fui preso”; “It was the day when the sun’s rays turned pale with grief for his Maker when I was taken” [3.1–3]), thereby ensuring that he is twice caught — for he is “preso” in a vice of guilt and remorse as well as in a vice of love. Similarly, in “Lassare il velo,” the veil is introduced as the agent of frustration. The lover wishes her to reveal herself, but from the moment that she came to know of his great desire, she will not let go the veil with which she keeps herself hidden: “Lassare il velo o per sole o per ombra, / donna, non vi vid’io / poi che in me conosceste il gran desio” (Lady, I have never seen you put aside your veil for sun or for shadow since you knew the great desire in me [11.1–3]).

This theme of desiring to know and withdrawing from being known is Cavalcantian, just as the ballata is Cavalcanti’s genre par excellence and *conoscenza* is his word for possession both erotic and meta-erotic: in *Rvf* 11 knowledge is transferred to the lady, so that the Cavalcantian lover’s typical failure to achieve *conoscenza* mutates into Laura’s punitive self-covering “poi che in me conosceste il gran desio” (3). Petrarch has introduced the veil into the Cavalcantian thematic as the lady’s method of wielding control over eros (“sì mi governa il velo”; thus the veil controls me [11.12]), which she does by covering the physical attributes, such as her hair, on which the lover wishes to gaze. And we should remember that the veil motif is closely related to the Diana/Actaeon thematic, made explicit in the extraordinary canzone that culminates the first part of the *Fragmenta*, *Rvf* 23, in which the lover’s *conoscenza* is not only denied but also severely punished.

The ballata “Lassare il velo” begins strongly, with the lady’s assertion of the control that frustrates the lover: she rejects eros by refusing to let go the veil — “Lassare il velo” — either by day or by night (“o per sole o per

ombra”). This same infinitive, *lassare*, which in *Rvf* 11 is so forceful a marker of the eros that it rejects, in the sonnet that follows becomes a marker of her mortality, as the aging Laura must “let go” the garlands and green raiment of her youth: “et **lassar** le ghirlande e i verdi panni” (12.6). More striking even is the fading of her hair: the blond hair that in the ballata Laura insists on veiling as soon as Love makes her aware of the poet’s feelings — “ma poi ch’Amor di me vi fece accorta, / fuor i **biondi capelli** allor velati” (but since Love has made you aware of me, your blond hair has been veiled [11.8–9]) — in *Rvf* 12 has morphed from gold to silver: “e i **cape’ d’oro** fin farsi d’argento” (and your hair of fine gold made silver [12.5]). The transition from “biondi capelli” to “cape’ d’oro” is telling: *biondo* does not, as *oro* does, evoke *ora*, nor does it belong to a scale of values on which gold degrades to silver.

There is more that one could say about the dynamic between “Lassare il velo” and “Se la mia vita,” especially around the theme of self-veiling: the physical self-revelation denied by the beloved in the ballata is achieved in a nonphysical dimension by the lover in the sonnet, whose answer to her covering veil is the process of “discovery” — “discovrirò” — whereby he unveils and reveals himself to her. But in our pursuit of *Petrarca metafisico* we shall now go back to *Rvf* 6, “Sì travïato è ’l folle mi’ desio,” a sonnet about the implacable irresistibility of eros in the spirit of Dante’s sonnet “Io sono stato con Amore insieme.” Here, as is most often the case with Petrarch, eros is communicated through frustration of desire (as compared, for example, to the aggressive consummation we find in Dante’s “Così nel mio parlar”), most emphatically in the identification of the poem’s “I” with Apollo as he pursues, gains, and loses Daphne. Thus the perilous analogy between the poet and Apollo, the disdainful god who was introduced by name in *Rvf* 5, is continued beyond the metapoetic into the erotic domain. The lover of *Rvf* 6 is in the grip of a *folle desio* that transports him to his death against his will: “i’ mi rimango in signoria di lui, / che mal mio grado a morte mi trasporta” (I remain in his power, as against my will he carries me off to death [6.10–11]). Love’s dominance is captured by the pent-up energy of “che mal mio grado a morte mi trasporta,” a verse whose furious slowness reflects the self’s frustrated resistance and ultimate surrender. But then, in the moment of surrender, the poem turns. The lover rushes headlong to his death — but nothing climactic happens. Or rather, what happens is an anti-climax that only intensifies the previous frustration; he rushes

headlong to his death—only to reach the laurel, where one gathers bitter fruit: “che mal mio grado a morte mi trasporta: / sol per venir al lauro onde si coglie / acerbo frutto” (6.11–13).

In its delineation of two bleak alternatives, death or the laurel’s bitter fruit, *Rvf* 6 is a precise prolepsis of *Rvf* 22, the sestina that, with the canzone that follows it, serves as the climax or ending of the *Fragmenta*’s beginning micro-*canzoniere*. But for the moment I am interested in the use of the word *sol* in “sol per venir al lauro” in verse 12 of *Rvf* 6. The *Fragmenta*’s first use of *sol* as “sun” belongs to the *incipit* of *Rvf* 3, “Era il giorno ch’al sol si scolaro.” Solar imagery begins to be associated with Laura in *Rvf* 4, where her birth is heralded as that of a sun, “ed or di picciol borgo un sol n’è dato” (and now from a small village He has given us a sun [4.12]), and is reprised in the elaborate conceit of *Rvf* 9, a sonnet in which the creative effects of a springtime sun on the earth are compared to the effects of Laura’s eyes on the lover: “così costei, ch’è tra le donne un sole, / in me movendo de’ begli occhi i rai / cria d’amor pensieri, atti et parole” (Thus she who among ladies is a sun, moving the rays of her lovely eyes, in me creates thoughts, acts, and words of love [10–12]). Of course her eyes are both solar and not, given that *Rvf* 9 concludes by swerving toward one of the collection’s great verses of deprivation: “primavera per me pur non è mai” (spring for me still never comes [9.14]). However she deploys her eyes, for him springtime never comes: the *tronchezza* of the “I” is perfectly reflected in the *verso tronco*, “primavera per me pur non è mai,” that seals this poem. And deprivation continues as a theme, for *Rvf* 10 registers the first use of *troncare/tronco*, sutured to the adjective “sol” to signify the deprivation that Giacomo Colonna “alone” can cause, punning on him as an absent sun: “ma tanto ben sol tronchi et fai imperfecto / tu che da noi, signor mio, ti scompagne” (But so much good you alone cut short and make imperfect, for you keep yourself, my Lord, far from us [10.13–14]).²⁷

The “sol” of *Rvf* 6’s “sol per venir al lauro” is also connected to loss: it constitutes the text’s first instance of the adverb *solo*, “only,” and it signifies precisely privation, instead of the plenitude of the sun, which at the same the homonym evokes. Indeed, we could say that the sun god Apollo of *Rvf* 5 is obliquely present in the *sol* of *Rvf* 6, and that “sol per venir al lauro” suggests the moment in which Apollo—*sol*—catches up with Daphne and gets nothing, remaining *sol* (alone). Like the adverb, the adjective *solo/sola*, “alone,” can also register privation, although it is an ambivalent signifier: as

we shall see, and as already suggested in the *solo* that modifies Giacomo Colonna in *Rvf* 10, it is also capable of denoting the One in its simple fullness. Both erotic privation and erotic fullness are present in *Rvf* 22, the *sestina* where we find the *Fragmenta*'s most erotically charged uses of the adjective—"n un sol giorno" (in but one day [28]), "sol una nocte" (just one night [33])—entwined with the rhyme word *sole*.

This double valence of *sol*—both plenitude and privation—will come to fruition in the sun of the *Triumphus Temporis*, which is not a nourishing presence but a destructive and all-consuming one. Thus, the sun of *Triumphus Temporis* is not the "Almo Sol" of *Rvf* 188, not a nurturer. But even the sun of the sonnet "Almo Sol," we remember, belies the descriptor *almo* and is ultimately a grower of shadow, not of life, for it is shadow that grows while the poet speaks: "L'ombra che cade da quel' humil colle [. . .] crescendo mentr'io parlo" (The shadow that falls from that low hill [. . .] growing as I speak [188.9, 12]). The nuance and ambivalence of *Rvf* 188, the conjunction of *almo* with *ombra*, is altogether removed from the sun of the *Triumphus*: the protagonist sun that emerges "sì ratto" from its golden hostel at the outset of *Triumphus Temporis* signals full-blown and uncontrolled temporal anxiety. The transition from verse 1 to verse 2 of *Triumphus Temporis* distills the difference in tone of the *Fragmenta* and the *Triumphus*. From the elegiac *incipit*, "De l'aureo albergo, co l'Aurora inanzi," which is not out of step with many verses of the *Fragmenta*, especially in the later sections of part 1 where Aurora takes the place of Daphne, we move to the uncompromising urgency of "sì ratto usciva il Sol cinto di raggi," a verse whose latent anxiety is reinforced and made explicit by the bizarre domesticity of "che detto avresti:—E' si corcò pur dianzi!" (From its golden inn, with the Dawn in front, so fast did the Sun exit banded with rays, that you would have said "He just now went to bed!" [TT 1–3]). This third verse, conjuring the whirlwind of adult life in which it seems as though "we just went to bed" as nights bleed into dawn and dawns into nights, gives the full measure of the fearsome yet so familiar *Sol* of the *Triumphus Temporis* (as perhaps the domesticity of the verse gives the measure of the *Triumphus*'s odd modernity).

Petrarch builds much complexity into *sol* as noun, as adverb, and as adjective. This is not surprising given the freighted value of solitude for Petrarch, who penned a treatise entitled *De vita solitaria* on the moral worth of solitude, and yet associates solitude with love and with Laura in the *Fragmenta*. Here too we come back to the core issue of the one/many: solitude

is a moral good for Petrarch precisely because it offers the self an opportunity to be collected, rather than to be dispersed in the multiplicity of the crowd. At the same time, Petrarch invests solitude with his typical ambiguity, and so we find that Augustinus in the *Secretum* upbraids Franciscus for seeking solitude: because solitude reinforces his love for Laura (as we see, for example, in *Rvf* 129, the canzone “Di pensier in pensier,” where solitude is one element in a recipe for conjuring Laura), Augustinus counsels Franciscus to seek the city crowds as an antidote to love.²⁸

Perhaps most significant of the forms from this verbal cluster with respect to the one/many problematic is *solo/sola*, “alone,” which as one of Laura’s key adjectives carries not the sense of privation but the sense of Neoplatonic plenitude we associate with the end of Plotinus’ *Enneads*: “alone unto the Alone I go.” We saw precisely this meaning in the *Triumphus Eternitatis*: in eternity “non avrà loco *fu*, sarà, ned *era*, / ma è *solo*, in *presente*, et *ora*, et *oggi*, / e *sola* eternità raccolta e ’ntera” (67–69; italics in original). For Laura too, the adjective *sola* signals—again with typical Petrarchan ambiguity—that Laura, carrier of multiplicity, is also the opposite of multiplicity: she is alone, she is unique, she is the One. The importance of *sola* can be better gauged if we bear in mind that the final attributes of the Virgin in *Rvf* 366 are “unica et *sola*” (133), and that this designation immediately follows the final definition of the self’s condition as time-bound, given that “sì corre il tempo et vola” (time so runs and flies [366.132]). This final rhyme of *sola* with *vola* is a way of indicating the Virgin’s ability to redeem our time-boundedness, our multiplicity, through her unicity, her oneness. The Virgin is a beacon of salvation precisely because she is beyond time, beyond multiplicity. Laura is not beyond time and she is not beyond multiplicity; she is indeed, as we have seen, from the beginning of the *Fragmenta* constructed as a being synonymous with multiplicity and also therefore synonymous with mortality, for a being’s mortality is precisely that which defines it as one of the many—not *unica e sola*. And yet, through much of the *Fragmenta*, Laura, who denotes time, can also catalyze the lover’s ecstatic stepping outside of time.

We encounter *sola* first in *Rvf* 14, modifying death, which “alone can stop the lover’s thoughts from pursuing the amorous path that leads to Laura” (“Morte pò chiuder *sola* a’ miei pensieri / l’amoroso camin che gli conduce” [14.5–6]), and then paradigmatically in *Rvf* 17, which tells us that through Laura “alone the self is divided from the world”: “per cui *sola* dal

mondo i' son diviso" (4). Here again, as with *Rvf* 5, a sonnet that presents itself as a rhetorical conceit in fact broaches metaphysical issues. The conceit of "Piovonmi amare lagrime dal viso" is meteorological and involves eyes, which have been present—both his and hers—since *Rvf* 3, where her beautiful eyes bind him and Love finds the path open through his eyes to his heart. In "Piovonmi amare lagrime," the tears from his eyes fall like rain from his face when it happens that he turns his eyes toward her—toward the one through whom alone he is divided from the world. At the same time her eyes are also invoked, in an astrological key that recalls her solar eyes in *Rvf* 9; in *Rvf* 17 her eyes are the stars that guide him, "le mie fatali stelle" (my fated stars [17.11]). This is a conceit that anticipates the so-called *canzoni degli occhi* (canzoni of Laura's eyes), *Rvf* 71–73. In *Rvf* 73 Laura's eyes are the beacons and the sole comfort ("conforto solo" [73.51]) that guide the self through the sea of love's multiplicity and chaos; her eyes are the two lights that allow the weary helmsman to guide his ship through love's gale of wind:

Come a forza di vènti
 stanco nocchier di notte alza la testa
 a' duo lumi ch'à sempre il nostro polo,
 così ne la tempesta
 ch'i' sostengo d'Amor, gli occhi lucenti
 sono il mio segno e 'l mio conforto solo.
 (73.46–51)

As in the force of the winds the tired helmsman at night
 lifts his head to the two lights that our pole always has, thus
 in the tempest I endure of love those shining eyes are my
 constellation and my only comfort.

The question of the lady's role in the *Fragmenta* is a complex one, since she sometimes is presented as the guide she is in *Rvf* 73, and sometimes his love for her is an obstacle on the path to salvation. She is a Beatrice-like figure, for instance, already in *Rvf* 13, the sonnet "Quando fra l'altre donne ad ora ad ora," where we learn that Laura leads to God: from her derives an amorous thought that, as long as one follows it, guides to the highest good

(“Da lei ti vèn l’amoroso pensiero, / che mentre ’l segui al sommo ben t’invia” [9–10]). However, I say “Beatrice-like” advisedly, since even here what Petrarch is doing is not the same as what Dante does: this strain of Petrarch’s love poetry cannot be correctly labeled “stilnovist,” as it usually is, since it is not congruent with stilnovism to introduce the concept of physical love as that which all men crave but which Laura’s lover is able to devalue.²⁹ In a true stilnovist sonnet such as Dante’s “Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare,” for instance, physical love is a nonissue, a nonpresence in the poem, while in *Rvf* 13 Petrarch conjures “quel ch’ogni huom desia” (11) in order to say that he has been rendered proof against such desire (again, the form working at cross purposes to the content). By the same token, it is instructive to use Dante in evaluating the verse “per cui sola dal mondo i’ son diviso,” which recalls but deviates from Dante’s first great tribute to Beatrice in *Inferno* 2: “O donna di virtù, sola per cui / l’umana spezie eccede ogni contento / di quel ciel c’ha minor li cerchi sui” (O lady of power, through whom alone the human race rises above all the contents of that heaven whose circles are smallest [*Inf.* 2.76–78]).

Two points need to be made here. The first regards the meaning of Dante’s words, around which a dispute has grown as modern commentators have shied away from the traditional—more radical and Dantean—understanding of the verse, whereby “sola per cui” modifies “donna,” and therefore have suggested that “sola per cui” modifies “virtù.” I heartily endorse Chiavacci Leonardi in her insistence that this interpretation constitutes “a grave critical error.”³⁰ The Dante of the *Vita Nuova*’s canzone “Donne ch’avete intelletto d’amore” was already making theologically hyperbolic claims for his then still-living lady: to resist these claims is to resist the heart of his incarnational poetics. My second point is that Petrarch understands Dante as using the “sola per cui” construction to refer to Beatrice, and reconfigures it to suit his own less incarnational and more Neoplatonic brand of hyperbole. In other words, we can use these two *sola per cui* constructions as indices with respect to the different natures of the transfigured realities to which these ladies give their poets access. Beatrice is an agent for change on earth, the means for humans to surpass morally all other sublunary created beings. Laura operates in a more private dimension: her poet cares less about improving the moral status of other earthlings than he does about separating himself from earth altogether. Laura serves not to transform earth but as the means for separating her poet from it, dividing and removing him from its chaos and multiplicity.

The question of Laura's significance is not one that we can exhaust here. For the time being, it is important to note that *Rvf* 17's "per cui *sola* dal mondo i' son *diviso*" initiates a meditation on her deep value for the poet. Likewise, the rhyme words *diviso*, *riso*, and *fiso* in *Rvf* 17 anticipate two important canzoni groups, both of which I view as "metaphysical islands" of particular weight within the *mare magnum* of the *Fragmenta*: the *canzoni degli occhi* and canzoni 125–29. The terms *diviso* and *fiso*, which appear in "Piovonmi amare lagrime dal viso" for the first time, are markers of a meta-erotic and quasi-mystical state. The trigger for this state is frequently Laura's smile, *riso*, which also makes its first appearance here: Laura's "dolce mansueto *riso*" (sweet mild smile [17.5]) quiets the lover's ardent desire. Concentrating on Laura, staring at her intently and fixedly—"mentr'io son a mirarvi intento et *fiso*" (as long as I am intent and fixed on watching you [17.8])—he is released from suffering.

This sequence of events from *Rvf* 17 turns out to be a template for Petrarch's anxious metaphysical quest: in *Rvf* 73 a peace similar to that of heaven moves from the *riso* of her eyes ("Pace tranquilla senza alcuno affanno, / simile a quella ch'è nel ciel eterna, / move da lor inamorato *riso*"; Tranquil peace without any trouble, like that which is eternal in Heaven, moves from their lovely smile [67–69]); to look *fiso* upon her eyes ("Così vedess'io *fiso*"; Might I see thus fixedly [70]) would provide the lover his own brand of Augustinian extra-temporal trance. Like *fiso*, the word *diviso* figures in canzoni with strong metaphysical currents, such as *Rvf* 126, "Chiare, fresche et dolci acque," where the lover achieves an ecstatic state as a result of being cut off—*diviso*—from physical reality through the agency of the lady's attributes, including her *dolce riso*: "Così carco d'oblio / il divin portamento / e 'l volto e le parole e 'l dolce *riso* / m'aveano, et si *diviso* / da l'immagine vera" (Her divine bearing and her face and her words and her sweet smile had so laden me with forgetfulness and so divided me from the true image [126.56–60]). An early model for the ecstasy-inducing Laura of *Rvf* 73 and *Rvf* 126 is thus provided by *Rvf* 17's "per cui *sola* dal mondo i' son *diviso*" (where too, *diviso* rhymes with *riso*): her plenitude—her oneness—divides him from divisibility, protects him from multiplicity.³¹

The first poems of the *Fragmenta* inaugurate many of the collection's key motifs and concerns. The motif of voyage, for instance, is linked to the metaphysical grounding of this text because it figures forth the linearity—the multiplicity—of the life-experience through time and permits the poet

to dramatize the various strategies of the self to defeat time. The *incipit* of *Rvf* 15, the sonnet “Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo,” is emblematic of the self’s refusal to move forward that is characteristic of part 1 of the *Fragmenta*, a “non-narrativity” deployed as a means of outsmarting time (according to my formula whereby “in part 1 narrative is avoided because the goal is to stop time, resist death; in part 2 narrative is invoked because in order to preserve her as she was he must preserve her in time”).³² This backward-looking “Orpheus” motif, this stance of *rivolgersi indietro*, moreover, allows the poet to explore the important theme of memory, introducing memory as “part 1’s non-forward moving mechanism par excellence”: and, indeed, “Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo” offers the collection’s first instances of *ripensare* (“Poi ripensando al dolce ben ch’io lasso”; Then, thinking back on the sweet good I leave behind [15.5]) and *rimembrare* (“Ma rispondemi Amor: Non ti rimembra / che questo è privilegio degli amanti”; But Love replies to me: ‘Do you not remember that this is a privilege of lovers’ [15.12–13]).

The journey theme of “Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo,” and the journeyer’s “corpo stanco ch’a gran pena porto” (weary body which with great effort I carry forward [15.2]), anticipate and contrast with the pilgrimage sonnet that follows, “Movesi il vecchierel canuto et bianco,” whose journeyer is also “rotto dagli anni, et dal camino stanco” (broken by the years and tired by the road [16.8]), but where the voyage is uncharacteristically forward rather than backward moving. The strong “Movesi” that launches *Rvf* 16 and the *cammino* that the old man avidly pursues, “seguendo ’l desio” (following his desire [16.9]), tell us that we are in Dantean territory: this is the language of Dante’s psychology of desire, according to which life is a pilgrimage on which we are propelled by desire, spiritual motion (“disire, / ch’è moto spiritale” [*Purg.* 18.31–32]). In “Movesi il vecchierel,” of course, we are dealing with the exploitation of the old man’s belabored pilgrimage toward the Roman icon said to be imprinted with Christ’s image (the “Veronica” or “true image”), which in the last tercet is revealed to be an elaborate term of comparison for the lover, who with equal determination pursues his lady’s “forma vera”: “così, lasso, talor vo cerchand’io, / donna, quanto è possibile, in altrui / la disiata vostra forma vera” (Thus, alas, at times I go searching in others, Lady, as much as is possible, for your longed-for true form [16.12–14]). The profanation of the sacred for which this sonnet is famous does not, however, mean that its metaphysical concerns are not

serious; provocatively stripped of a theological context, the self's quest to verify the metaphysical basis of his beloved—her “forma vera”—is all the more exquisitely and urgently etched.

In this essay I have looked at verbal expressions of the *Fragmenta*'s profoundly metaphysical foundation, a foundation that grounds the themes for which the collection is known, such as its psychologizing treatment of love, or its incipient romanticizing of nature. The sonnet “Gloriosa columna in cui s'appoggia,” for instance, is cited by Contini for its “così moderna comunicazione con la natura”;³³ while I do not disagree, it is important to note that the poet's call to substitute “palazzi [. . .] teatro o loggia” (palaces, theater, or gallery [10.5]) with “un abete, un faggio, un pino” (a fir tree, a beech, a pine [10.6]) engages a dialectic between particulars and universals that is fundamentally metaphysical. The very language “un abete, un faggio, un pino” reveals the underlying query— are we speaking of particular firs, or essence of fir?— a query that radically informs later evocations of Laura, as indeed it informs the issue of her “forma vera” in *Rvf* 16. It is appropriate that this query would be latent in *Rvf* 10, for “Gloriosa columna” is the poem that introduces the marker *columna/colonna* that stands to the Colonna family as *lauro* stands to Laura. These are signs that Petrarch uses to play with the question of particularity versus universality, since “column” and “laurel” can be more readily construed as universals than an individual person or family. These universalizing code-names are treated by Petrarch in ways that continue his program of ambivalence: for on the one hand they work to universalize the particular, but on the other they suggest the fungibility—the non-particularity— of all particulars, which have in common a universal condition of mortality. For instance, the labels are exchanged, with *colonna* in key contexts attached to Laura, as in *Rvf* 126's “gentil ramo ove piacque / (con sospir' mi rimembra) / a lei di fare al bel fiancho **colonna**” (gentle branch where it pleased her [with sighing I remember] to make a column for her lovely side [4–6]). Here the sign that conjures the world of male friendship and patronage crosses over to the female and erotic passion; it is used to elide the world of the column with the world of the laurel.

Nowhere do we see these universals used to achieve a sense of interchangeability and non-particularity more effectively than in the poem of crossing over— of chiasmus— that is *Rvf* 266, the sonnet “Signor mio caro.” In *Rvf* 266 Petrarch celebrates both eighteen years of love for Laura and

fifteen years of friendship with Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, and chiasmus is the trope that he employs to render Laura and the cardinal fully fungible:

Carità di signore, amor di donna
 son le catene ove con molti affanni
 legato son, perch'io stesso mi strinsi.
 Un **lauro** verde, una gentil **colonna**,
 quindecim l'una, et l'altro diciotto anni
 portato ò in seno, et già mai non mi scinsi.
 (266.9–14)

Devotion to my lord, love of my lady are the chains where
 with much labor I am bound, and I myself took them on!
 A green Laurel, a noble Column, the latter for fifteen,
 the former for eighteen years, I have carried in my breast
 and have never put from me.

The tercets of this remarkable sonnet feature a double multi-verse chiasmus, in which an ABBA combination is reversed to BAAB through the deployment of three elements referring to the cardinal (“Carità di signore” aligns with “una gentil columna,” which aligns with “quindecim l’una”) and three elements referring to Laura (“amor di donna” aligns with “Un lauro verde,” which aligns with “et l’altro diciotto anni”). This protracted double chiasmus is buttressed by two single-verse ABBA grammatical chiasmi in lines 12 and 13 (the first is a noun/adjective/adjective/noun sequence [*lauro/verde/gentil/columna*], while the second is a number/pronoun/pronoun/number sequence [*quindecim/una/altro/diciotto*]). Moreover, Petrarch reverses grammatical and sexual genders to further suggest interchangeability in this passage: the phrases signifying the male cardinal (“Carità di signore” and “una gentil columna”) are feminine, as underscored by the feminine pronoun that aligns with them in “quindecim l’**una**,” while the phrases signifying the female Laura (“amor di donna” and “Un lauro verde”) are masculine, as highlighted by “et l’**altro** diciotto anni.”

But what is important about this rhetorical play is how it moves us toward thinking of categories, rather than individuals: the categories of noun, adjective, pronoun, and number, the categories of gender, the categories of

love and friendship, or—if we switch over from the chains of *Rvf* 266 to the golden chains of the *Secretum*—the categories of love and glory (since both are embedded in the laurel, they can both easily be embedded in the column as well). The distillation of individuals into categories allows Petrarch to manipulate them—like numbers, like figures in a patterned sequence (ABBA, BAAB)—and to consider them in different relationships, in different pairings, in different intellectual contexts: in a word, to consider them abstractly. Indeed, these categories prod us to think abstractly, philosophically, metaphysically. They prod us to think in precisely the way that Alfieri is not thinking when he writes, famously, about the column of *Rvf* 10: “una colonna non cammina” (a column does not walk).³⁴ Petrarch, held up as a mirror of stylistic perfection, is here taken to task because he got his image wrong—columns don’t walk, after all—when what is most interesting about Petrarch is here overlooked: Petrarch is interesting precisely because his cast of mind tends toward the abstract, the universal, the numerical, and the metaphysical, while at the same time his desires remain rooted in the particular, the contingent, the immanent, and the physical.

Petrarch is a metaphysical poet. He does not feign his inclination toward the abstract; it is deeply inscribed into his poetic personality, like the abstract ciphers we are forced to manipulate as we thread our way through the intricate and abstract labyrinth of the *Fragmenta*. He does not feign his inclination toward the abstract any more than he feigns his love for the particular, individual, physical objects that his labyrinth showcases with longing and regret. It is wrong to think that he is in bad faith, as he one moment caresses the *cosa bella mortal* and the next disavows it: the internal Petrarchan fault line of so much critical discourse (the *dissidio* of the *secolare commento*) is essentially his personal metaphysical dance between the one and the many, preserved as poetry, and it is real.

NOTES

1. I endeavored to explain the metaphysical properties of the lyric sequence as a form in “The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,” *MLN* 104 (1989): 1–38, rpt. in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 193–223 (hereafter pages refer to the rpt.). There I discuss metaphysical issues—time, the one, and the many—in relation to the construction of a lyric sequence. My goal

now is to unpack the position, expressed in passing in 1989, that “this text is more philosophic than romantic” (205).

2. The common view is that Petrarch rejected metaphysics along with scholasticism and other forms of the medieval mindset: “In place of speculative metaphysical systems, of scientific, especially medical, investigation, of legal codification, he puts grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, moral philosophy”; see Peter Hainsworth, *Petrarch the Poet: An Introduction to the “Rerum vulgarium fragmenta”* (London: Routledge, 1988), 4. While not without elements of truth, this commonplace requires considerable nuancing.

3. My critical and structural overview of the *Fragmenta* is presented, with a chart, in “The Self in the Labyrinth of Time (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*)” in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

4. As Santagata notes in his commentary to sonnet 2: “Se 1 risponde ai canoni dell’*exordium*, la serie 2–5 rispetta quelli dell’*initium narrationis*, con l’utilizzazione di *loci a re* (2 *causa*, 3 *tempus*) e a *persona* (4 *patria*, 5 *nomen*)” (13). See *Canzoniere*, ed. Marco Santagata (Milan: Mondadori, 1996); all citations are from this edition. Unless I need to render the sense more literally, the excellent translations are those of Robert M. Durling, *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The “Rime sparse” and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1976). When I use bold rather than italics for emphasis, I am indicating the presence of a “metaphysical marker.”

5. The metaphor of the self as dispersed unless gathered in God is fundamental to the *Confessions*, where we find: “et colligens me a dispersione” (recollecting myself from dispersion [*Conf.* 2.1]); “id est velut ex quadam dispersione colligenda” (like being gathered together from dispersion [*Conf.* 10.11]); “in te, quo colligantur **sparsa** mea” (in you, in whom all my scattered parts are gathered [*Conf.* 10.40]); “colligas totum quod sum a dispersione et deformitate hac” (you wholly gather all that I am from this dispersion and deformity [*Conf.* 12.16]). The text of the *Confessions* is from the Loeb edition, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1976); the translation is R. S. Pine-Coffin’s (London: Penguin, 1961).

6. Another example of the use of *recolligere* for the self in the *Secretum* is: “cum diurnis curis relaxatus animus se in se ipsum recolligit” (Book 1, 58). The edition used is that of Enrico Carrara, in *Prose* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1955).

7. The translation of the *Physics* by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye is from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941). The Latin for this passage is “hoc enim est tempus, numerus motus secundum prius et posterius.” It is cited by Enrico Berti in his article “Fisica,” *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 6 vols. (Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970–78), 2:933–34, citation 933; for the Latin translation of Aristotle, see *Aristoteles Latinus*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello (Bruges and Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1953–78).

8. The Latin text is cited by Cesare Vasoli in his article “Tempo,” *Enciclopedia dantesca*, 5:546–51, citation 546.

9. The beautiful translation of the *Confessions* is the 1631 rendition of William Watts in the Loeb edition.

10. See also *Rvf* 62’s prayer for conversion to God, “piacciati omai, col Tuo lume, ch’io torni / ad altra vita” (let it please you at last that with your light I may return to a different life [5–6]), and sonnet 178’s “anti-conversion” to love, rendered as “conven ch’altra via segua” (it must follow another path [13]).

11. The other uses in *Triumphus Eternitatis* (*TE*) are *varia* in verse 33, *variar* in verse 41, and *variato* in verse 78, for a total of four. There are also two uses of *vari* in *Triumphus Cupidinis* (*TC*) 2.139. The *Triumph*i are cited in the edition by Marco Ariani (Milan: Mursia, 1988); translations are mine.

12. For Augustine’s self-conscious use of “little time words,” invoked as a way of delaying conversion, see *Confessions* 8.5: “et undique ostendenti vera te dicere, non erat omnino, quid responderem veritate convictus, nisi tantum verba lenta et somnolenta: ‘modo,’ ‘ecce modo,’ ‘sine paululum.’ sed ‘modo et modo’ non habebat modum et ‘sine paululum’ in longum ibat” (You used all means to prove the truth of your words, and now that I was convinced that they were true, the only answers I could give were the drowsy words of an idler—‘Soon,’ ‘Presently,’ ‘Let me wait a little longer.’ But ‘soon’ was not soon and ‘a little longer’ grew much longer). This passage from the *Confessions* is imitated by Petrarch in the *Secretum*: “Da michi castitatem, sed noli modo; differ paululum” (Book 2, 80).

13. The citation from Boyde comes from *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher: Man in the Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 219; I cite it in *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 173.

14. The Latin text of the *Consolation of Philosophy* is cited in the Loeb Classical Library edition, ed. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1936). The following discussion is based on Book 5, prose 6.

15. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* is cited in the edition of the Blackfriars, 61 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964–81). This citation from *Quaestio* 10, “De aeternitate Dei” (On the eternity of God), is from vol. 2, 1964, ed. and trans. Timothy McDermott, 144. Thomas notes that while eternity is *tota simul*, time contains a before and after: “in tempore autem est prius et posterius” (144). In *Quaestio* 10, article 1, Thomas defends and confirms Boethius’ definition of eternity from *Consolation of Philosophy* 5.6. His Aristotelian allegiance, on the other hand, is demonstrated by his discussion of time: in the course of his argument, he notes that we can only come to know eternity by way of time, which “nihil aliud est quam numerus motus secundum prius et posterius” (136).

16. This view is expounded in the *Paradiso* chapters of my *Undivine Comedy*.

17. The citation is from *Undivine Comedy*, 233; the treatment of *Paradiso* 28's paradoxes of form and content extends through 236. An elegant reading of Dante's metaphysics is provided by Christian Moevs, *The Metaphysics of Dante's "Comedy"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

18. The annotation may be found in the famous draft notebook ("codice degli abbozzi") preserved as the codex *Vaticano latino* 3196, which I cite from the useful edition of Laura Paolino: "transcripti isti duo in ordine, post mille annos" (816). See *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino (Milan: Mondadori, 1996).

19. And *mille* as signifier of unending multiplicity is also present in the *Secretum*: for instance, in the description of the pains of Hell as "**mille** suppliciorum, **mille** tortorum genera" (Book 1, 56).

20. Laura is associated with *mille* in the *incipit* of *Rvf* 21, "**Mille** fiat, o dolce mia guerrera." The only other sonnet to start with *mille* is "**Mille** piagge in **un** giorno et **mille** rivi," *Rvf* 177, whose *incipit* uses the *un/mille* marker to define Love as the tour guide that unifies the intricate multiplicity of the Ardenne forest.

21. Hair as a marker of the passing of time is also a motif of the *Secretum*, where Augustinus challenges Franciscus to note the changing of his face and the arrival of some white hairs: "nonne vultum tuum variari in dies singulos et intermicantes temporibus canos animadvertisti" (Book 3, 176).

22. *Oralor* appears 276 times and is the twenty-seventh most frequently occurring word in the collection, preceded by definite articles, prepositions, personal pronouns, and the like.

23. In Boethius' definition of eternity ("Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae *tota simul* et perfecta possessio") the words "*tota simul*" do not stand alone, since "*tota*" is an adjective. I have borrowed the handy nominal phrase "*totum simul*," which so well sums up this definition of eternity as all-at-once-ness, from Benvenuto da Imola, who uses it to gloss Dante's image of the universe bound in one volume in *Paradiso* 33: "*in un volume*, quasi dicat: '*totum simul*'" (Guido Biagi, ed., "*La Divina Commedia*" nella figurazione artistica e nel secolare commento, 3 vols. [Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1924–29], 3:742).

24. The chains of temporality that bind Franciscus in the *Secretum* are marked by the same *or* sound; they are "**Amor** et gloria" (Book 3, 132).

25. Augustinus reproves Franciscus for drawing comfort from the idea of his and Laura's mutual old age; see *Secretum*, Book 3, 185.

26. Santagata notes the provenance from *Inferno* 2 but does not analyze it. The text is *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–67). The translation is Robert M. Durling's, in *Inferno* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

27. The lover's mad desire is an uncontrollable steed that cannot be reined in. Sara Sturm-Maddox notes that Dante's sonnet "Io sono stato" is a precedent for Petrarch's *Rvf* 6, in *Petrarch's Metamorphoses: Text and Subtext in the "Rime Sparse"* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), 81–82.

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28. I am following Santagata, who opts for Giacomo as the absent Colonna, in place of the traditional choice of Stefano Colonna il Vecchio.

29. Augustinus exhorts Franciscus to avoid solitude, until he feels he has lost all traces of his love sickness: “Tam diu cavendam tibi solitudinem scito, donec sentias morbi tui nullas superesse reliquias” (*Secretum*, Book 3, 172).

30. Referring to this sonnet’s “situazione stilnovistica” (59), Santagata shows little appreciation for the ideological divergence from stilnovism captured by a verse like “pocho prezando quel ch’ogni huom desia” (little valuing what other men desire [13.11]). The error of viewing Petrarch as occasionally stilnovist, rather than viewing Petrarch as occasionally echoing and radically transforming stilnovist motifs, occurs throughout his commentary, egregiously in the treatment of the *canzoni degli occhi*.

31. See Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi, ed., *Inferno* (Milan: Mondadori, 1991), 61 and 71 for further discussion.

32. The question arises as to whether being *diviso* from everything by Laura is positive or negative for Petrarch. Santagata reads the effect of being *diviso* in *Rvf* 17 as negative (“effetto negativo della passione, denunciato in 360, 46–53 e condannato in *Secr.* III, p. 156 ‘tristis et amor solitudinis atque hominum fuga’; la stessa connotazione negativa in 292, 3–4 ‘che m’avean sì da me stesso diviso, / et fatto singular da l’altra gente’”), while also noting that “espressioni analoghe ritornano però anche in accezione del tutto positiva: cf. 323, 30 ‘che dal mondo m’avean tutto diviso’” (73). While I agree that, like *solo* and *solitario*, to which Santagata is linking *diviso*, *diviso* can have negative connotations in Petrarch’s lexicon, I hold that *diviso* has an ecstatic component not touched on by Santagata’s note and that in any case the negative and positive connotations are much more enmeshed than his reading suggests.

33. See “The Making of a Lyric Sequence,” 222; the quote in the next sentence is from 199.

34. Gianfranco Contini, *Letteratura italiana delle origini* (Florence: Sansoni, 1970), 582.

35. Cited in the edition of Giosuè Carducci and Severino Ferrari, *Le Rime* (Florence: Sansoni, 1899; rpt. 1957), 12.