CHAPTER ONE

THE SELF IN THE LABYRINTH OF TIME • *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*

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Petrarch's enduring collection of lyric poetry, the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Fragments of Vernacular Matters;* called variously *Canzoniere, Rime,* and *Rime sparse* but properly and authorially only *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*),[1] is—like all of Petrarch's work—obsessed with time: the medium that fragments us, makes us multiple and metamorphic, robs us of ontological stillness and wholeness. The *Fragmenta,* which thematizes fragmentation or multiplicity in its very title, conjures the existence of the self in time; we are beings subject to constant incremental change and to radical ontological instability. Aristotle defines time in the *Physics*—"For time is just this, number of motion in respect of 'before' and 'after'" (*Physics* 4.11.219b1)—in a passage cited by Dante in the *Convivio:* "Lo tempo, secondo che dice Aristotele nel quarto de la Fisica, è 'numero di movimento, secondo prima e poi'" (Time, according to Aristotle in the fourth book of the *Physics,* is "number of movement, according to before and after" [*Convivio* 4.2.6]). Asking "does [the 'now'] always remain one and the same or is it always other and other?" (*Physics* 4.10.218a9–10), Aristotle writes, "if the 'now' were not different but one and the same, there would not have been time" (*Physics* 4.11.218b27–28).[2] Time, therefore, comports difference, change, instability, absence of identity, oneness, and being: Petrarch's chosen themes. Hence, although it is not usual to associate Petrarch's lyric sequence, consisting mainly of love poetry, with a philosophical text like Aristotle's *Physics,* it is appropriate: time is a philosophical—indeed, a metaphysical—problem, and to the degree that time is the chief focus and concern of his poetry, Petrarch is a metaphysical poet. Metaphysical concerns, defined as first principles and ultimate grounds, such as being and time, are Petrarch's abiding concerns. 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, and these are the problems that he dramatized in his work.[3]

Let us begin by considering what we see when we pick up a copy of Petrarch's poetry book today. We see 366 poems of varied lyrical genres, all interspersed: 317 sonnets, 29 canzoni, 9 sestine, *7 ballate,* and 4 *madrigali* (for the allocation of these poems throughout the text, see the appendix "Metrical and Thematic Sets in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*" at the end of this essay). In most editions the 366 poems are—correctly—divided into two parts, with part 2 beginning about two-thirds of the way through the text, at poem 264, the canzone *I' vo pensando.* In many editions the two parts incorrectly bear headings that were added early in the editorial tradition: the heading "In vita di madonna Laura" (During the life of Lady Laura) and the heading "In morte di madonna Laura" (After the death of Lady Laura). Later on the beginning of part 2 was moved in order to accommodate the narrative story line told by the invented rubrics. From Pietro Bembo's 1514 edition until Mestica's 1896 edition, part 2 begins with sonnet 267, *Oimè il bel viso,* the first poem to register Laura's death, rather than with canzone 264, *I' vo pensando.* While the division of the text into two parts is Petrarch's, the headings and the transposed beginning of part 2 testify to readers' longstanding desire to impose a clear narrative onto the tenuous and opaque love story that the poems do not narrate so much as conjure and suggest.[4]

Of Laura, Petrarch's beloved, we know nothing beyond what he tells us: he first saw her and fell in love with her on April 6, 1327, in the Church of Saint Claire in Avignon. The precise date is declared in sonnet 211, *Voglia mi sprona,* a poem almost excluded from the collection),[5] which concludes: "Mille trecento ventisette, a punto/su l'ora prima, il dì sesto d'aprile,/nel laberinto entrai, né veggio ond'esca" (One thousand three hundred twenty-seven, exactly at the first hour of the sixth day of April, I entered the labyrinth, nor do I see where I may get out of it [*Fragmenta* 211.12–14]). The image of the labyrinth that Petrarch here offers as emblem for his existential experience is particularly telling: he is a writer who specializes in creating texts imbued with aporia, a term for insoluble contradiction or paradox that literally signifies "no passage," impassable, like a labyrinth. But this poet of impasse and dead ends also creates terrible symmetries; thus, Laura died on the same date that he first saw her, April 6, in the plague year of 1348, as specified in sonnet 336, *Tornami a mente:* "Sai che 'n mille trecento quarantotto,/il dì sesto d'aprile, in l'ora prima/del corpo uscìo quell'anima beata" (You know that in one thousand three hundred and forty-eight, on the sixth day of April, at the first hour, that blessed soul left the body [336.12–14]).[6] Laura's identity has eluded numerous attempts to ascertain it. Petrarch's love for her and failed attempts to attain

reciprocation from the chaste Laura are the thematic burden of part 1—to the degree that there is a theme to this text beyond the self's metamorphic existence in the labyrinth of time—while, again from the perspective of the "love story," her death and subsequent softening toward her lover dominate part 2.

Both Laura's fierce chastity and later imagined reciprocation are avenues Petrarch uses to dramatize and explore his own psyche, nuancing and psychologizing the narcissism and self-projection that typify the courtly tradition, in which the lady is present as foil to the male lover/poet but not as a subject with her own inner life and moral choices. Petrarch forged his identity against Dante's by going back to the courtly paradigm that Dante inherited, theologized, and then ultimately abandoned; Petrarch's reinstitutionalizing of the courtly paradigm had specific repercussions with respect to the construction of gender in the Italian tradition. Dante constructs women as moral agents in the *Commedia* and even before, already moving away from the courtly paradigm in which women exist only as projections of male desire in moral canzoni like *Doglia mi reca nello core ardire,* whose women possess desires of their own and are full interlocutors who require instruction in moral matters. Petrarch, by contrast, did not write vernacular poems like Dante's *Doglia mi reca,* in which Dante addresses women directly; Petrarch's moral poems, political poems, and poems of friendship address men rather than women. He does not show the commitment to female historicity and selfhood that we find in Dante.[7] Therefore, when we speak of the psychological richness that is dramatized in *Fragmenta,* we are speaking exclusively about the male lover/poet, as is typical in the courtly tradition.

Petrarch creates opportunities to explore psychological conflict and inner drama, for instance by telling us, for the first time in sonnet 3, *Era il giorno,* that he fell in love on Good Friday: "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]). In this way he builds into his collection a perennial source of tension and contradiction:[8] while he should have been focused on Christ's crucifixion, his eyes heavenward, instead he was falling in love with a mortal creature, his glance earthward. The poet has pinioned himself into a marvelously fertile bind, as we can see for instance in sonnet 62, *Padre del ciel,* a prayer in which he begs God to take pity on his "unworthy pain" by leading his thoughts back from where they are—fixed on Laura—to a "better place," namely, meditation on the crucifixion: "*miserere* del mio non degno affanno;/reduci i pensier' vaghi a miglior luogo;/ramenta lor come oggi fusti in croce" (have mercy on my unworthy pain, lead my wandering

thoughts back to a better place, remind them that today you were on the Cross [62.12–14]). Most strikingly, *Padre del ciel* not only tells of the aporia in which Petrarch situates himself, but actually *is* an aporia, incarnate as text, since it is simultaneously a prayer for repentance and a remembrance of the day he first saw Laura: "Or volge, Signor mio, l'undecimo anno/ch'i' fui sommesso al dispietato giogo" (Now turns, my Lord, the eleventh year that I have been subject to the pitiless yoke [62.9–10]).

The issue of whether and when the poet will ever achieve a "conversion" away from Laura to God—there are some poems in which his love for Laura is viewed as a means to reach above the immanent to the transcendent, like Dante's love for Beatrice, but there are others in which such love for a fellow human being, even Laura, is viewed in a negative light as a distraction from loving God—has divided critics. Some read the collection as dramatizing an achieved conversion. Others, including the author of this essay, do not, for instability is at the core of this work: thematically, psychologically, and as we shall see, textually and materially. With respect to the psychology and theology of conversion, instability is signaled by the fact that the collection's famous final poem is a prayer to the Virgin in which Petrarch is, precisely, still praying for help and still commanding his will to be full, while as Augustine notes. "The reason, then, why the command is not obeyed is that it is not given with a full will. *For if the will were full, it would not command itself to be full, since it would be so already.* It is therefore no strange phenomenon partly to will to do something and partly to will not to do it."[9] The logic of conversion is temporal, since conversion is an experience that involves a movement along the arrow of time from a self that is fragmented, changing, and unstable to a self that is whole, unchanging, and still; while the process of achieving conversion may involve much backsliding, as Augustine dramatizes in the *Confessions,* true conversion, once achieved, is by definition a condition from which there is no relapsing. Augustine's meditation in the *Confessions* on the process of achieving fullness of the will is intimately related to his need to tackle the question of time—the medium in which change occurs, and in which fullness cannot occur—within the same text, in book 11.

The *Fragmenta*'s 366 poems are mainly love poems, although there are 11 penitential or anti-love poems in which the lover repents of his love.[10] There are also 7 political poems and a larger group of moral and occasional poems.[11] The political, moral, and occasional poems to friends are interspersed among the love poems, as a way of demonstrating their participation in a universal set of problems. The overlapping of the political and erotic spheres, for instance, is structured into the text not only through

sequential ordering but also through lexicon and imagery: one of Laura's variants, the laurel (*lauro*), is connected to glory both political and poetic. Thus, while in this essay it will not be possible to focus on the political poems, I want to state clearly that our interpretation of a political canzone like *Italia mia* (128) must grapple with its position in a series of love poems, and that I do not endorse the interpretive schism best dramatized by the sixteenth-century editor Alessandro Vellutello, who in his 1528 edition of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* placed the political, moral, and occasional poems in a separate third section of his own invention.

The collection's love poems are arranged in a rough chronological order, and this history is highlighted by the existence of a set that critics have dubbed "anniversary poems": poems that commemorate the anniversary of the day and year when Petrarch first fell in love with Laura. The anniversary poems span 24 years, starting with 7 years after 1327, in 1334, and ending 31 years after 1327, in 1358. The fifteen poems mark the following years in the following order: 7 years, 10 years, 11 years, 14 years (twice), 15 years, 16 years, 17 years, 15 years, 20 years (twice), 18 years, 21 years, 24 years (3 years after Laura's death) and 31 years (10 years after her death).[12] These textual markers to April 6, 1327, are—along with the two date poems already cited—the "ciphers" to Petrarch's long obsession: these numbers provide the indispensable platform for any chronological understanding of the events in the *Fragmenta*.

As we can see from the fact that two of the anniversary poems are out of chronological order—a second poem commemorating fifteen years (poem 145) follows the seventeen-year marker, and a poem commemorating eighteen years (poem 266) follows the twenty-year marker—this platform is a shaky one. In truth, chronology and history are often violated by Petrarch, most flagrantly by the two out-of-order anniversary poems, which have caused much consternation in the text's reception. Petrarch's relationship to chronological order is anything but slavish. He views chronology as one more modality to be exploited as he pursues the goal of creating a structure that is itself an aporia: a structure that resists structure. Because it is devoted to dramatizing evanescence, the *Fragmenta* obey no single criterion of order. The collection's overarching theme is the self subjected to multiplicity, caught in the flux of time and change, which Petrarch renders by dramatizing the pressures of time and desire (lack, hence absence of being) through techniques such as Ovidian metamorphoses, through multiple images of multiplicity, such as the many knots of Laura's scattered hair, and through the plays on Laura's name as it morphs into other words (such as *l'aura* [air] and *lauro* [laurel]) and she into other forms. All these

devices, to which we shall return, are Petrarch's rhetorical methods for dramatizing radical ontological instability, the instability of being itself.

The name Laura is, as Peter Hainsworth writes, "an exact homophone of 'l'aura' (breeze, breath), something transient, invisible, intangible, and, therefore, insubstantial, and empty, or, alternatively, something cooling, consoling, or even vital when it becomes the breath of life or inspiration."[13] Because Petrarch did not use the diacritical mark we call the apostrophe, Laura's name and the word *l'aura* are written by him in the same fashion. To the degree his collection is a love story, then, it is quite literally a love story about the evanescent and the transient.

If we are to try to capture in our critical nets the deliberately evanescent Petrarchan text, if we hope to say "In rete accolgo l'aura" (In a net I catch the air [*Fragmenta* 239.37]), we need to consider the relevant material documentation. Because of the way Petrarch handled and manipulated the codices in which he wrote, because of the extremely "hands-on" nature of the material constructedness of his texts, he created an opus that requires would-be interpreters to understand the relevant philological and codicological issues.

We are fortunate enough to possess an autograph manuscript of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,* Vaticano Latino 3195. The study of this codex, long dominated by the work of Ernest Hatch Wilkins,[14] has recently been reinvigorated through the production of a facsimile volume with extensive commentary.[15] Although Vaticano Latino 3195 is technically a partial autograph in that Petrarch did not himself copy all the poems in it, it is fully authorial, for the poems not transcribed by Petrarch were transcribed by his secretary Giovanni Malpaghini under his direct supervision.[16] Petrarch was actively working on the *Fragmenta* right up to his death, as we can see from his late renumbering of the last 31 poems. Although Petrarch never had a chance to erase and recopy these poems in their new positions, modern editions of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* print the last 31 poems according to Petrarch's marginal renumbering, assuming that this was his ultimate disposition.[17] Would he have proceeded, had he lived, to erase and recopy these poems according to the beautiful delicate Arabic numerals with which as an old man he renumbered them in his beloved codex? We can never know.[18] As well as unstable in its order, the *Fragmenta* may well be incomplete: the presence in Vaticano Latino 3195 of seven blank pages between the last poem of part 1 and the first poem of part 2 led Wilkins to believe that Petrarch intended to keep adding to part 1 and therefore to

conclude that 366 does not represent the final number of poems and that the text is not complete.[19] Whatever our feelings about the suitability of sonnet 263, *Arbor victoriosa triumphale,* a veritable summa of part 1 themes and motifs, for the post of last poem of part 1, we must acknowledge that a sense of incompletion and instability cannot be banished from a text with respect to whose contours we can raise such legitimate doubts.

Alongside the textual instability documented by the material evidence, there is the deliberate thematic and rhetorical instability that Petrarch built into his textual net for gathering the evanescence of human life. In practical terms, the poems are arranged in such a way as to destabilize each other. An example of such disruption operating thematically is provided by the placement of sonnets 60–63: the completedness of sonnet 60, in which the poet curses the laurel/Laura, is compromised by sonnet 61, in which he blesses everything connected with Laura, while sonnet 61 is in its turn destabilized by sonnet 62, a penitential poem, in which the poet's love for Laura is viewed as sinful, while sonnet 62 is then itself undermined by sonnet 63, a love poem. In theoretical terms, the lyric sequence in Petrarch's hands is the form that brings his long meditation on the one and the many to life, for the fragments—the individual poems, the microtexts—exist in two distinct dimensions, simultaneously one and many: in one dimension they are manifestly unstable and incomplete when taken out of the whole, a macrotext whose own shape and teleology confer significance on its parts, but in another they are fully complete, 366 individual entities each endowed with its own beginning, ending, and ability to signify (as witnessed by the anthologization to which many have been subject).[20] The lyrics' simultaneous oneness and 366-ness enact time's simultaneous oneness and manyness, its nature as both continuum and innumerable discrete pieces of the continuum, as Petrarch expresses in this letter: "Thirty years ago—how time does fly! And yet if I cast a glance backward to consider them all together, those thirty years seem as so many days, so many hours, but when I consider them singly, disentangling the mass of my labors, they seem so many centuries."[21]

Time and its passing are the hinges between Petrarch's moral and metaphysical meditations: his exploration of the self's interiority in its multiple fragmented incarnations unable to resolve and to convert into a single stable and full being reflects his understanding of time as a medium that literally cuts the ground out from under us, destabilizing and deracinating us. Time in its metaphysical multiplicity can lead to moral confusion: in the *Secretum* Augustinus cautions Franciscus not to delay his conversion, not to be deceived by the divisibility of time into many units, by the apparent plu-

rality of days (*pluralitas dierum*), for a whole life, even a long one, is really less than the space of one day (*diei unius*).[22] The temporality of Petrarch's message is metaphysical, moral, and finally even reflected in the material and compositional record, giving poignancy and edge to Wilkins's dry description: "The *Canzoniere* contains poems written at various times through the long years of Petrarch's life. It is not a collection made toward the end of his life in a single editorial effort, nor is it a mere gradual accumulation of poems: it is a selective and ordered collection, the fashioning of which, begun in his youth, continued to the day of his death."[23]

Before continuing to characterize the *Fragmenta,* it will be useful to place Petrarch's lyric sequence within the Italian vernacular context. In doing so, we must distinguish between an authorially ordered collection and a scribal collection, between "the *canzoniere* as a literary genre and the *canzoniere* as a codicological genre (the 'anthological collection')."[24] We are currently witnessing, via material culture and the postmodern pastiche, a moment of heightened scholarly interest in the anthological codex, in which a scribe creates an anthology by virtue of collecting material in one codex: the "idea of the anthology," which has set critics looking for the "controlling literary intelligence" of anonymous codices, has gone a long way toward bringing philology back into fashion.[25] The Italian tradition boasts not only a wealth of anonymous codices but also authored anthologies like Chigiano L V 176, in which circa 1363–66 Giovanni Boccaccio transcribed a variety of authors including Petrarch, and thus created the "Chigi form" of the *Fragmenta,,* the only extant version prior to Vaticano Latino 3195.[26]

Vaticano Latino 3195, the codex containing the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,* is not an anthology like Chigiano L V 176, not a compilation of disparate texts that someone (someone of genius, in the case of Boccaccio) saw fit to bring together. Rather, it falls into the category of "*canzoniere* as literary genre," the genre of *authorially* collected lyrics, in which the explicitly controlling intelligence of the author has brought lyrics together and determined their order and disposition. "I have transcribed it [that is, the poem] into the order" or "transcribed by me" are common abbreviations from Petrarch's drafts. Given our recent attention to the history of the book, compilation, and anthology, scholars have been exploring the precedents for Petrarch's achievement and in some cases sought to diminish the originality of his contribution. We cannot, however, equate a scribally compiled codex, like the Laurenziana's Rediano 9 that houses Guittone d'Arezzo's verse, and an authorially constructed codex like Vaticano Latino 3195.[27] In considering Petrarch's vernacular precursors, whose poems we read in scribal compilations, we are inevitably driven to look for signs,

always thematic, always connected to the persona of the lover and to the events of his love, and from these gleanings we infer unity and authorial purpose. In considering the *Fragmenta,* we are looking instead at a collection whose unity and authorial purpose are a given, and in which abstract order—form—not theme or plot (certainly not the persona of the lover or the events of his love), is the governing paradigm.

Petrarch's method of composition is identical from the time of the early Chigi collection, copied by Boccaccio, if not before.[28] He constructed the *Fragmenta,* around a bipartite structure: our current poems 1 and 264 were fixed as the beginnings of parts 1 and 2, and the collection grew by a process of accretion to each part.[29] He copied poems into Vaticano Latino 3195 from his draft notebooks, one of which, known as *il codice degli abbozzi,* is preserved as Vaticano Latino 3196:[30] here we can see Petrarch's haunting personal notations, such as "Responsio mea sera valde" (My response, late indeed), which accompanies a sonnet for Giacomo Colonna written long after his friend's death; we can see the marginalia of a working poet, including the abbreviations for "transcripsi in ordine," by which he indicates that a poem has been copied into the working copy of a final order, cancelling it after transcription by a line drawn through it; we find textual events like the dramatic rehabilitation of the rejected *Voglia mi sprona,* ultimately included in the *Fragmenta* in position 211.[31] From this compositional method the idea of order emerges as primary. Order is a more intangible and abstract concept than history or chronology, not incidentally expressed in numbers (the very numbers that we find ourselves inescapably using to discuss this text), also intangibles. Petrarch kept a sequential count of the collection's sonnets by fifties, starting with poem 130, which as the collection's hundredth sonnet he labeled "C" for *centum.*[32]

Petrarch uses order to dramatize and explore ideas, including the ideas embedded in textuality: the idea of the beginning, the idea of the middle, and the idea of the end. The original beginning, according to Wilkins, is the present sonnet 34, *Apollo, s'anchor vive il bel desio,* an archetypal part 1 poem in which temporal sequence is invoked in the process whereby Apollo loved first what the poet loves now—"difendi or l'onorata et sacra fronde,/ ove tu prima, et poi fu' invescato io" (now defend the honored and holy leaves where you first and then I were limed [34.7–8])[33]—only in order to be nullified: in that she is "la donna *nostra*" (*our* lady), both Apollo's Daphne and Petrarch's Laura, whom both together will watch ("sì vedrem poi per meraviglia inseme/seder la donna nostra sopra l'erba," thus we shall then together see a marvel—our lady sitting on the grass [34.12–13]), all identities are conflated and time ceases to exist.[34] By contrast, our present num-

ber 1, *Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono,* is atypical. Its purpose is to establish temporal sequence: a verse like "quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'i' sono" (when I was in part another man from what I am now [1.4]) suggests narrative movement from the past into the present and seems to promise more such movement leading from the present into the future. In this sense, the poem imposes a beginning in quasi-narrative terms. But, by the same token, it also subverts it, precisely by virtue of its position at the text's beginning. A recantation—"'l pentérsi," repentance (1.13)—at the outset makes no more sense than a sinner's attempt to repent *before* sinning, a logical contradiction treated by Dante in the Guido da Montefeltro episode of the *Inferno* (via the same unusual form of the verb, *pentere,* used in *Voi ch'ascoltate* by Petrarch):[35] "ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,/né pentere e volere insieme puossi/per la contradizion che nol consente" (For he who does not repent cannot be absolved, nor can one both repent and will at once, because of the contradiction which does not allow it [*Inferno* 27.118–20]). "Forse/tu non pensavi ch'io loïco fossi" (Perhaps you did not think I was a logician! [*Inferno* 27.122–23]), says the devil to Guido as he drags him off to hell. As shown by Augustine in the *Confessions* and by Dante in the *Commedia,* and as Petrarch well knows, the logic of conversion follows the arrow of time: it is not logical to renounce the "breve sogno" before engaging in it, before succumbing to it, before representing it.[36]

Petrarch invokes the category of middle by breaking off part 1 and starting a new part with canzone 264. This canzone, *I' vo pensando,* is a philosophical poem that dramatizes the same moral concerns that we find in Petrarch's *Secretum;* it is clearly indicated in the autograph as the beginning to part 2, separated from sonnet 263 by seven blank pages and further set off as a new beginning by its large ornamental initial, echoing the ornamental initial of sonnet number 1. The two poems that follow canzone 264 refer to Laura alive, and have therefore proven confusing to readers who have wanted Petrarch's text to conform to neat historical and autobiographical categories. As a result, for many centuries editions of the *Fragmenta* began part 2 with sonnet 267, the first sonnet to treat Laura as dead, rather than with canzone 264. By placing sonnets 265 (written in 1350 but as though Laura were still alive) and 266 (an anniversary poem that instructs us to view it as composed in 1345, hence before Laura's death in 1348), right after canzone 264 at the beginning of part 2, Petrarch flouts chronology and indicates—through order—that the significance of part 2 must be grounded in something more abstract and intangible than simple chronology, biography, or history. In my opinion, Petrarch places sonnets 265 and 266 where he does precisely to point us to the deep meaning of

part 2, which is not the death of one contingent creature but the nature of contingency and transition itself: the reality that a "2" will always follow a "1," that no human event or mortal being is durable or final. As canzone 264 explains, mortal creatures should not be loved more than their Creator even when they are inherently good precisely because they are, in the end, always mortal, contingent, transitory, subject to the passing of time. But this canzone that makes the case for conversion as it formally "converts" to part 2 then denies the lover's own moral conversion in its final verse, "et veggio 'l meglio, et al peggior m'appiglio" (I see the better but I hold onto the worse [264.136]). Thus Petrarch's "middle," well defined by Hainsworth as "the great canzone of aporia in the face of vanity," is a transition that resists transition and is as unstable as his beginning.[37] As for the ending, its instability is both material—in the renumbering of the last 31 poems—and ideological: the order of the poems directly conditions our reading of the ending, as to whether or not the poet has credibly achieved a point from which a conversion is possible. While canzone 366, *Vergine bella,* was by then a fixed point, the textual equivalent of *pace,* the question of how to get to that fixed beacon preoccupied Petrarch up to his death.[38]

The very act of composing a text—of collecting one's lyrics—in and of itself generates a beginning and an ending, but the willed and constructed nature of a beginning or an ending is less evident if a text contains no other formal structure (no chapter divisions or other segmentations). Petrarch's division is a formal structure that, by generating a textual "middle"—in the narratological sense of in medias res rather than in the mathematical sense (poem 264 is closer to two-thirds of the way through the *Fragmenta* than to the halfway point)[39]—also has the effect of throwing into relief the willed and constructed nature of the collection's beginning and ending, and hence of its narrativity.

In a way that I would argue is stunningly new, Petrarch makes time the protagonist of his book of poetry. Time is continually present in the *Fragmenta* through the text's orchestrated narrativity: its deployment of the categories of (unstable) beginning, middle, and end, its dialectically interwoven *contaminatio* of lyric and narrative drives.[40] The poet introduces narrativity through chronology and tenuous thematic linkages, but most of all through various formal measures such as the novel device of dividing his lyric collection into two parts. We can therefore synthesize the principles of construction of the *Fragmenta* as follows. Onto the static organizing principles established by Phelps and Wilkins[41]—general chronological order, variety of form (intermixed sonnets, canzoni, *ballate,* and *madrigali*), and variety of content (love poems for Laura intermixed with moral and

political poems)[42]—we must layer the dynamic principle of dialectically interacting lyric and narrative drives, which offers the poet a way to reflect the dialectic between fragmentation and unity, between the scattered and the collected, between particulars and universals, between the contingent and the transcendent, between the many and the One. The fundamental characteristic of the Petrarchan lyric sequence, beyond the basic features set out by Phelps and Wilkins, is its self-conscious, metapoetic, and metaphysically driven exploitation of the principle of order, a textual analogue of time itself.

Narrativity is thus deliberately injected into the *Fragmenta,* but it is injected opaquely and sparingly. Excess narrativity—actual history or storytelling—is kept at bay. Excess narrativity, or at any rate what the Petrarch of the *Fragmenta* would consider excess narrativity, will be the future of the genre: later lyric sequences throughout Europe become ever more overtly biographical, ever more incapable or unwilling to resist the blandishments of storytelling. Petrarch is never seduced by narrativity, at least never in the *Fragmenta* (by contrast, the *Triumphi* could be read as what happens when Petrarch attempts full-fledged narrativity in the Dantean medium of terza rima). And what of the past? In canzone 70, *Lasso me,* Petrarch rehearses the lyric tradition from its Occitan origins to his own time by citing incipits of Arnaut Daniel,[43] Guido Cavalcanti, Dante, Cino da Pistoia, and his own canzone 23, thus inscribing himself within the history of the vernacular lyric. The poets whom he cites wrote lyrics that they never collected. However, Dante had also proposed, in his *Vita nuova,* a radically new way of gathering lyrics,[44] taking the steps that are fundamental for the Petrarchan lyric sequence, namely, that of collecting previously written lyrics and transcribing them in a new and significant order, and that of deploying lyric/narrative *contaminatio,* embedding his lyrics in a prose frame. Of Dante's two means for generating narrativity, Petrarch discards the more explicit, namely, prose, and preserves the more subtle, namely, order.

Another feature of the *Vita nuova* that carries forward into the *Fragmenta* is the mixing of poetic genres, a major innovation with respect to earlier lyric collections. I noted that the *Fragmenta*'s 366 poems include 317 sonnets, 29 canzoni, 9 sestine, 7 *ballate,* and 4 *madrigali,* all interspersed. In Petrarch's system, genre and meter carry significance: for instance, he signals the reader by positioning a number of canzoni in a series, most notably canzoni 70–73 and canzoni 125–129, and by using meter to highlight—again, very abstractly—the "story" told by these groupings (thus, canzoni 71–73 have the same meter, which must be factored into our interpretation of them; canzoni 125 and 126 are almost identical metrically and thus dif-

ferent from the other poems in their canzone series, but my larger point is that each canzone's meter is significant). Meter is connected to narrative deployment again vis-à-vis the sestine, which are carefully positioned throughout the collection. Such sets are not only metrically defined: as we have seen, the anniversary poems are a linked set that are defined by their subject, in that each member of the set commemorates the date of the poet's falling in love on April 6, 1327.

The anniversary poems always remind us of Petrarch's paradoxical relationship with narrativity: on the one hand, he never satisfies his readers with a biographically limpid story line in the manner of Renaissance lyric sequences, but on the other the entire psychodrama he builds with the elements of guilt-inducing Good Fridays and Laura's oft-mentioned chastity is absolutely new (and absolutely not stilnovist) in its personal and psychological dimensions. Beatrice's chastity is simply never a discussion item for Dante. Laura's chastity will be an issue right through the *Fragmenta,* mentioned as late as the final canzone, where he notes that a positive response from Laura would have brought "death to me and dishonor to her" (a me morte et a lei fama rea [*Fragmenta* 366.97]). Petrarch's ability to invoke personal topics but at the same time to remain rigorously abstract is a signature characteristic of his unique poetic voice.

Through the creation of sets of poems (another abstract, indeed mathematical, concept), Petrarch creates opaque "narrative" threads that run through his great web—his "opra d'aragna" (spider's web [*Fragmenta* 173.6])—and that we can isolate and interpret as reflections of the work as a whole. We can distinguish between dispersed sets, both metrical and thematic, that we can cull from the *mare magnum* of the *Fragmenta* in order to read each set as a group, and sequential sets, again both metrical and thematic. Petrarch fashions such formal mechanisms as a means of introducing narrativity into F*ragmenta,* injecting narrativity/temporality into his static and time-resistant lyric collection in the following ways:

- the marking of a beginning, "middle," and end;
- the division of the text into two parts;
- the interspersing of the lyric genres, a technique that effectively constructs metrically marked dispersed sets, encouraging us to cull and to "read" the set of all canzoni as a group, all sestine as a group, all *ballate* as a group, and all *madrigali* as a group;
- the creation of thematically marked dispersed sets, most originally the set of anniversary poems, which commemorate a particular moment in time;
- the creation of other thematically marked dispersed sets, such as the

set of political poems (these sets can include subsets, such as the set of sonnets on Avignon), the set of penitential poems, the set of poems to friends like Sennuccio del Bene, the set of poems that mention the place Vaucluse, etc.;

- the creation of many more thematically dispersed sets, not included in appendix 1, such as the set of poems that feature Ovidian mythological characters, with its many subsets, for example: poems featuring Daphne and Apollo, poems featuring Eurydice and Orpheus, etc.;
- the creation of sequential sets through metrical means: the deployment of metrical similarity and even identity to set off series of canzoni from other canzoni and to highlight them within the sea of sonnets (e.g., 70–73, 125–129);
- the creation of sequential sets through lexical repetition: the use of lexical linkages between poems to create lexically marked sequential sets on a spectrum from the very tenuous to the very obvious, for example (at the obvious end of the spectrum), the so-called "*l'aura* poems" (*L'aura gentil* [194], *L'aura serena* [196], *L'aura celeste* [197], and *L'aura soave* [198]). Note that these sets are typically unstable and imperfect, hence the interpolation of sonnet 195, *Di dì in dì,* into the *l'aura* sequence;
- the creation of sequential sets through thematic means: for example, the series of sonnets we could call the "death sequence" that adumbrates Laura's death (roughly 246–254, but again imperfect as a series); and
- the creation of imbricated or overlapping sets, such as friendship poems that are also love poems, underscoring the polyvalence of discourse; these can become textual analogues for aporia: for example, a penitential poem that is also an anniversary poem, such as *Padre del ciel* (62).

A set itself is an abstract concept, and the creation of sets allows the poet to play with abstract concepts. Thus, the overlapping of two apparently contradictory sets in one poem allows the poet to materialize the idea of insoluble contradiction or aporia in textual form, as in *Padre del ciel,* which is both a penitential poem and an anniversary poem; another example is *Giovene donna sotto un verde laura* (30), which is both a time-resistant sestina and a time-affirming anniversary poem.[45]

The second appended chart, "Structure of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,*" presents a compact reading of the *Fragmenta,* along with a numerological note. There is a structural tension between the bipartite structure generated by Petrarch's division of the poems into two parts—263 in part 1 and 103 in part 2—and a tripartite structure that I posit using as an endpoint canzone 129. Petrarch's part 1 arrives at a first climax in the extraordinary

and anomalous series of five canzoni that runs from 125 to 129, a series that dramatizes an ecstatic *oblio*—oblivion and release from time—of both Augustinian and Dantean proportions in canzone 126, *Chiare, fresche et dolci acque,* and then the definitive reconsignment of the self to time and to *storia* in canzoni 127, 128, and 129.[46] If we use the last poem of this series as an endpoint (in support of this endpoint, we remember that Petrarch's sequential count of the collection's sonnets starts immediately after canzone 129 with poem 130, the hundredth sonnet, noted by him with the label "C" for *centum*), there are 129 poems in the first part of part 1 and 134 poems in the second part of part 1.[47] Therefore, the tripartite structure generated by the implicit endpoint of canzone 129 yields the breakdown: 129 // 134 // 103. The interplay between an overt bipartite structure and an implicit tripartite structure creates the fundamental dyadic versus triadic dynamic that is coded into the *Fragmenta* through the number 6: the number of time and Petrarch's number, as Calcaterra has shown.[48] Moreover, the dynamic of dyad versus triad is the structural basis of the sonnet (founded on the tension between the octave, divisible by 2 but not by 3, and the sextet, divisible by 2 and also by 3) and the lyric genre that is arguably Petrarch's favorite, the type of canzone called the sestina, founded on the number six.

The *Fragmenta* begin with a concentrated micro-*canzoniere,* consisting of poems 1 to 23, which includes an introductory sequence, poems 1 to 5 (poems 2 and 3 provide "plot" information regarding the lover's falling in love and poems 4 and 5 provide information about the beloved), and culminates with the first sestina, poem 22, and the first canzone, poem 23. Sonnet 5, *Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi,* is the first poem to invoke Apollo and to thematize the intertwined identities of lover and poet, the latter figured in the laurel (*lauro*) sacred to Apollo and used to wreath the brows of poets. We shall see the poet rise triumphant out of the ashes of the lover's despair in canzone 23, *Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,* and we noted the benefit of time-resistance brought about by his being linked to Apollo as the lover of "la donna nostra" in *Apollo, s'anchor vive il bel desio* (*Fragmenta* 34), but the first invocation of Apollo—god of music and poetry and would-be lover of Daphne, who fled from the god and was changed into a laurel—occurs in sonnet 5 and offers the poet a bleak scenario.

This sonnet, the first poem to contain the word *il fine*—the end—is a famous play on the beloved's name, parsed as LAU-RE-TA, and 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-lk 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's passing 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, in a passage that tinges Petrarch's exit into *oblio* and return to *storia* in canzone 126, 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 [*Confessions* 9.10]). Learning from Augustine, who returns from extratemporal vision at Ostia to the sound of language, and thus to time, in the form of syllables and words that possess beginnings and endings, Petrarch understands the textual and the temporal to be parallel modalities.[49]

Sonnet 5 dramatizes the enmeshedness of time and narrative. Particularly noteworthy are the narrative markers that the poet has linked to the syllables 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 *l'aura* and *rete,* the evanescent caught in the net of time and text, as in "In rete accolgo l'aura"

(239.37). 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 finitude—his "lingua mortal"—is thus firmly established by sonnet 5's conclusion, as well as the link between the final syllable of the beloved's name and finality, between Laura/*l'aura* and the multitude of finite things that are the opposite of the nonfinite plenitude of God.

Laura indeed *is* multiplicity. Her hair (in Italian, we should not forget, *capelli* is plural), scattered to the wind in "mille dolci nodi" (a thousand sweet knots [90.2]) in *Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi,* is the chief of many poetic signifiers of her function as carrier of multiplicity. More important even than the hair being "scattered"—"sparsi" like the "rime sparse" in the proemial sonnet—is their existing in the past tense: sonnet 90 begins with the imperfect of the verb *essere* (to be): "Erano." Her hairs of gold *were* scattered by the wind. 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. Laura's poet does not keep her immune from the passage of time; rather, he uses her to mark the passage of time. The imperfect tense is the tense of ongoing incomplete action in the past, the tense of memory, and in it the poet captures and caresses the past as he conjures it and holds it in his memory, thinking of the golden hair and "the lovely light [that] burned without measure in her eyes, which are now so stingy of it" (e 'l vago lume oltra misura ardea/di quei begli occhi ch'or ne son sì scarsi [90.3–4]). Verse 4 brings us to the present tense: it is a present in which Laura's eyes, like Laura herself, have aged.

Petrarch's Laura does what no stilnovist or Dantean lyric love lady had done before her—she ages—and her aging, as in *Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi,* is a catalyst for the discourse of time, change, and multiplicity. The "I" and his memories and his thought processes are the poem's true subject; 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 [90.9–10])—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 as a source of wonder and awe in a syntactic eternal present in Dante's sonnet *Tanto gentile e tanto onesta pare,* but rather a source of nostalgia and self-reflection: the Lady as Measurer of My Mortality.[50]

Alongside Augustine's *Confessions,* Dante's *Commedia,* and the vernacular lyric tradition extending back to the Occitan troubadours, the major intertextual presence in the *Fragmenta* is Ovid's *Metamorphoses,*[51] a text that dramatizes instability and multiplicity by capturing characters in the moment when multiplicity most overtly afflicts them: in the moment of metamorphosis. Change, which we all experience incrementally and continuously and mostly without noticing it (except for those occasions when we wake up and realize that everything has changed), dominates Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* in which change is not incremental but sudden and catastrophic (so that we cannot fail to notice it), and it similarly dominates Petrarch's canzone 23. Known as the *canzone delle metamorfosi* for the six Ovidian metamorphoses that it recounts, *Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade* held particular importance for Petrarch (it is the poem with which he represents himself in the lyric history recounted by canzone 70), telling the story of how the narrator both fell in love and became a poet. The two occurrences are strictly linked, as the narrator declares in the first strophe: he will sing of his "fierce desire" (*fera voglia* [23.3]) "because, singing, pain becomes less bitter" (*perché cantando il duol si disacerba* [23.4]). Writing poetry is therefore the balm of the lover. But nothing is straightforward in the Petrarchan universe, and the second strophe introduces us to the first metamorphosis of *Nel dolce tempo,* when love and the lady transformed the lover into a laurel: "e i duo mi trasformaro in quel ch'i' sono,/facendomi d'uom vivo un lauro verde,/che per fredda stagion foglia non perde" (those two transformed me into what I am, making me of a living man a green laurel that loses no leaf for all the cold season [23.38–40]). Therefore to love was for Petrarch to be transformed into a laurel, to become a poet, so that the very poetry that lessens the pain of love is also the cause of it. But at the same time the transformation into a laurel is positive: he becomes a "green laurel that loses no leaf for all the cold season," gaining the immortality of a poet. The double role of poetry that will haunt this text is here disclosed, and the ambiguous relations of poet and lover are established.

Nel dolce tempo proceeds to narrate the vicissitudes of the lover/poet through a series of Ovidian transformations: he is changed into a swan,

like Phaeton's uncle Cygnus, in the second metamorphosis and, in the third metamorphosis, transformed into a stone, as Battus by disguised Mercury. His resuscitation at this point—the low point of the canzone—comes through poetry; it is precisely here that the poet enters to tell us he must speed up the narrative: "Ma perché 'l tempo è corto,/la penna al buon voler non pò gir presso:/onde più cose ne la mente scritte/vo trapassando" (But because time is short, my pen cannot follow closely my good will; wherefore I pass over many things written in my mind [23.90–93]). As a result of this taking stock of himself through use of the poet's voice, he can use poetry to break violently free: "le vive voci m'erano interditte;/ond'io gridai con carta et con incostro" (Words spoken aloud were forbidden me; so I cried out with paper and ink [23.98–99]). When he cannot speak with "living words"—that is, when he cannot live and love—he can cry out in paper and ink (note the urgency of "gridai"), he can write. What he writes is a disclaimer of self in the language of metamorphosis; he who changes shapes, taking other identities through love, does not possess his self: "Non son mio, no" ("I am not my own, no" [23.100]).[52] And yet the disclaimer of self functions as an affirmation of self: in the act of writing, he is revived. In fact, as he says at the beginning of the next (sixth) stanza, he believed to transform himself thus from "unworthy" to "worthy," and this belief made him "ardito" (bold [23.103])—that is, he is taking charge of his self rather than waiting for her next blow.

In the fourth metamorphosis, the lover becomes a fountain, like Byblis, a woman in love with her brother and the aggressor in her illicit romance. It is worth noting that the gender alignments within the metamorphoses of canzone 23 are not fixed and stable but shift throughout the canzone, as both lover and beloved are aligned eventually with mythical figures of both genders. These shifts in gender alignment, as also in the relative status of victim or aggressor, reflect in microcosm the collection as a whole, where we can trace similar shifts as we move from poem to poem. Thus the mythological and imagistic aspects of *Nel ∂olce tempo* follow the same unstable, nonlinear, and labyrinthine course that marks the entire collection. From the point of view of gender, therefore, it is difficult to develop a persuasive model on the basis of any one myth or any one trope or any one textual strategy, since every myth, trope, or strategy applied to Laura (including particularizing description) will in turn be applied to the lover/poet himself.[53]

The fifth metamorphosis depicts the lover turned into hard flint and disembodied voice, like Echo, another female aggressor rejected by her beloved (Narcissus, who in other poems will be Petrarch's counterpart:

here he is Echo, elsewhere Narcissus), while in the sixth metamorphosis Petrarch deploys correct gender alignment for one of his favorite myths: here, where for the first time in the canzone the roles are entirely congruent in terms of sex and identity, he is Actaeon transformed into a stag for having gazed upon Diana. This transformation takes us, eerily, into the present tense—he is *still,* like Actaeon, being chased by his hounds through the woods: "ch'i' sentì' trarmi de la propria imago,/et in un cervo solitario et vago/di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo:/et anchor de' miei can' fuggo lo stormo" (for I felt myself drawn from my own image and into a solitary wandering stag from wood to wood quickly I am transformed and still I flee the belling of my hounds [23.157–60]).

But after announcing that he is "still" in the state to which he was transformed in the sixth metamorphosis, Petrarch cancels time and change and multiplicity in the poem's *congedo* or leavetaking, where he tells us that he never left the first state, that of the laurel: "né per nova figura il primo alloro/seppi lassar" (nor for any new shape could I leave the first laurel [23.167–68]). This final declaration follows upon the identification of his poet's self with none other than Jove: in a reference to Jove's rape of Ganymede, he is the eagle that rises through the air "raising her whom in my words I honor" (*alzando lei che ne' miei detti honoro* [23.166]). When, at the end of this poem, he becomes a male god, he does not become Apollo, who loses Daphne, but Jove, who gets what he wants, though like Apollo he acts through poetry. By the time he concludes that he has never left the laurel for any new shape, he has transformed being the laurel so that he is not Daphne the victim, nor Apollo the failed pursuer, but Jove the conqueror, "alzando lei che ne' miei detti honoro."

Nel dolce tempo brilliantly displays the change that is not change—the refusal to change because change brings death and endings—which is at the heart of part 1 of the *Fragmenta.* Change that is not change is associated in the lyric tradition with the sestina, a canzone that has been rigidified (by the use of six rhyme words rather than sounds) and stylized (by the use of *retrogradatio cruciata,* an organization that causes the six rhyme words to appear over the course of six strophes in every possible combination by proceeding backwards [*retrogradatio*] and by alternating or "crossing" [*cruciata*]) to the point where it becomes the textual equivalent of the illusion that time has stopped. Petrarch's precursors in the writing of sestine were Arnaut Daniel and Dante, whose *rime petrose* to a stone-lady include one sestina, *Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d'ombra.* Petrarch cultivated the sestina form, putting eight sestine in part 1 of the *Fragmenta,* the first immediately preceding canzone 23, and one (a double sestina) in part 2. Echo-

ing Dante's *rime petrose,* Petrarch frequently refers to his stonelike qualities (again we see his penchant for gender reversals, for in the *rime petrose* the *pietra* is not the male poet but the female figure, characterized by her cold and stony rejection of the lover): in *Nel dolce tempo* he calls himself "un quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso" (an almost living and terrified stone [23.80]) and in *Di pensier in pensier* he is "pietra morta in pietra viva" (a dead stone on the living rock [129.51]). Stoniness may imply a death of the soul's emotions but it also suggests the immortality of the "rock of ages." Canzone 23 perfectly reflects the principle of change that is not change in its linguistic texture: dense, convoluted, an icon to reified—or, as Petrarch would put it, "petrified"—immobility.

Nel dolce tempo is characterized by compact impenetrability, metrical as well as thematic, boasting a heavy stanzaic pattern consisting of a twenty-verse strophe (the longest strophe of any canzone in the collection), packed with mostly hendecasyllables (19 hendecasyllables and only one *settenario,* the shorter verse that Petrarch uses to lighten his canzoni). Its structural counterpart in part 2 of the *Fragmenta* is canzone 323, *Standomi un giorno solo a la fenestra,* which is separated from *Nel dolce tempo* by 300 poems and which presents, by contrast, a limpidly flowing twelve-verse strophe containing two *settenari.* The storylike flow of canzone 323 is a stylistic correlative of the governing principles of part 2: time flows, nothing lasts, death comes. As the poet declares, "ogni cosa al fin vola" (Everything flies to its end [323.55]). For all their divergences, the two canzoni also bear witness at either end of the collection to its abiding concerns. Known as the *canzone delle visioni* for its six mythologically informed narrative visions of Laura's death, canzone 323 depicts tableaux that draw on and invert the metamorphoses of canzone 23. In *Standomi un giorno* he sees her as a beautiful wild creature chased by hounds (whereas he was the one hunted by hounds as Actaeon in *Nel dolce tempo*), as a rich ship sunk by a sudden tempest (he figures himself as a ship throughout the sequence, e.g., *Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio,* poem 189), as a laurel (to which he links himself in poem after poem) that is destroyed by lightning, as a fountain engulfed by a chasm (we saw him become a fountain in canzone 23), as a phoenix that turns its beak on itself, and then, finally, as Eurydice bitten by a snake. But, in the same kind of affirmation through poetry that we saw in *Nel dolce tempo,* if Laura is Eurydice then Petrarch is Orpheus—the singer who charmed wild beasts with the beauty of his song and moved Hades to allow him to bring his beloved back to life.

While in part 1 of the *Fragmenta* Petrarch overtly resists narrativity, in part 2 he apparently accepts it, but these two divergent stylistic and

thematic responses are part of a unitary strategy: 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 Laura as she was he must preserve her in time. He thus adopts opposite and apparently contradictory strategies to achieve the same results.[54] When she is alive, he needs to cancel time. When she is dead, he needs to appropriate it, bringing her back to life in his poetry. Petrarch's form of acceptance is thus finally as resistant to time's passing as the overt refusals to acknowledge change of part 1, summed up by sonnet 145's "sarò qual fui, vivrò com'io son visso" (I shall be what I have been, shall live as I have lived [145.13]). In poetry, as an Orpheus who succeeds in recovering his Eurydice, Petrarch can make Laura live again. And now she can be everything he always wanted her to be, she can be literally as he fantasized in canzone 126, *Chiare, fresche et dolci acque,* the canzone whose incipit invokes the sweet waters of the beautiful place where he loved Laura, and where he imagines that she will return to find him dead and will weep over his grave:

> Tempo verrà anchor forse
> ch'a l'usato soggiorno
> torni la fera bella et mansueta,
> et là 'v'ella mi scorse
> nel benedetto giorno
> volga la vista disiosa et lieta,
> cercandomi: et, o pieta!,
> già terra in fra le pietre
> vedendo, Amor l'inspiri
> in guisa che sospiri
> sì dolcemente che mercé m'impetre,
> et faccia forza al cielo,
> asciugandosi gli occhi col bel velo. (126.27–39)
>
> [There will come a time perhaps when to her accustomed sojourn the lovely, gentle wild one will return and, seeking me, turn her desirous and happy eyes toward where she saw me on that blessed day, and oh the pity! Seeing me already dust among the stones, Love will inspire her to sigh so sweetly that she will win mercy for me and force Heaven, drying her eyes with her lovely veil.]

Here we have a quintessentially part 1 scene, whose complex temporal shifts reflect the tangled strategies required to find solace in imagination

when the poet does not have a completely free hand: he imagines a future time (*Tempo verrà*), necessarily hypothetical (*forse*), in which Laura will return to their shared past, their "usato soggiorno." The love that she never showed him in the real past is imagined in a past that is projected into the future within the present of the poem.

In part 2, when Laura is dead, Petrarch the poet can make this scene occur without any such intricate projections of past memory into a hypothetical future. Rather, he can now simply go—in the present—to their "accustomed sojourn" in Vaucluse and look for signs of her: "Così vo ricercando ogni contrada/ov'io la vidi" (Thus I go searching through every region where I saw her [306.9–10; see also 280, 288, 301, 304, 305, 320]). Although this search often results only in traces of Laura (*Lei non trov'io: ma suoi santi vestigi,* her I do not find, but I see her holy footprints [306.12]), it can also lead to more substantive results: thus in sonnet 281 his calling yields visions of Laura, "Or in forma di nimpha o d'altra diva" (Now in the form of a nymph or other goddess [281.9]), which have materialized to the point where he can say that he sees her "calcare i fior' com'una donna viva" (treading the fresh grass like a living woman [281.13]). Indeed, she is sufficiently "donna viva" that he can specify her piteous attitude toward him: "mostrando in vista che di me le 'ncresca (showing by her face that she is sorry for me" [281.14]).

Variants of this event occur in poem after poem in part 2 of the *Fragmenta,* where Laura and her poet develop a closeness never seen in part 1. For instance, there are poems in which she returns to console him. These poems constitute the logical next step after the successful search described in sonnet 281; her concern leads her to return with the express purpose of consoling her lover, as we learn in sonnet 282: "Alma felice che sovente torni/a consolar le mie notti dolenti" (Happy soul who often come back to console my sorrowing nights [282.1–2]). In this poem the process of materialization begun in sonnet 281, where she appears "com'una donna viva," is crystallized in his recognition of her unique presence, manifested "a l'andar, a la voce, al volto, a' panni" (by your walk, by your voice, by your face, by your dress [281.14]). She returns similarly in sonnet 283 (*Ben torna a consolar tanto dolore/madonna, ove Pietà la riconduce,* My lady does indeed come back to console so much sorrow, for pity leads her back [283.9–10]) and in sonnet 343, where her consolation takes the form of listening to and commenting on his life's story, which causes her to weep: "et come intentamente ascolta et nota/la lunga historia de le pene mie!" (and how intently she listens to, and takes note of, the long history of my sufferings! [343.10–11]). In sonnet 285, on the other hand, she is the sto-

ryteller recounting the events of their shared life (*contando i casi de la vita nostra* [285.12]). These events (see also sonnets 284 and 286) are summed up by a verse in sonnet 285, "spesso a me torna co l'usato affecto" (she often returns to me with her usual affection [285.7]), which exemplifies the process whereby the affection she shows in death is projected backward onto her life: "*usato* affecto" refers to her "usual" affection, although such affection was not a feature of part 1.

There are also in part 2 poems in which Laura is cited speaking to her beloved in direct discourse; in sonnets 342 and 359 she not only comes to him and speaks to him, but also sits on his bed and dries his tears. In general throughout part 2, Petrarch literalizes the turning-back topos: from a trope of memory, in part 1, it becomes a literal description of her various returns to him. Thus, *rimembrare* gives way to *richiamare, rivedere, ricercare, ritrovare,* and the expression "tornami inanzi" (268.46) or "Tornami avanti" (she returns before me [272.9]) becomes a textual emblem for part 2, as for instance in sonnet 336, where the opening "Tornami a mente" (She returns to mind) allows the poet to build up to the vivifying exclamation: "Ell'è ben dessa; anchor è in vita" (That is she, she is still alive! [336.7]). "She is still alive"—"anchor è in vita"—is a perfect emblem for the powerful work of the poet's imagination in part 2 of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta,* where Laura's death does not serve—as Beatrice's death does for Dante—to prompt him finally to realize "che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno" (that whatever pleases in the world is a brief dream [1.14]), but rather liberates him to fashion her as the lover he had always wanted. In part 2 of the *Fragmenta* Petrarch caresses the *breve sogno,* the poet's own particular set of personal nonuniversals within the flux of fragmentation and multiplicity, with even greater vigor than in part 1.

Petrarch's obsessive focus on the self within the labyrinth of fragmentation, multiplicity, desire, and time and his long meditation on the one and the many, the fragments and the whole, is reflected in his life: in ways that are not equally true of other authors, the multiplicity of Petrarch's many writings refract one set of issues and concerns; they ring changes on the same set of bells. As Petrarch would say: "Solo d'un lauro tal selva verdeggia" (From only one laurel tree such a wood grows green [107.12]). Petrarch is an author who worries, in the *Secretum,* about works left uncompleted (*Labores . . . interruptos* [206 []]), about the *Africa* half-finished ("semiexplicitam" [192]), and who also describes himself as "inexpletum" (74), unfulfilled, incomplete. The way Petrarch worked—the way he put down one *labor* to pick up another, keeping many projects going simultaneously

rather than bringing one to completion before starting another—is fragmented and labyrinthine rather than integral and linear: "nel laberinto entrai" (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* 211.14). From what we know of Petrarch's life as a writer we can get some sense of an inner life more horizontal than vertical, more committed to making multiple connections among the many morphing *lauri* in the one *selva* than to moving from one integral *lauro* to an utterly discrete something else.

At the same time the very fragmentariness of some of the *labores* only adds to the sense of their all ultimately belonging to one overarching life—one authored and authorized self—which, once gathered, once *raccolto,* once etymologically perfected through death and hindsight, is in fact strangely cohesive and complete.

What I have just described, the many incomplete works or fragments that yet make a "complete Petrarch," a completed and authored self, could also serve as an emblem of his most famous work. The fact that we can find precedents to Petrarch's great lyric sequence should not cause us to overlook what is distinctively new in his creation: new and perhaps unique. The enormous influence of Petrarch's collection of vernacular lyrics notwithstanding, it is entirely possible that, defined as we have defined it, this lyric sequence is a unique exemplar, a category of one. Petrarch would certainly not mind the outcome of singularity for his text (especially since it was accompanied by imitation): he praises the Virgin in his final canzone as "unica et sola" ("single and sole" [366.133]). For her there is no second, no "part 2" will ever follow her "part 1," for of her it can be said (and how like Petrarch it is to say it!) that she is "Vergine sola al mondo, senza exempio" (Virgin unique in the world, unexampled [366.53]) and that of her "né prima fu simil, né seconda" (366.55). This last verse, usually translated loosely as "whom none ever surpassed or even approached," literally means that with respect to her there was never a first (a superior) or a second (a similar but lesser exemplar). Because she is literally unique, literally a category of one, she has no seconds. She is not multiple; she is not in flux; she is not evanescent. Petrarch diverges in his praise of the Virgin in *Vergine bella* from Dante's prayer to the Virgin in *Paradiso* 33 in this most significant use of numbers: the all-important "ciphers," the indicators of multiplicity and flux that he never ceases to use, even when he uses them to say that in this case they do not apply. For this poet of multiplicity and time there is no higher value than unicity and singularity, qualities that exempt their possessor from time, and in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* he created a unique and singular text.

APPENDIX 1
Metrical and Thematic Sets in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta**

Allocation	**Part 1.1**	**Part 1.2**	**Part 2**
Canzone number	23, 28, 29, 37, 50, 53, 70, 71, 72, 73, 105, 119, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129	135, 206, 207	264, 268, 270, 323, 325, 331, 359, 360, 366
No. of *canzoni*	17	3	9
Total no. of *canzoni* per part	20		9
Total no. of *canzoni*	29		
Sestina number	22, 30, 66, 80	142, 214, 237, 239	332
No. of *sestine*	4	4	1
Total no. of *sestine* per part	8		1**
Total no. of *sestine*	9		
Ballata number	11, 14, 55, 59, 63	149	324
No. of *ballate*	5	1	1
Total no. of *ballate* per part	6		1
Total no. of *ballate*	7		

APPENDIX 1 (*continued*)

Madrigale number	52, 54, 106, 121	None	None
No. of *madrigali*	4	None	None
Total no. of *madrigali* per part	4, all in part 1		None
Anniversary poem number (date-poems in brackets)	30, 50, 62, 79, 101, 107, 118, 122	145, [211], 212, 221	266, 271, 278, [336], 364
No. of anniversary poems	8	3	4
Total no. of anniversary poems per part	11		4
Total no. of anniversary poems	15		
Political poem number	27, 28, 53, 128	136, 137, 138	None
No. of political poems	4	3	None
Total no. of political poems per part	7, all in part 1		None
Occasional/ moral/friendship poem number	7, 8, 9, 10, 24, 25, 26, 38, 39, 40, 58, 68, 92, 98, 103, 104, 108, 112, 113, 119	143, 144, 166, 179, 232, 238, 244	266, 269, 287, 322

(*continued*)

APPENDIX 1 (*continued*)

No. of poems	20	7	4
Total no. of occasional/ moral/friend ship poems	31		
Penitential poem number	1, 62, 80, 81	142, 189	264, 355, 364, 365, 366
No. of penitential poems	4	2	5
Total no. of penitential poems per part	6		5
Total no. of penitential poems	1		

*The *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* contains 366 poems: 317 sonnets, 29 *canzoni*, 9 *sestine* (of which the last is a *sestina doppia* or double sestina), 7 *ballate*, 4 *madrigali*, all interspersed.

**Sestina doppia.

APPENDIX 2
Structure of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta**

Part 1. Poems 1–263.

1.1. Through the first climax and fall, this section consists of 129 poems (1–129).

- How to begin? A micro-*canzoniere,* 1–23, includes introductory sequence, 1–5, and culminates with 22, the first *sestina,* and 23, the first *canzone* (*canzone delle metamorfosi*)
- *Canzone* 23, emblematic of part 1—change which is stasis—marks the end of the beginning; its counterpart in part 2 is *canzone* 323
- Establishing the problematic: from 24 to 124, including occasional poems, political poems, penitential poems, Vaucluse poems
- Release from time/return to time, ecstatic *oblio* versus *storia* in *canzoni* sequences: adumbrated in 70–73, activated in 125–129

1.2. This section rehearses the problematic established in 1.1 and shows less application of principles of chronology, variety of form, and variety of content. It consists of 134 poems, starting with the poem marked by Petrarch as the 100th sonnet (130–263).

- Stasis and repetition: "Sarò qual fui, vivrò com'io son visso" (I shall be what I have been, shall live as I have lived [145.13]), echoing Dante's Capaneo, "Qual io fui vivo, tal son morto" (As I was alive, so am I dead [*Inf.* 14.51])
- Much formal and thematic linkage, many little subsets or clusters that enhance the feeling of a great interconnected web in this section, which however does not contain the dramatic climaxes created by the great sweeps of *canzoni* found in the earlier section
- Anticipation of Laura's death, the "death sequence": 246–254

Part 2. Poems 264–366.

Part 2 begins with canzone 264 and consists of 103 poems (264–366).

- *Trans-ire:* How to change? The question of conversion posed thematically and formally. The beginning of part 2: 264–269
- Fantasy of *canzone* 126, where he imagined she took pity on him, now made "real": "calcando i fior' com'una donna viva / mostrando in vista che di me le 'ncresca" (281.13–14)
- Less variety of content: no political poems

(*continued*)

APPENDIX 2 (*continued*)

- Canzone 323 (*canzone delle visioni*) offsets 23, is emblematic of part 2's acceptance of change, marks beginning of the end
- How to end? Petrarch's renumbering of final 31 poems

*Note the dynamic of a bipartite structure [263 + 103 = 366] versus a tripartite structure [129 + 134 + 103 = 366]. The dynamic of dyad versus triad is the structural basis of the sonnet and *sestina*. Moreover, 2 and 3 are factors of the number 6, the number of time, Petrarch's number (see Calcaterra 1942), a number that is also present in the following ways: importance of April 6; importance of the *sestina* (poem 66 is a *sestina*); majority of *canzoni* have a *fronte* of 6 verses; 6 *canzoni* begin with *settenari;* 366 = 6 × 60 + 6; *canzone* 23 and *canzone* 323 include 300 poems and exclude 66 poems.