Petrarch and Sixteenth-Century Italian Portraiture

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# Petrarch and Sixteenth-Century Italian Portraiture

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# 1 Introduction

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This volume explores the multiple ways in which the legacy of Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch, 1304–1374) shaped the relationship between literary and visual portraits in the sixteenth century. Building on the extensive and diverse body of research on Petrarch and the arts produced by historians of both art and literature, this collection adopts a specific critical angle, focusing on different concepts and dimensions of Petrarchan and Petrarchist 'portraiture' in an interdisciplinary perspective.

By 'portrait' today we commonly indicate the so-called 'image of an individual', which is also the title of a pivotal collection of essays edited by Nicholas Mann and Luke Syson in 1998.[1] The definition of 'individual', however, as scholars dealing with portraiture have long known, is a treacherous terrain.[2] The association between the rise of the 'spiritual individual' as manifested by a rich corpus of painted and sculpted portraiture, and the dawn of the Renaissance, of which Petrarch can be legitimately considered the putative intellectual father, has deep roots in Jacob Burckhardt's influential *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).[3] Burckhardt's essay has been much debated in subsequent scholarship and reframed in the context of the author's nineteenth-century sensitivity. On the other hand, the importance of portraiture in the late Middle Ages, when Petrarch was writing, has been advanced by an ever-growing corpus of robust scholarship.[4] More recent

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1 Mann and Syson 1998.
2 A review of the literature on this subject is beyond the scope of this analysis, but essential references for the sixteenth century are: Cassirer 1963; Boehm 1985; Batkin 1992; Burke 1995; Burke 1997; Martin 1997; Enenkel 1998; Baldwin 2001; and Martin 2004. Further bibliography is indicated throughout the volume.
3 Burckhardt 1951.
4 A rich overview of medieval notions of representation and identity in relation to sculpted faces can be found in the essays collected in Little 2006. The question of medieval individuality is explored in Bedos-Rezak and Iogna-Prat 2005, where of particular interest is the chapter by Étienne Anheim on Petrarch (Anheim 2005). For portraiture at the French court see Sand 2006; Perkinson 2007; and Perkinson 2009; for Romanesque portraiture see Dale 2002 and Dale 2007. The problem of premodern portraiture has been discussed in a crucial essay on likeness and presence by Hans Belting (Belting 1994), while the medieval understanding of the relationship between corporeality and individuality has been explored

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responses to the Burckhardian view of the Renaissance individuality have posited an opposite model of individuality, one consciously built 'from the outside in' as a result of social and cultural conditionings.[5] In his nuanced essay on the 'myths of individualism', John Jeffries Martin tried to address this ambivalence, pointing to the Renaissance individual as being constantly negotiating the relationship between the internal and external self.[6] Quoting Douglas Biow, he even hinted at the more extreme consequence of this negotiation, the modern fragmentation of the self.[7]

What is Petrarch's place in this debate? In many ways, the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* does not offer a single or straightforward answer to the issue of individuality: the autobiographical nature of the collection charts in unprecedented detail his spiritual and personal journey; at the same time, the *ex post facto* editing work on the sequence of poems indicates a conscious act of 'self-fashioning' aimed at conferring universal value on his individual experience; the very dialogue between the sonnets on Laura's portrait (*Rvf* 77–78), moreover, paired and juxtaposed for us to read, dramatises the poet's ambivalence and doubt, symptom of his 'split' response to Laura's image. According to Thomas Mussio, who sees the *Canzoniere* as the key intermediary between Michelangelo's troubled reflections in the *Rime* and the Augustinian conflict of the soul in the *Confessions*, the Petrarchan model of individuality 'posits that the loving subject's identity is based […] on the experience of loving'.[8] This complexity should not limit, but rather enrich our understanding of how Petrarch's writings continued to inform the dialogue with the genre of portraiture in the sixteenth century. For the purposes of this volume, then, we will adopt an expanded definition of portrait that encompasses material objects (sculpted, painted on panel or canvas, drawn, or engraved), mental images created by memory and imagination (as the *figura nel cuore* of medieval poetry), as well as literary 'effigies', either derived from paintings or sculpture, by means of description or through a series of prescriptions. This diverse yet conceptually coherent corpus

by Caroline Walker Bynum (Walker Bynum 1995), whose analysis of ideas around the somatomorphic soul and the beatific vision around 1300 (ch. 7) is particularly pertinent here.

5    See Greenblatt 1980. For this model of selfhood see also Goffman 1959.

6    Martin 2004.

7    Ibid.: 5–6. In this sense, Petrarch's *Rvf* 168.4–8, in which the poet reflects on trusting Love's promise despite the passing of time, resonates powerfully: 'Io, che talor menzogna et talor vero | ò ritrovato le parole sue, | non so s'i' 'l creda, et vivomi intra due: | né sì né no nel cor mi sona intero' [I, who have found his words sometimes false and sometimes true, do not know whether to believe him, and I live between the two: neither yes nor no sounds whole in my heart]. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf* or *Canzoniere*) in this introduction are from Petrarca 1996a. English translations are from Petrarca 1976.

8    Mussio 1997: 339. Here Mussio (341–43) also draws an explicit connection between Michelangelo's sonnet 87: 'Vorrei voler quel ch'io non voglio' and Petrarch's ambivalence in *Rvf* 168. For further reflections on Petrarch's poetry and subjectivity see Moevs 2009 and Zak 2010.

of portraits coalesces around a preoccupation with ideas of resemblance, imitation, substitution, memory, praise and self-fashioning, while embodying both singularity and exemplarity, the real and the ideal.

In the vast constellation of cultural practices that surround the notion of portrait in the Renaissance, Petrarch plays a key role at several levels, as a rich tradition of studies has persuasively demonstrated. In this context, the main scholarly strand—possibly the broadest in scope—has focused on Petrarch's own attitude towards images as expressed in his prose and verse and the fortune of his oeuvre in the visual arts, with responses as diverse as illuminations and emblems, portraits, and *cassoni*. Petrarch's attitude towards the arts was multifaceted: on the one hand, the philosopher and moralist; on the other, the man and lyric poet. As Michael Baxandall has observed in his *Giotto and the Orators*, Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortune* offers the first and 'longest discussion on art one has from the humanist Trecento'.[9] Completed in 1366, *De remediis* stages a series of dialogues between Ratio and the four passions of the Stoic tradition (Dolor, Metus, Gaudium, Spes), where Ratio revoices an Augustinian moral perspective and Gaudium personifies human frivolity.[10] The discussion on the arts is encapsulated in the chapters 'De tabulis pictis' and 'De statuis' (*De remediis*, I.40 and I.41). While Gaudium only pronounces standard formulas of appreciation for the vanities of the secular world ('I like paintings': I.40.1), Ratio advances articulated arguments against the deceitful nature of images: paintings are 'vacuous enjoyments', fruits of 'vanity' (I.40.2), 'fictions made up of vain trick', a corruption of God's superior act of creation (I.40.28); statues are mere 'seductions for eyes' (I.41.31).[11] Nevertheless, as Ratio concedes, sacred art can be instructive for the illiterate and those unable to grasp theological truths otherwise, and profane images of virtuous subjects can similarly set a positive example (I.41.42–43).[12] Petrarch himself had the chance to express admiration for sacred images. In 1370, four years after completing *De remediis*, he wrote his last will, giving details of various bequests and gifts, including 'a panel or icon of the blessed Virgin Mary, a work of the eminent painter Giotto' for his

9    Baxandall 1971: 53.
10   On the *De remediis*, see Bettini 2002; Perucchi 2014: 23–83, 203–287; Perucchi 2021; and Löhr 2021. See also Dunlop 2008: 86–88, and the edition annotated by Bernhard Huss (Petrarca 2021 and Petrarca 2022).
11   Respectively: 'Pictis tabulis delector' (I.40.1); 'Inanis delectatio', 'vanitas' (I.40 2); 'Tu autem, si hec ficta et adumbrata fucis inanibus usqueadeo delectant, atolle oculos ad Illum qui os humanum sensibus, animam intellectu, celum astris, floribus terram pinxit: spernes quos mirabaris artifices' (I.40.28); 'illucebre oculorum' (I.41.31). Cited from Perucchi 2014: 180–82, 188.
12   'Delectari quoque sacris imaginibus, que spectantes beneficii celestis admoneant, pium sepe excitandisque animis utile; profane autem, etsi interdum moveant atque erigant ad virtutem dum tepentes animi rerum nobilium memoria recalescunt, amande tamen aut colende equo amplius non sunt' (I.41.42–43). Cited from Perucchi 2014: 188.

patron Francesco Vecchio da Carrara, Signore of Padua. In praising the excellence of this work, Petrarch claims that 'the ignorant do not understand the beauty of this panel but the masters of art are stunned by it'.[13] In 1353, moreover, Petrarch had the chance to admire in Milan a statue of Saint Ambrose, which he understood as a faithful portrait, as he wrote in a letter to Francesco Nelli dating 23 August: 'I gaze upwards at his statue, [...] which it is said closely resembles him, and often venerate it as though it were alive and breathing. [...] The great authority of his face, the great dignity of his eyebrows [...] are inexpressible; it lacks only a voice for one to see the living Ambrose' (*Familiares*, XVI.11.12–13).[14]

Within the same strand of studies on Petrarch and the arts, several works have been devoted more specifically to portraiture, with particular emphasis on the portrait as material object and written description. A first major line of research has concerned Petrarch's approach to 'the image of the individual', be it the image of others or his own, with the latter setting a paradigm for the iconography of 'the poet'. Positioned at the crossroad of medieval and early modern thought and culture, Petrarch embodies the troubled transition from an allegorical vision of reality—which results from a combined reading of the book of nature and the book of God—to a proto-humanistic view of the world that has the individual at its centre.[15] It seems apposite, then, that Petrarch should reflect in *Rvf* 77 and 78 on the representationality of painted portraiture, its complicated status as a substitute for the presence of the individual and a necessarily incomplete vehicle for the far richer—and elusive—'truth' of the soul.

The language of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century art theory is also relevant to Petrarch's understanding of portraiture, in light of his influence on the subsequent critical discourse. Villard de Honnecourt called mimetic imitation from life *contrefaire*, while he used *portraire* to indicate a superior form of representation founded in the artist's ingenuity, which makes visible the ineffable and is based on Geometry. Geometry, as part of the Quadrivium, was one of the disciplines associated with the knowledge of the nature of things and God's creation. Similarly, Jean de Meun, in the continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* (*c.* 1275), writes that

13    'Et predicto igitur domino meo Paduano, [...] dimitto tabulam meam sive iconam beate Virginis Marie, operis Iotti pictoris egregii [...], cuius pulchritudinem ignorantes non intelligunt, magistri autem artis stupent'. Cited from Mommsen 1957: 78–80. See also Dunlop 2008: 77.

14    'Iucundissimum tamen ex omnibus spectaculum dixerim quod aram, [...] scio, imaginemque eius summis parietibus extantem, quam illi viro simillimam fama fert, sepe venerabundus in saxo pene vivam spirantemquem suspicio. Id michi non leve precium adventus; dici enim non potest quanta frontis autoritas, quanta maiestas supercilii, quanta tranquillitas oculorum; vox sola defuerit vivum ut cernas Ambrosium.' The Latin text is from Petrarca 1933–42: III (1937), 205–06. The English translation is from Petrarca 1975–85: II (1982), 319.

15    For a study of allegories and painting in Petrarch, see Dunlop 2008.

Pygmalion engaged with portraiture whenever he wanted to show his *ingenium*, so that the images he produced appeared to be alive but for the lack of vital spirit.[16] Cennino Cennini, the author of the *Libro dell'arte* (written around 1400), uses the verb *ritrarre* to indicate an act of skilful imitation.[17] He also explains, however, that painting is an operation of the imagination (*fantasia*) that makes visible what cannot be seen.[18] Cennini's advice on imitation (of nature, but also of artistic models), has been connected by Andrea Bolland with what she terms the 'post-Petrarchan' culture of late Trecento Padua.[19] Petrarch's reflection on portraiture and the image of Laura, therefore, intersects these complex discourses from a linguistic perspective first, and then a conceptual one.

Petrarch himself is the first modern author of whom we have images that were more or less contemporaneous with his own life; and in the twenty-five years after his death in 1374, he was portrayed more often than any other writer.[20] His reputation as a philosopher and poet forged the exemplary model of the man of learning: he posed for a portrait commissioned by Pandolfo Malatesta, the addressee of what is known as the Malatesta form of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*; Leonardo Bruni kept his effigy in his study as an inspiration.[21] In many of his portraits, Petrarch holds a pen and a book; when open, the book frequently displays the first lines of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*; in others he wears the *laurea*, a reminder of the laurel coronation that took place in Rome in 1341 at the hand of Robert of Anjou. As J. B. Trapp has shown, it had long been the custom to represent Evangelists and Fathers of the Church showing the first words of their Gospel and treatises, or God himself holding the Scripture. Petrarch is the first secular writer to be pictured

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16    Perkinson 2009: 54–61.

17    In the Preface, Cennini lists 'ritrarre e contraffarre' as alternative processes, but he includes both of them among the mechanical skills that the aspiring painter has to develop; see Cennini 1859: XIII.

18    '[E] questa è un'arte che si chiama dipignere, che conviene avere fantasia, con operazione di mano, di trovare cose non vedute (cacciandosi sotto ombra di naturali), e fermarle con la mano, dando a dimostrare quello che non è, sia' [and this is called Painting, for which we must be endowed with both imagination [*fantasia*] and skill in the hand, to discover unseen things concealed beneath the obscurity of natural objects, and to arrest them with the hand, presenting to the sight that which did not before appear to exist]. The Italian is from Cennini 1859: 2. The English translation is from Cennini 1899: 4.

19    Bolland 1996: 472.

20    See Trapp 1992–93: 11–32. The first extant portrait of Petrarch is a full-page coloured profile introducing his *De viris illustribus* in a manuscript in Paris (Bibliothèque National, MS Lat. 6069F), where the image of Petrarch features as both the author and a prominent *vir illustris*. This model is the predecessor of many renderings to come in the following decades. As a result of his reputation, the poet was also portrayed in monumental setting in the Paduan area, such as the figure traditionally identified as Petrarch in the frescoes by Altichiero in the Oratory of Saint George of the early 1380s; the figure, again by Altichiero or his workshop, in the Chapel of Saint Felice in Santo; the portrait in the Sala dei Vescovi in Padua and once in Petrarch's house near the cathedral, which dates from the late 1300s.

21    See Dunlop 2008: 87.

in such fashion, inaugurating a fortunate tradition of portraits *alla petrarchesca* that will be used widely, from the retrospective refashioning of the portrait of Dante to Renaissance women writers, eventually crossing the borders of the Italian peninsula.[22]

A second major line of research has focused on the image of Laura, considered both as a concrete depiction attributed to the painter Simone Martini and as a mental and literary effigy continuously haunting the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Medieval poets referring to the visual arts were not a novelty in Italy. In his *Comedy*, for example, Dante praises Giotto through the voice of illuminator Oderisi da Gubbio (*Purgatorio*, 11). Giacomo da Lentini's poem 'Meravigliosa-mente' stages the topic of desire fuelling a 'phantasmic' portrait of the beloved, internalised in the lover's mind just as she appears: 'Avendo gran disio | dipinsi una pintura, | bella, voi simigliante' [Fuelled by desire, I painted a beautiful portrait of your likeness] (19–21).[23] In sonnets *Rvf* 77 and 78, however, Petrarch does not only comment on the work of a contemporary, whom he had actually met in Avignon, but also on a supposedly real portrait of Laura he himself commissioned.[24] The sonnets represent arguably the first condensed theory of portraiture and introduce many of the ideas that will shape the genre and its criticism for centuries to come.[25] Unlike the criticism expressed in *De remediis* through the point of view of Ratio, however, the two sonnets reveal a younger Petrarch, who was certainly not insensitive to the seductions of secular images. The first of the two sonnets envisages Simone travelling to heaven, where he had been able to see and translate visually the essence of Laura:

> Per mirar Policleto a prova fiso
> con gli altri ch'ebber fama di quell'arte
> mill'anni, non vedrian la minor parte
> de la beltà che m'ave il cor conquiso.

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22   See Trapp 1992–93: 22–24; and Löhr 2011. For example, the image by Domenico di Michelino in the Duomo in Florence, of about 1465, displaying Dante laureate and holding his book; or the portrait of Gaspara Stampa drawn by Antonio Daniele Bertoli and engraved by Felicita Sartori in a miscellaneous edition of *Rime* by Stampa herself, her brother Baldassarre, Collatino di Collalto, and Vinciguerra di Collalto (Venice: Piacentini, 1738). For a recent study of the portraits and representations of Petrarch and of the manuscripts containing his works, see Brovia 2022. In her article, Brovia argues that the early fashioning of Petrarch's public persona first concerned his image and later his writings, and that the cultural appropriation of Petrarch's persona was in part due to political strategies.

23   Cited from Antonelli et al. 2008: I, 47.

24   The two sonnets were penned on MS Vaticano Latino 3196 in 1336 (fol. 7r), when Simone Martini was in Avignon, and transcribed 'in order' in MS Vaticano Latino 3195 in 1357. See Wilkins 1951: 89–91. The body of scholarship on *Rvf* 77 and 78 is extensive. See, for example, Lee 2017; Bartuschat 2007; Bertone 2008; Fenzi 1996; and Ciccuto 1991: 82–88.

25   Pommier 1998: 33–38, esp. 35.

    Ma certo il mio Simon fu in paradiso
onde questa gentil donna si parte:
ivi la vide, et la ritrasse in carte
per far fede qua giù del suo bel viso.
    L'opra fu ben di quelle che nel cielo
si ponno imaginar, non qui tra noi,
ove le membra fanno a l'alma velo.
    Cortesia fe'; né la potea far poi
che fu disceso a provar caldo et gielo,
et del mortal sentiron gli occhi suoi. (*Rvf* 77)

[Even though Polyclitus should for a thousand years compete in looking with
all the others who were famous in that art, they would never see the smallest
part of the beauty that has conquered my heart. || But certainly my Simon was
in Paradise, whence comes this noble lady; there he saw her and portrayed her
on paper, to attest down here to her lovely face. || The work is one of those which
can be imagined only in Heaven, not here among us, where the body is a veil to
the soul; || it was a gracious act, nor could he have done it after he came down to
feel heat and cold and his eyes took on mortality.]

Within the sacred narrative of a profane love story, to put it with Gianfranco Contini,
Petrarch touches upon the topic of the beloved's truest essence and beatific power,
which will be fully celebrated after Laura's death, from the celestial perspective
of eternity, in the *Triumphi*: 'se fu beato chi la vide in terra, | or che fia dunque a
rivederla in cielo?' [if those who saw her on earth were blessed, what then of those
who will see her again in heaven?] (*Triumphus Eternitatis* 144–45).[26] Through a
hyperbolic vortex comparing and contrasting the modern and the ancient world,
Simone must have joined the blessed in the Empyrean, where he could admire
the platonic idea of Laura, outdoing even Polyclitus and his contemporaries. The
exceptional power of portraiture, therefore, is filled with the superior purpose of
showing what mortal eyes cannot see.

The image of the painter translating a heavenly vision for an earthly audience
('Ma certo il mio Simon fu in Paradiso'), moreover, recalls the iconography of Saint
Luke painting the Virgin, which recurs frequently between the Middle Ages and the
Renaissance.[27] Byzantine accounts attributed the miraculous icon of Mary holding
the Child from the Monastery of Hodegon in Constantinople (*Hodegetria*) to the

26   Petrarca 1996b: 538. On the vision of Laura in the *Triumphus Eternitatis*, see Bertolani 2001: 137–39;
and Bertolani 2005: 225–27. On the metaphor of the body as a prison, see Marcozzi 2011: 13–42.
27   See Hall 1983: 90–91.

Apostle himself, and the subsequent tradition of Saint Luke the painter made him the patron of artists' guilds.[28] Artists frequently portrayed themselves in the guise of Saint Luke painting the Virgin as a way to show their professional affiliation, entrust their work to the saint's protection, and proudly affirm the power of art to make the ineffable visible. Petrarch's reference to Simone's painting appears to refer in filigree to this tradition, subtly presenting him 'in the guise of the saint' to celebrate his artistic ability—and presumably provide a non-pagan counterpart to Polyclitus—and attributing an almost miraculous power to the image of Laura ('per *far fede* qua giù').

If *Rvf* 77 celebrates the illusionistic power of art, *Rvf* 78 expresses the lover's frustration against the limits of this seductive illusion, its inability to come alive and speak, re-presenting Laura's mind:

> Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto
> ch'a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile,
> s'avesse dato a l'opera gentile
> colla figura voce ed intellecto,
>     di sospir' molti mi sgombrava il petto,
> che ciò ch'altri à più caro, a me fan vile:
> però che 'n vista ella si mostra humile
> promettendomi pace ne l'aspetto.
>     Ma poi ch'i' vengo a ragionar co·llei,
> benignamente assai par che m'ascolte,
> se risponder savesse a' detti miei.
>     Pigmalïon, quanto lodar ti dêi
> de l'imagine tua, se mille volte
> n'avesti quel ch'i' sol una vorrei. (*Rvf* 78)

[When Simon received the high idea which, for my sake, put his hand to his stylus, if he had given to his noble work voice and intellect along with form || he would have lightened my breast of many sighs that make what others prize most value to me. For in appearance she seems humble, and her expression promises peace; || then, when I come to speak to her, she seems to listen most kindly: if she could only reply to my words! || Pygmalion, how glad you should be of your statue, since you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!]

The heavenly essence that Simone Martini is said to have captured proves to be an illusion, a fiction echoing the words of Ratio in *De remediis*. Unlike Pygmalion,

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28   On the *Hodegetria*, see Pentcheva 2006: ch. 4.

whose ivory statue of Galatea was brought to life by Venus in response to his prayers, Petrarch has not been rewarded with such a miracle. Instead of relieving the poet's pain, the portrait exacerbates it.[29] Sonnet 78 suggests an implicit parallel between Simone Martini's stylus, which failed to give voice and intellect to the portrait of Laura, and Petrarch's style of his 'rime sparse', as metonymies for their works. Just as Simone has not managed to endow the portrait with a voice, so Petrarch's poems have not succeeded in winning the beloved's resistance, her 'cor di smalto' (*Rvf* 70.22). Jean Campbell proposed to see a further, more conceptual link between the styluses used by Simone and Petrarch to portray Laura:

> Although the stylus is the instrument that informs the painting subject and brings the work into being, it is not coterminous with an accomplished object. Rather, it is explicitly identified with the potential in the moment between the conception of a portrait, which Petrarch attributes to Simone's inspired vision of beauty, and the realization of a work that ultimately fails to fulfill his desire.[30]

In this sense, the stylus becomes synonymous with the development of the artist's and poet's *ingenium* and is connected with their intellectual faculty, intermediary between the heavenly and the earthly sphere. However, it is precisely in the material translation of the products of *ingenium* (the impression of the stylus on the *carte*) that both Petrarch and Simone are defeated by the mimetic limitations of their respective arts.

Despite this, the sighs and frustration associated with Simone's failure and Laura's insensitivity have eternalised the poet's own voice through poetry. While Simone's portrait 'in carte' (*Rvf* 77.7) of Laura has not survived, Petrarch's poems have been a source of glory for himself and the painter.[31] This is what Vasari's words seem to prophesy in his *Life* of Simone Martini through a *paragone* that celebrates

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29   In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine conflates the arts with the devil's deceit: even though not deliberately intended to lead the viewer astray, painting and sculpture are ultimately false promises (*Soliloquia*, II.VI–X; *Patrologia Latina*, XXXII.889–893). In the *Secretum*, Augustinus will openly condemn Franciscus's use of Laura's portrait as an idol: 'And what's even crazier is that, not content with the sight of the face that had brought all this upon you, you went and had another version of it painted by a famous artist, so that you could carry it around with you everywhere and thus have a constant cause for everlasting tears' [Quid autem insanius quam, non contentum presenti illius vultus effigie, unde hec cuncta tibi provenerant, aliam fictam illustris artificis ingenio quesivisse, quam tecum ubique circumferens haberes materiam semper immortalium lacrimarum?] (*Secretum*, III.7.4). Cited from Petrarca 2016: 180–81. On Petrarch and Augustine, see also Lee 2012: 63–112.

30   Jean Campbell 2009: 213.

31   On Vasari, Petrarch, and Simone Martini, and the fame resulting from poetry, see Campbell 2021, from which the expression 'eternal ink' that follows is borrowed.

the triumph of honour and fame resulting from the 'eternal ink' of poetry over the decaying materiality of painting:

> Più felici di tutti [...] (parlando degl'artefici) sono quelli che [...] vivono al tempo di qualche famoso scrittore, da cui, per un piccolo ritratto o altra così fatta cortesia delle cose dell'arte, si riporta premio alcuna volta mediante gli loro scritti d'eterno onore e nome. La qual cosa si deve, fra coloro che attendono alle cose del disegno, particolarmente desiderare e cercare degl'eccellenti pittori, poiché l'opere loro, essendo in superficie e in campo di colore, non possono avere quell'eternità che dànno i bronzi e le cose di marmo allo scultore, o le fabbriche agl'architetti. Fu dunque quella di Simone grandissima ventura vivere al tempo di messer Francesco Petrarca, e abbattersi a trovare in Avignone alla corte questo amorosissimo poeta desideroso d'avere la imagine di madonna Laura di mano di maestro Simone; perciò che avutala bella come desiderato avea, fece di lui memoria in due sonetti [...]. E invero questi sonetti [...] hanno dato più fama alla povera vita di maestro Simone che non hanno fatto né faranno mai tutte l'opere sue, perché elleno hanno a venire, quando che sia, meno, dove gli scritti di tant'uomo viveranno eterni secoli.

> [Happiest of all [...] are those (speaking of artists) who [...] live in the time of some famous writer from whom, in return for a small portrait or some other kind of gift of an artistic nature, they may on occasion receive, through his writings, the reward of eternal honour and fame. Such a thing should be especially desired and sought after by those most excellent artists who work in the field of design, for their works, being executed upon surfaces within a field of colour, cannot possess the eternal duration that bronze casting and marble objects bring to sculpture or buildings to architects. It was thus Simone's greatest good fortune to live in the time of Messer Francis Petrarch and to happen to find this most amorous poet at the court of Avignon, since he was anxious to have a picture of Madonna Laura by the hand of Maestro Simone; for that reason, when he received a painting as beautiful as he had wished, he immortalized Simone in two sonnets [...]. And in truth, these sonnets [...] have given the poor life of Maestro Simone greater fame than all his works did or ever will do, for the time must come, whenever it may be, when they will disappear, while the writings of such a great man will endure for all time.][32]

While *Rvf* 77 and 78 codify some of the most lasting themes regarding the power of portraiture, they also implicitly set the theoretical premises for its failure.

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32    Cited from Vasari 1966–87: II, 191–92. The English translation is from Vasari 1998: 37–38.

Petrarch's distinction between Laura's physical image and her real portrait in heaven echoes the Augustinian distinction between a superior soul and an inferior body, a Platonic dichotomy that shaped his epistemological approach to images.[33] This position emerges also in the *Secretum*, where Petrarch's complicated—even tortured—understanding of visual representation is dramatised in Franciscus's dialogue with Augustine:

> AUGUSTINUS: Your vision is correct, and yet the words of the Apostle apply to you: 'For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle presses down the mind that muses upon many things'.[34]

When Augustine reproaches him for his admiration of Laura's mortal image, Franciscus replies:

> FRANCISCUS: Don't you realize that you've referred to a woman whose heart is free of worldly concerns, and burns instead with desire for heavenly things, in whose face—if anything were ever true—the embodiment of divine beauty shines, whose character is a model of the highest integrity, whose voice and piercing gaze have nothing mortal about them, and even whose gait is not human?[35]

> FRANCISCUS: If the features of the love that holds me in sway were visible, they would resemble the face of the one on whom I have admittedly lavished much praise, though less than I should have.[36]

The image of Laura is 'true' and morally acceptable because it exists in Petrarch's heart and is not of the flesh, has nothing mortal and cannot be compared to that of anyone else.

Well beyond studies on the image of Laura and its visual fortune,[37] *Rvf* 77 and 78 have instigated a rich strand of research on their poetic legacy. This has been

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33    On Augustine's epistemology and its development, see Moore 2011. On Petrarch's Augustinian positions in the discussion of the visual arts, see Gill 2005: 95–99.

34    *Secretum,* I.15.4: 'AUGUSTINUS: Rite discernis, atqui verificatum est in vobis illud apostolicum: "Corpus, quod corrumpitur, aggravat animam, et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitantem"'. Translated in Petrarca 2016: 59.

35    *Secretum,* III.3.2: 'FRANCISCUS: Ceterum scis ne de ea muliere mentionem tibi exortam, cuius mens terrenarum nescia curarum celestibus desideriis ardet; in cuius aspectu, siquid usquam veri est, divini specimen decoris effulget; cuius mores consumate honestatis exemplar sunt; cuius nec vox nec oculorum vigor mortale aliquid nec incessus hominem representat?'. Translated in Petrarca 2016: 153–54.

36    *Secretum,* III.4.2: 'FRANCISCUS: Si enim amoris in me regnantis facies cerni posset, eius vultui, quam licet multum tamen debito parcius laudavi, non absimilis videretur'. Translated in Petrarca 2016: 161.

37    See Trapp 2001.

explored in particular through a number of critical issues first identified by
Giovanni Pozzi and then taken up by Amedeo Quondam: the varying relationship
between poetic and visual portrait; their biunivocal connection in terms of
challenge and emulation between poetry and painting; and the self-referential
autonomy of literary portraiture.[38] With regard to the relationship between poetic
and visual portrait, Pozzi proposed to identify three distinct categories: occasional
poems that make reference to a portrait and explicitly mention pictorial elements;
occasional poems that refer to a portrait but make no reference to pictorial
elements; and descriptive poems that display pictorial elements but make no
reference to an existing portrait.[39] While helpful, such distinction tends to blur
the line between two kinds of textual object that, though cognate, should not be
confused with one another: on the one hand, amorous or encomiastic poems that
are explicitly connected with a work of art (either extant or lost), which properly
constitutes their occasion or subject matter, regardless of the presence or absence
of visual elements in the text; on the other, poems that simply describe the
beauty of a woman according to the rhetorical model of *descriptio pulchritudinis*
codified by the Petrarchan 'canon of beauties', but make no reference to art
except, possibly, for the mention of the act of 'portraying' metaphorically carried
out with words and 'style'. The latter group have been studied magisterially by
Pozzi and Quondam, whereas the former initially attracted the attention of art
historians, who collected them mainly as sources for dating and attributions,
but later and gradually began to read them as iconographical sources.[40] Others,
building on Pozzi's legacy and on the foundational work of Elizabeth Cropper,
enriched the corpus of poems on portraits and proposed new critical categories
for their interpretation.[41]

　　If more critical attention has comparatively been given to portraits of women—
an attention easily explained in connection with the canon of beauties and with
the tradition of *ut pictura poësis*—the potential for the study of male portraits
in the light of Petrarch and Petrarchism was already evident in John Shearman's
'Portraits and Poets', one of the best examples to date of an effective and insightful
integration of literary objects into an argument on the visual arts.[42] More recently,
such potential was taken up and explored in the monograph by Novella Macola on

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38   Pozzi 1979; Quondam 1991: 304.

39   Pozzi 1979: 20–22.

40   The documentary approach is found, for instance, in Colasanti 1904, while the more interpretative
one is reflected in studies such as Goodman-Soellner 1983; Rogers 1986; Damianaki Romano 1998; and
Pericolo 2009.

41   Besides the pivotal Cropper 1976, see also Cropper 1986 and 1995; Bolzoni 2008; Pich 2010; and Zemanek
2010. For a recent and valuable contribution on Giovan Battista Marino and the arts, see Russo et al. 2019.

42   Shearman 1992. See also Cranston 2000.

portraits with books, as well as in the work of Stephen Campbell and Marianne Koos on 'lyric' portraits, which contributed to undermining preconceived gender distinctions.[43] All these studies variously build on the now well-established notion of Petrarchan and Petrarchist metaphors and lexicon as a shared repertoire for the representation of both body and soul across a range of cultural practices. For instance, as Enrico Castelnuovo posited in his *Ritratto e società in Italia*, the use of the *petrarchino* in portraiture substitutes old heraldic references to draw attention to the sitter's intellectual side and inner life.[44] While the complex structural dimension of *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and its mastery of syntactic orchestration mainly escaped a deep understanding and thorough imitation, its language, tropes, and motifs were taken up extensively across different literary forms and genres, in both prose and verse, and its imagery nurtured Renaissance visual culture in major and pervasive ways. In a century dominated by the rhetorical comparison between art and poetry (*ut pictura poësis*) and by the debate on the superiority of one form over the other (*paragone*), the interplay between Petrarch's oeuvre, 'Petrarchisms' (the diverse landscape of lyric poetry variously building on his model), and portraiture underpinned a variety of experiences, objects and practices, from medals to engravings, from narrative genres to dialogues on love and beauty.[45]

On the one hand, then, through his *De remediis utriusque fortune* and *Familiares*, Petrarch made a crucial contribution to the development of a theoretical discourse about the visual arts; on the other, his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and *Triumphi* offered new models for representation and self-representation, to which both Renaissance poets and artists proved to be exceptionally receptive.[46] For John Freccero, Petrarch's greatest achievement was his creation in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* of a timeless self-portrait composed of 'lyric instants', sapiently combined to create a fictional persona that has escaped the ravages of time.[47] In this respect, a further Petrarchan legacy can be identified in the frequent references to his *canzoniere* in sixteenth-century discussions about the notion of lyric poetry as imitation (and, later, expression) of *affetti*, as established by theoreticians such as Antonio Minturno,

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43   Macola 2007; Campbell 2005; and Koos 2006.

44   Castelnuovo 2015: 78.

45   See Shearman 1992 and Trapp 2003. With a focus on portraiture as a theme and as a model between poetry and art, see Bolzoni 2010 and Pich 2010. On Petrarchan emblems, see Torre 2012. See also Bayer 2008; Lorne Campbell et al. 2009; Christiansen and Weppelman 2011; Kohl et al. 2014; Steigerwald and von Rosen 2012; Genovese and Torre 2019; Terzoli and Schütze 2021, with extensive bibliography. On 'Petrarchisms', see Gigliucci 2005.

46   On the former issue, see Baxandall 1971; Ciccuto 1991; Bettini 2002; and Perucchi 2014. On the latter, see Cropper 1976; Campbell 2005; and Koos 2006.

47   Freccero 1975: 34.

Agnolo Segni, and Pomponio Torelli.[48] Such notion not only resonates with the connection between lyric utterance and portrait as performances of the self but is embodied almost literally in 'speaking' portraits, namely effigies bearing inscriptions cast in the first person.[49] The agency of speaking portraits as acts of self-staging and self-affirmation is even more evident for images of poets and in the case of female sitters, who turn from silent objects of gaze into subjects of both gaze and voice.[50]

*Quid tum*? The relationship between mimetic resemblance and the 'truth' of the soul remained at the heart of the discussion on portraiture during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[51] For instance, in Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi Tornabuoni* the cartellino (mockingly?) laments art's inability to depict the character and the soul.[52] Leonardo's studies of the *moti dell'animo* and the primacy he attributed to sight among the other senses, as well as his dense anatomical explorations of the brain, the heart, the nerves, muscles, and bones that turn thoughts into actions, produced an intense yet ambiguous form of portraiture, tied more profoundly to his own judgement than to the reality of the sitters.[53] In response to those who criticised him because the portraits of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici in San Lorenzo did not look like the models they were supposed to portray, Michelangelo famously wrote to Nicolò Martelli that he was not concerned with exact resemblance, because it would not matter a thousand years later; instead, what he wanted to portray and eternalise was their ideal image, their virtue and glory.[54] This statement is not unlike Petrarch's ultimate message in *Rvf* 77 and 78: we do not see Simone's portrait, we 'admire' it and the likeness it depicts through Petrarch's words, as Vasari recognised, in an implicit 'triumph' of *poësis* over *pictura*. It is thus more important than ever to understand how Petrarch's intuitions and qualms were received and transformed not just by his poetic followers, but by artists and their audience.

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48   An overview of the debate is offered by Frezza 2001.

49   See Bredekamp 2010.

50   See Pich 2021. For the growing emergence of women writers in the Italian Renaissance, see Cox 2008 and Cox 2013.

51   A particularly felicitous overview of this topic in art, from a philosophical as well as literary perspective, is in Zöllner 2005.

52   'Ars utinam mores animumque effingere posses pulchrior in terris nulla tabella foret' [O Art, if you could depict the character and the soul, no painting on earth would be more beautiful!]. The verses are adapted from Martial, *Epigrammata*, X.32.5–6; see Simons 2011–12.

53   On Leonardo's anatomical search for the soul, see Kemp 1971; on judgement as the faculty mediating between the perception of reality and its representation, see Summers 1987: 170–76; on Leonardo's idealisation in portraiture, see Brown 1983 and Meller 1983.

54   The passage is cited in Castelnuovo 2015: 87. On the subject of resemblance and the aims of portraiture, see also Maria Loh's discussion of 'Renaissance faciality', Loh 2009. A useful overview of the question of mimetic resemblance in Renaissance portraiture is presented in Woodall 1997.

## Interdisciplinary Encounters

This volume investigates the multifaceted relationship between Petrarch and portraiture in a genuinely interdisciplinary framework and from a range of distinctive perspectives, displaying the complex network of material and conceptual aspects that characterise the phenomenon. We have gathered a group of early career scholars with international experience, whose main specialism lies in either art history or literature but whose research has already moved beyond their discipline of reference in significant ways. Each chapter addresses the forms and implications of the relationship between Petrarch and sixteenth-century portraiture through a close reading of texts, images, and contexts across a variety of media (painting, sculpture, and engravings), genres (lyric poetry, dialogues, and letters), and geographical areas (Florence, Venice, and Bologna). While keeping their specific focus and method, all chapters resonate with each other and, by their own interweaving, help illuminate understudied crossroads and oft-overlooked areas of interest.

The volume opens with two chapters by historians of literature, whose reflections move beyond the more familiar and well-established scholarly discourse in this area. Simone Monti and Martina Dal Cengio build on the general coordinates proposed by Lina Bolzoni and Federica Pich to break new ground by focusing on understudied objects—respectively, sonnets by widows on the portrait of their dead husband, and poems on sculpted busts—which shed a different light on the well-known patterns of lyric poetry about portraiture. Monti's chapter addresses both social and literary conventions by considering the narrow range of themes and tones deemed appropriate for female poets, and the consequent limits and constraints experienced by women in shaping their own poetic voice. By analysing two 'in morte' sonnets by Livia Spinola and Francesca Turina that focus on the portraits of their dead husbands, Monti shows their contrasting solutions, one taking solace in the image's illusionary presence, while the other alert to the dangers of lifelike representation. These divergent attitudes translate into different rhetorical stances: Spinola's sonnet is dominated by eulogy and epideixis, whereas Turina's poem enacts the illusionary experience in the form of an amorous address. In this respect, the poems develop in different directions two of the main discursive possibilities experimented by Petrarch in his sonnets on the portrait of Laura and more generally in his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*: the conative dynamic of direct address (and dialogue) and the static and epideictic statement of praise, which also implies a different approach to the visual object.[55] Monti's analysis illuminates how the codes of poetry were fundamentally modelled on the male experience, just like the strategies of observation of the sitter in portraiture presented women artists

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55   On this, see Pich 2021.

with the challenge of finding their distinctive 'female gaze'. In John Berger's famous words: 'men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. […] Thus she turns herself into an object—and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.'[56] Widowhood, Monti argues, offers Spinola and Turina a poetic opportunity to legitimately 'objectify' the image of their husbands and explore their inner selves without contravening social mores.

Martina Dal Cengio proposes a pioneering overview on poems about sculpted portraits throughout the sixteenth century. The choice of a broad time frame allows her to single out consistent motifs and formulas characterising the subgenre, as well as to describe its thematic and rhetorical evolution: from poems (often sonnets) about individual women—no matter how little known or idealised—to poems (often madrigals) on undefined and generic sitters; from the centrality of the speaking viewer to that of the speaking stone portrait. In outlining these two interwoven trends, Dal Cengio emphasises the role of the epigrammatic tradition (from Greek and Latin models to their Renaissance imitators), especially for madrigals giving a voice to mythological figures. In contrast to the process examined by Monti, here Petrarch's legacy emerges in the rich imagery of petrification derived from his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, rather than in rhetorical patterns; such imagery responds to the specific nature of the objects in question—marble portraits—and effectively plays into the *paragone* between painting and sculpture. Dal Cengio also shines new light on the rhetorical possibilities that were inspired by sculpted portraiture, a topic that has not received sufficient scholarly attention to date. Sculpted portrait busts were instrumental to the development of portraiture in the Quattrocento, when artists exploited their three-dimensionality to endow their subjects with a new psychological complexity. Vasari refers to the many sonnets and epigrams left on Desiderio da Settignano's tomb after his untimely death, including one where Nature itself is baffled by his ability to 'dar […] a' freddi marmi vita' [give life to the cold marble].[57] The transition, in painting, from the profile to the three-quarter and frontal portrait, where the hands contribute to reveal the motions of the soul, is thus inextricably linked to sculptural models:[58] the hands of Verrocchio's *Lady with Primroses*—almost a Petrarchan device in the way they visually connect the flowers to the young woman's bosom—anticipate Cecilia Gallerani's seductive grasp of the ermine in the portrait by Leonardo. If early marble portraits were an opportunity to animate the sitter, however, the Cinquecento examples explored by Dal Cengio operate a striking rhetorical reversal, whereby life is frozen by the cold unresponsive stone. In the transition from Antonio Brocardo to Luigi Groto's 'Ecco il ritratto vostro' we witness the transition from Bembismo to the more baroque theme

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56   Berger 2008: 47.
57   Vasari 1966–87: III.403.
58   See Fehl 1973.

of illusion, an illusion so convincing it is eventually preferred to reality. The structure of Groto's verses closely juxtaposes references to the real body of the beloved with references to her stone effigy, in a play of textures where stone is like skin and skin is like stone that seems to prelude to Bernini's virtuosity in working with marble.[59] The image of the Gorgon 'staring back' at the reader in Groto and Marino, a device that almost removes the poet as an intermediary, cannot escape the comparison with Caravaggio's alleged self-portrait as Medusa, in which viewer, artist, and monster become one on the illusionary surface of the shield.[60]

   The chapters by Francesco Lucioli, Diletta Gamberini, and Antonio Geremicca move further in a cross-disciplinary direction by addressing three areas in which the verbal and visual cultures of the Renaissance coalesce and interweave to the point of being inextricable. At the same time, some of the arguments developed in the previous two chapters resurface, albeit from new angles, suggesting the pervasiveness of Petrarch's model and the continuous connections between different contexts and discourses. For example, the issues raised by Monti about the social expectations limiting female poets reappear in the essay devoted by Lucioli to the role of Petrarch's works in conduct literature for and about women. While some moralists considered Petrarch's poetry a dangerous instrument of corruption of female morality, others made extensive use of quotations from *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* in works addressed to a female readership and aimed at offering practical advice on women's behaviour. By focusing on a variety of such writings, Lucioli highlights the way in which Petrarchan motifs shaped the physical and moral image of the ideal woman, creating canons that had a significant influence on visual portraiture. His discussion sheds new light on the construction and performance of the self in the early modern period. The metaphor of the mirror was at the heart of medieval and Renaissance conduct books and spurred the genre of *specula principum*, which invited the reader to achieve moral betterment by emulating the conduct of exemplary models.[61] These themes had been amply anticipated by Petrarch in *De viris illustribus*—but also, as Geremicca shows, in the *Familiares*—and their most immediate counterpart in portraiture are the series of illustrious men and women that educated viewers from the walls of Renaissance buildings, both public and private.[62] In light of the central role attributed to visual and literary mirroring in the Renaissance and the influence of *Rerum vulgarium*

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59   Barolsky 2005.

60   On Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* and its references to antique self-portraits, see Posèq 1990: 157–58. On Caravaggio's escutcheon and petrification, see Cropper 1991.

61   The theme of the mirror is central to Petrarch's poetics. See Cocco 1993.

62   Mommsen 1952. On the fortunate marriage of portraiture and the tradition of famous men and women, see the example of Paolo Giovio's portrait gallery and his printed *Elogia*, discussed, among others, by Minonzio 2007.

*fragmenta* on the ideal canon, Lucioli's chapter demonstrates once again how Petrarch's reach extended far beyond the literary and visual spheres, to the very heart of early modern society.

In an ideal segue to Lucioli's chapter, Diletta Gamberini focuses on non-idealised female sitters in poetry and art and considers in what ways Renaissance depictions of old women could engage with the literary authority of the Petrarchan tradition. By comparing two stylistically divergent treatments of ageing female sitters—one of Leonardo's 'grotesque heads' and Giorgione's *La vecchia*—her essay shows how such images cannot be explained simply as the parodistic reversal of the anonymous *belle* embodying Petrarch's canon of beauty. While the scholarly debate has interpreted these depictions almost exclusively through the lens of so-called 'anti-Petrarchism', with its burlesque (and anticanonical) satire of female ugliness, Gamberini argues that Petrarch's own 'serious' reflection on time, physical decay, and the transience of beauty is perhaps more pertinent. The role of inscriptions in the iconotextual structure of both images points in this direction: Leonardo's quotation from *Rvf* 248.8—one of his several transcriptions of Petrarchan *sententiae*—must be read alongside the grotesque head, while the motto 'Col tempo' [In time] on the banderole held by *La vecchia* is best understood not only in the context of fifteenth-century *poesia cortigiana*, but also in the light of Petrarch's imagination of Laura in her old age (*Rvf* 12 and 315–17), possibly conveying a *memento senescere* in the form of an admonitory portrait of the beloved. Gamberini's reading introduces a fascinating new perspective on two famous images of women by challenging rigid interpretive dichotomies, where youth equals beauty and old age ridicule. Petrarch himself subverts these canons in the *Secretum*, where he defends his love for Laura in spite of the threat of her physical decay:

> FRANCISCUS: I call upon the lady who is present to bear witness, alongside my conscience, to the fact that (as I said earlier) I never loved her body more than her soul. The evidence is that the older she got, and her physical beauty was inevitably destroyed, the more I remained convinced of my view. Even if with the passing of time the bloom of her youth visibly declined, the beauty of her mind, which had been at the origin of my love, increased with the years, giving me cause to persevere in what I had begun. Otherwise, if I'd simply been in pursuit of her body, I'd have changed my mind long ago.

> AUGUSTINUS: Are you joking? If the same mind had been lodged in a gnarled and ugly body, would it have attracted you just as much?

> FRANCISCUS: I cannot go as far as to say that: the mind is not visible, and physical appearance would not give any guarantee that it was beautiful. But if it were

to become visible, then I would certainly love the beauty of the mind even if
it inhabited an ugly body.[63]

Portraits as intermedial constructions involving poetry remain centre stage in
the chapter by Antonio Geremicca, who focuses on Agnolo Bronzino's portraits of
*Lorenzo Lenzi* and *Laura Battiferri* and on the long poetic exchange between the
artist and Benedetto Varchi. In particular, the essay investigates the theoretical
implications of both portraits and epistolary poems with regard to the *paragone*
between poetry and painting, and considers to what extent Bronzino and Varchi
were inspired by Petrarch's ideas on the visual arts, as expressed not only in his
*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and *Triumphi*, but also in his *Familiares* and *De remediis
utriusque fortune*. Geremicca shows how the visual rhetoric of the two portraits,
both featuring open books inscribed with Petrarch's verses, can be interpreted as the
result of a close collaboration between Bronzino and Varchi; at the same time, his
analysis of the poetic exchange highlights how the choice of motifs and rhetorical
structures, far from being neutral, contributes to channelling specific stances and
concepts, as suggested in the chapters by Monti and Dal Cengio.

By the tenet of *ut pictura poësis*, portraits are silent whereas poems speak.
However, poetic inscriptions can give the sitter a voice, as in Bronzino's *Laura
Battiferri*. If verses, sonnets or whole books can feature in portraits, portraits, too,
can appear in books. Different facets and implications of this presence are explored
in the chapters by Gemma Cornetti, Muriel Maria Stella Barbero, and Susan Gaylard.
In the burgeoning sixteenth-century production of printed portraits, the paired
portraits of Petrarch and Laura introduced novel visual schemes, at times also
including segments of text that complemented their likenesses. Cornetti's essay
examines the visual formulas displayed in portraits of Petrarch and Laura included
in sixteenth-century editions of *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* and *Triumphi* and in
independent prints, exploring the relationship between these images and Petrarch's
poetry as well as the publishing strategies to which they responded.[64] The chapter
thus uncovers the iconotextual mechanism at work in the interaction of a number

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63   *Secretum,* III.5.3–4: 'FRANCISCUS: Hanc presentem in testimonium evoco, conscientiamque meam facio
contestem, me (quod iam superius dixeram) illius non magis corpus amasse quam animam. Quod hinc
percipias licebit, quoniam quo illa magis in etate progressa est, quod corporee pulcritudinis ineluctabile
fulmen est, eo fimior in opinione permansi. Etsi enim visibiliter iuvente flos tractu temporis languesceret,
animi decor annis augebatur, qui sicut amandi principium sic incepti perseverantiam ministravit. Alioquin
si post corpus abiissem, iam pridem mutandi propositi tempus erat. || AUGUSTINUS: Me ne ludis? An si
idem animus in squalido et nodoso corpore habitaret, similiter placuisset? || FRANCISCUS: Non audeo
quidem id dicere; neque enim animus cerni potest, nec imago corporis talem spopondisset; at si oculis
appareret, amarem profecto pulchritudinem animi deforme licet habentis habitaculum'. Translated in
Petrarca 2016: 169.

64   See Daniels 2020.

of understudied paratexts, such as the portrait-urn of Petrarch and Laura and the anonymous sonnet on their ashes featured in several editions printed by Gabriele Giolito: the phoenix on top of the urn can be read not only in conjunction with the printer's mark but also with the sonnet and with the apparitions of the mythical creature in *Rvf* 135, 185, and 321. This system of allegorical and textual references that accompany the portraits of Petrarch and Laura is closely connected with the tradition of emblems and *imprese*, as well as with the numismatic relation between a mimetic reverse and an allegorical obverse. As a collector of antique coins, Petrarch was familiar with these conventions and his language in *Rvf*, starting with the central play on Laura-*lauro*, is profoundly emblematic.[65] In the sixteenth century, *imprese* were understood as being composed of a 'body' (the image) and a 'soul' (the motto), a position that echoes the debates on the *paragone* between poetry and painting discussed by Geremicca and is particularly relevant to portraiture.[66] Despite being indebted to these models, however, the 'packaging' formulas discussed by Cornetti subvert the hierarchy of word and image by using the paratext not just as a commentary or embellishment, but to introduce, as in the case of the portrait-urn, unexpected references.

The actual intermediality analysed by Cornetti—engraved portraits, frames, and verses from Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* or *Triumphi*—becomes an implicit or 'phantasmic' intermediality in the chapter by Muriel Maria Stella Barbero, which focuses on the encomiastic scheme of paired sonnets, verbal 'diptychs' celebrating rulers and their spouses, often in the context of dedication. The essay argues that this eulogistic model, employed, for instance, by Pietro Aretino and Gaspara Stampa, might have originated from the combined influence of Petrarch's two sonnets on the portrait of Laura (*Rvf* 77–78) and of paired portraits of royal or princely couples. The comparison with portraiture is particularly effective because it highlights a system of references and cross-textual echoes that connect the sonnets together, just as portraits of couples were linked by symbols, backgrounds, and heraldic visual devices. Moreover, since portrait diptychs (especially devotional ones) were strongly linked with the Netherlandish tradition, Barbero's essay introduces an alternative 'autochtonous' model for Italian double portraits, one rooted—as often happens in Italy—in the written word.[67] Once more, the permeability of verbal rhetoric to visual rhetoric, and vice versa, is particularly exposed in paratextual

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65   The use of 'emblematic' in reference to Petrarch is derived here from Freccero 1975: 37. The distinction between the emblematic Petrarch and the allegorical Dante originates, however, with Gianfranco Contini (1970: 189; first pub. in 1951). On Laura-*lauro* see Sturm-Maddox 1992 and the literature review by Falkeid 2012.

66   Giovio 1556: 6. On the *paragone* in *impresa* literature, see Caldwell 2000.

67   For a discussion of northern portrait diptychs, see Lotte Brand and Anzelewsky 1978; Hand, Metzger and Sprong 2006; and Falque 2012.

elements, such as the rubrics preceding the sonnets addressed to Henry II and Catherine de' Medici and their careful graphic framing in the posthumous edition of Stampa's *Rime*.

Similarly, layout and framing mediate textual meaning in the illustrated portrait books discussed by Susan Gaylard, who examines the evolution of women's portraits in these printed collections, from the early sixteenth century to the 1570s. In particular, her chapter discusses how Petrarchan canons of beauty, as embodied in Quattrocento portraiture, became part of a strategy of sublimation, by which the idealised images of famous women were juxtaposed with their morally problematic biographies. After the complex mediations experimented by Jacopo da Strada (*Epitome du Thresor des Antiquitez*, 1553) and Enea Vico (*Imagini delle donne auguste*, 1557), women's faces disappeared from illustrated portrait books, developing into framing decoration or models for regional costume.

Building on these diverse yet complementary essays, the book paints a rich 'portrait' of Petrarch and his legacy as they continued to inspire and challenge artists and writers well into the autumn of the Renaissance.

## Editorial Note

While quotations from Petrarch's texts and sixteenth-century sources have largely been made uniform across the volume, the interdisciplinary nature of the contributions and the different uses they make of textual references meant that authors were encouraged to maintain a degree of autonomy and internal consistency. We hope that this volume will be enjoyed by the widest possible readership: to this end, Italian texts are first given in the original vernacular, then translated, while Latin excerpts are translated immediately and the original is provided afterwards or in footnote.

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