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Pieper, C.H.; Hintzen, B.

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Theorie und Praxis des lateinischen Petrarkismus im Italien des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts

Christoph Pieper

The Challenge of Petrarch's Legacy – Love and *innamoramento* in Salutati and Some Elegiac Collections of the Fifteenth Century

1 Introduction

In the first half of the fifteenth century the first humanists wrote collections of poetry intended to revive the elegiac code offered by the Augustan masters like Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid. However, it is also beyond doubt that these poets were not only indebted to ancient models, but were similarly aware of the huge tradition of love poetry in *volgare* that culminated in the works of Dante and especially Petrarch. I contend that it is important to acknowledge in a more systematic way the impact of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* on these Latin poets of the Quattrocento for a full assessment of the beginnings of European Petrarchism. In the following, I wish to contribute to this project by focusing not on stylistic or rhetorical *aemulatio* of the Petrarchan model, but on the ethical debate triggered by his love poems. Generally speaking, Petrarch's importance as initiator of a new intellectual movement, as the 'father of humanism', was quickly recognized, especially in North Italian centres like Florence. But his lyric speaker's love for Laura, even if stylistically regarded as a highlight of the Italian *volgare*, offered a challenge with regard to contents.

My chapter is divided into two sections. The first (subheadings 2 and 3) is dedicated to Coluccio Salutati, an author who was both a fervent admirer of Petrarch and a severe critic of indulging oneself in the feelings of love. As a test case, I will analyse some letters directed to Pellegrino Zambecari in the early 1390s, which show how ethically problematic love poetry could be. In the second section (subheadings 4 and 5) I will turn to the moment of the speaker's *innamoramento* in some elegiac poems of the fifteenth century, and will examine how they respond to the Petrarchan model and how they increase its moral acceptability.

2 Petrarch as a cultural and moral hero

The considerable difficulty in ennobling amorous poetry in early humanistic circles can be shown through the example of an eminent figure of the time: Coluccio

Salutati, who was a fervent admirer of Petrarch and had since the 1360s been on friendly terms with him and Giovanni Boccaccio.¹ When Petrarch died in 1374, Salutati, just arrived in Florence to embark on his political career, composed an appraisal of Petrarch's intellectual inheritance that embraces most of the features of his later canonization.² In a famous letter to Roberto Guidi, the young count of Battifolle, written on 16 August 1374 and thus less than a month after the death of the venerated *maestro*, Salutati offers a true *laudatio funebris*. Petrarch is hailed as an extraordinary, sublime author and man, the glory of his era:

motus sum, fateor, qui viderim illud nedum huius florentis urbis lucidum iubar, sed totius Italie nostreque etatis lumen extinctum [...] istudque eloquentie sidus omniumque virtutum domicilium superni numinis benignitate nobis indultum.³

I am deeply moved, I confess, when I see that not only this bright splendor of this flourishing city, but the light of all Italy and of our time has been extinguished [...], this star of eloquence and homeland of all virtues, granted to us by the benevolence of the highest god.

In a daring *synkrisis* with the major ancient authorities, Salutati then extols Petrarch above all writers of antiquity because he alone has achieved the highest standards in prose (similar to Demosthenes and Cicero), poetry (similar to Vergil and all Greek lyrical poets) and philosophy (similar to Seneca). Among these achievements, Salutati mostly counts the deceased's Latin production, but he also touches upon the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, Petrarch's so-called *Canzoniere*:

taceo in hoc dicendi gignasio quo alternatis consonantibusque versicolorum finibus materna lingua vulgarium auricole demulcentur, in quo octo sexque carminibus, aut si quid

¹ A detailed assessment of Salutati's judgments about Petrarch throughout his life is offered by Marcello Aurigemma: *I giudizi sul Petrarca e le idee letterarie di C. Salutati*. In: *Atti e memorie dell'Arcadia*, ser. 3, 6.4 (1975–1976), pp. 67–146.

² Cf. on this famous letter recently Martin L. McLaughlin: *Latin and Vernacular from Dante to the Age of Lorenzo (1321–ca. 1500)*. In: *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*. Ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson. Cambridge 2005, vol. 2, pp. 612–625, here p. 615 (with further references); Timothy Kircher: *Petrarch and the Humanists*. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*. Ed. by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid. Cambridge 2015, pp. 179–190, here pp. 180–181.

³ The text is quoted from the edition *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*. Ed. by Francesco Novati. 4 vols., Rome 1891–1911, vol. 1, pp. 176–187 (= Ep. 3.15), here p. 177, ll. 15 and 20–21. The following references will indicate 'Volume number.Page number.Line number'. All translations in this chapter are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

paucioribus expediendum fuit, omnium consensu et compatriotam suum Aligherium Dante[m], divinum prorsus virum, et ceteros antecessit.⁴

I do not mention that field of eloquence in which the ears of the masses are allured by the alternately rhyming end of verses in the mother tongue, a genre in which he, with eight plus six verses [sc. the sonnet consisting of 8 + 6 verses] or, if a thought must be unwound, with even less, has surpassed according to the judgment of all, even his compatriot Dante Alighieri, a truly divine man, and all the others [sc. vernacular poets].

The end of the sentence merits special attention: Dante (here classified as a divine man) was slowly canonized around the year of Petrarch's death: in 1373, Boccaccio, on the invitation of the city of Florence, lectured in public on the *Comedia*, and had already written his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*. Thus, if Salutati one year later in a letter composed in Florence writes that Petrarch has outrivalled the divine Dante, he implicitly attributes to him, as the author of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, a similar status of supernatural *auctoritas*.⁵

Important for my further argument is that Petrarch's excellence is not restricted to his rhetorical and intellectual skills, but also includes his insights in moral philosophy and his virtuous behaviour (the *virtutes* of which he is said to be the homeland in the quotation above). Salutati explicitly asserts that Petrarch's virtuous life is reflected in his works: "quid virtuosum inter mortales inque rerum istarum corruptibilium societate potest optari quod ille iamdiu suis operibus omnium passionum fece purgatis suisque non sit meritis assecutus?" [What kind of virtuousness can one wish for amongst men and in the society of all perishable things that he has not achieved for his merits, since his works have already been purged from the dregs of all passions?].⁶ Without mentioning the vernacular poems of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* here, it is probable that they are in Salutati's mind. We know from other early assessments of Petrarch's life that the amorous poems were in need of defence. Although Giovanni Boccaccio and Filippo Villani in their biographies of their revered friend and master are mostly concerned with his Latin works, they both comment briefly on the vernacular poems as well.⁷ Boccaccio immediately defends the verses against the charge of immorality. After a long appraisal of Petrarch's excellent character, he also says that the *vulgaria poemata* on his love for Lauretta do not disagree (*non obstat*) with this image. Referring to Petrarch's own interpretation of the poems in

⁴ Novati (n. 3), 1.183.6–11.

⁵ Cf. on the comparison Dante-Petrarch in the letter Aurigemma (n. 1), pp. 86–88. McLaughlin (n. 2), pp. 615–616 recalls that in later years, Salutati would value Dante as higher than Petrarch.

⁶ Novati (n. 3), 1.177.28–178.1.

⁷ See for a very brief overview Kircher (n. 2), p. 180.

his *Secretum*, Boccaccio writes: “Laurettam illam allegorice pro laurea corona, quam postmodum est adeptus, accipiendam puto. quid opus est verbis? nihil enim potest de virtutibus et scientia huius poetae respective ad veritatem meus calamus explicare” [I think that this Lauretta must be understood as an allegory for the laurel crown, which he later obtained. Why should I write more? For my writing pen cannot explain anything with regard to truth about the virtues and knowledge of this poet].⁸ Even more apologetic is Boccaccio’s contemporary Filippo Villani in his biography of Petrarch, which he included in his *Liber de origine civitatis Florentiae et eiusdem famosis civibus* (completed in 1383). He introduces the vernacular poems (the *vulgares odae atque sonitii*) as compositions “in quibus incredibilem et fere angelicam,⁹ si sic dicere fas est, dictandi potestatem atque decorum ostendit. tanta siquidem dulcedine fluunt ut ab eorum pronuntiatione etiam senes gravissimi nesciant abstinere”¹⁰ [in which he shows an incredible and almost – if I may say so – angelic power and grace of expression. For they flow with such sweetness that even the most authoritative old men cannot abstain from reciting them]. The reference to the old men implicitly leads up to the theme of possible criticism to which Villani explicitly returns towards the end of his biographical sketch. According to him, most readers have criticized Petrarch for his amorous poetry: “existimavere plerique Petrarcham, cum beneficiis ecclesiasticis aleretur nec ab odibus lascivientis cupidinis abstinere, parum sanctae vitae studuisse” [most people believe that Petrarch did not strive enough towards a pious life, because he was fed with the benefactions of the church and did not abstain from his odes about licentious love].¹¹ Villani, however, contradicts this opinion: Petrarch’s death, during which the bystanders could see his soul emanating towards heaven, has definitively proven his virtuousness. In short, Salutati’s judgment of 1374 is in line with that of his older contemporaries Boccaccio and Villani: all three acknowledge that Petrarch’s moral grandeur was such that

8 Giovanni Boccaccio, *De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petrarchae de Florentia*, quoted from *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio scritte fino al secolo decimosesto*. Ed. by Angelo Solerti. Milan 1904, pp. 253–264, here pp. 262–263. The poetic coronation of 1341 and the previous exam in front of King Robert of Naples is the most elaborately narrated episode of Petrarch’s life in Boccaccio’s *De vita* (it fills one out of twelve pages in Solerti’s edition).

9 Solerti (n. 8) prints “incredibile et fere angelicum” in his edition and refers to the text I adopt only in a footnote (it is unclear whether as his conjecture or as a variant in one of the manuscripts).

10 Filippo Villani, *De vita et moribus Francisci Petrarchae poetae laureati*, in Solerti (n. 8), pp. 275–281, here p. 279. On Villani’s judgment of Petrarch’s vernacular poems, see briefly Aurigemma (n. 1), p. 118.

11 Ibid., p. 281.

he could even treat the potentially lascivious theme of love in an impeccably virtuous manner.

3 **Salutati readdressing Petrarch's moral excellence**

This, however, is only part of the story. As has been demonstrated by others, already five years after Petrarch's death Salutati had toned down the exuberant praise.¹² Again almost fifteen years later, he was confronted with a kind of intrusion of Petrarchan-style poetry into real life. His reaction shows that he no longer considered love of the kind that Petrarch had described as virtuous; on the contrary, as will become clear, he now accuses Petrarch of having written lascivious verses. The incident that triggered such a reaction was the following: Salutati's younger colleague and friend, the Bolognese chancellor Pellegrino Zambecari, had been in love with a girl called Giovanna, who, however, had refused to marry him and instead found another husband. Zambecari, even though himself married to another woman, obviously could not stop loving her, and, what is more important in this context, writing about his love for her.¹³ He did so both in poems and in letters which he sent to his friends, among whom was Salutati. From the letters concerning this affair, the most famous one is the latest from 1398, as it is often adduced as being an important source for Salutati's reflections on the *vita activa* versus the *vita contemplativa*¹⁴ – but for our current study, the earlier letters dating from the years between 1392 and 1394 are more relevant.¹⁵ In four subsequent letters Salutati does his utmost to dissuade his friend from indulging in his erotic passion and from expressing it in a similarly passionate way. As an alternative, he offers Zambecari a more valuable and virtuous object of his love:

12 Cf. Ronald G. Witt: *In the Footsteps of the Ancients. The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*. Leiden, Boston, Cologne 2000, p. 315. Cf. also Aurigemma (n. 1), p. 111 on Salutati's increasing need to defend Petrarch against critics at the moment when humanistic scholarship and Latin style developed further.

13 For the biographical background cf. Novati (n. 3), vol. 3, p. 3 n. 1. Aurigemma (n. 1) does not include these letters in his overview of Salutati's attitude towards Petrarch.

14 *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 285–308 (= Ep. 10.16). This letter is discussed, among others, in Ronald Witt: *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*. Durham (NC) 1983, pp. 351–353; it is translated in: Benjamin Kohl, Ronald Witt (eds.): *The Earthly Republic. The Italian Humanists on Government and Society*. Philadelphia 1978, pp. 93–114.

15 Novati (n. 3), vol. 3, pp. 3–52 (= Ep. 9.1–4).

god and god's creation. I contend that Salutati not only comments on the inappropriate love of a representative of a social elite, but treats this love and the writing about it as interconnected phenomena. This means not only that Salutati is addressing Zambeccari as political and moral advisor, but that we can also extract various pieces of literary criticism from the letters.

On the basis of this supposition, let me highlight some central aspects of his arguments. According to Salutati love can have two mutually exclusive objects, one based on sensual stimuli and another based on a virtuous and faithful attitude directed towards god. According to the latter, it would even be possible to love a woman, as long as one sees the beloved as an *imago dei*, as Salutati expresses at the end of the third letter: “ama Iohannem, ama et omnem rationalem creaturam, non ad recreationem, sed ad felicitatem, non tui gratia, sed eius, qui contemplatione diligitur [i.e., deus]” [love Giovanna, also love every rational creature of god, but not for recreation, but for happiness, not for your sake, but for the sake of him who is loved through contemplation].¹⁶ Yet, Zambeccari is in the grip of the sensual and egoistic type of love. From the outset, Salutati presents this passion as erroneous. He says that he had hoped that his friend “would have put an end to your love stories which burn you and which make you mad, and (what is more dangerous and the craziest thing) through which you think to earn glory by burning and being mad” (“te tuis amoribus, quibus ureris et insanis quibusque (quod periculosius et insanissimum est) te uri et insanire gloriosum ducis, finem et terminem posuisse”). If this turns out to be impossible, Salutati at least hopes that “after having understood the errors of your past life and after having changed your way of life, you are less mad than usual” (“minusque solito recognitis erroribus exacte vite, iam mutatis consiliis insanire”).¹⁷ With this opening, Salutati evokes two important Petrarchan themes. In the first sonnet of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, Petrarch programmatically had defined his love for Laura as an error of his youthful ego that was partly different from his present, more mature one (“in sul mio primo giovenile errore | quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono”, [in my first juvenile confusion, when I was partly another man than I am now], RVF 1.3–4). Michael Bernsen has therefore described the *Canzoniere* as “ein geschlossenes Werk im Sinne einer Bekehrungshistorie”,¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., 3.40.16–18.

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.4.2–4 and 6–7.

¹⁸ Michael Bernsen: Die Problematisierung lyrischen Sprechens im Mittelalter. Eine Untersuchung zum Diskurswandel der Liebesdichtung von den Provenzalen bis zu Petrarca. Tübingen 2001, p. 303. According to Bernsen, this conversion in Petrarch did not carry overt religious flavours; the focus in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* remains on the earthly love for Laura, even in the last canzone to the Virgin Mary (ibid., pp. 317–319).

Salutati also invites Zambecari to convert and distance himself from his passionate feelings.¹⁹ It is unclear whether Salutati also saw Petrarch's distancing as incomplete: rather than showing a Christian conversion and the abolition of erotic in favour of spiritual love, the poems of the *Canzoniere* remain deeply ambiguous and constantly merge the religious and human aspects of love and the beloved woman.²⁰ In the words of Andreas Kablitz, Laura appears from the very beginning "als Heilsbringerin und Verführerin in eins".²¹ Especially dubious is the honesty of Petrarch's repentance with regard to the glory he wanted to achieve with his vernacular poems,²² as he himself famously 'admits' in his conversation with St Augustine in the *Secretum*: his fascination for Laura was triggered more by her name (which recalls the laurel crown of the *poeta laureatus*) than by her beauty.²³ Even if Salutati does not refer in his letter explicitly to the such poetic glory, the fact that Zambecari obviously considers his love for Giovanna as glorious for himself (*gloriosum*) connects it to Petrarch's famous poetological allegory.

Petrarchan echoes continue to arise. At several points in his letters, Salutati refers to the way in which Zambecari has described his beloved Giovanna. A representative example is the following passage from the first letter:

miraris formam, laudas speciem, predicas pulchritudinem, oculos sideribus equas, faciem soli, illi te servum asseris, illam tibi dominam confitens immemor quod ab initio data nobis fuerit in socium, post transgressionem autem abdicata sit in servam.²⁴

¹⁹ The theme of Zambecari's *error* returns at the end of the second letter, Novati (n. 3), 3.20.16–19.

²⁰ Cf. Francesco Petrarca: *Canzoniere*. Ed. by Marco Santagata. Milan ²2004, p. 8 ad loc.: "la trasformazione non è completa perché nell'uomo nuovo sopravvivono ancora residui dell'errore passato." On p. 9, he speaks of "la dialettica cambiamento/persistenza".

²¹ Andreas Kablitz: 'Era il giorno ch'al sol si scoloraro per la pietà del suo factore i rai.' Zum Verhältnis von Sinnstruktur und poetischem Verfahren in Petrarca's *Canzoniere*. In: Romanistisches Jahrbuch 39 (1988), pp. 45–72, here p. 49. For the paradoxical role of Laura in the story of 'salvation' of the poet, cf. Aldo S. Bernardo, Laura as a *nova figura*. In: id. (ed.): Francesco Petrarca Citizen of the World. Proceedings of the World Petrarch Congress Washington, D.C., April 6–13 1974. Padua 1980, pp. 179–192, here p. 191 (on RVF 289): "The poet's salvation had all along lain in the very flames of his love, but only Laura's death had revealed that to him."

²² Cf. Bernsen (n. 18), p. 308, who argues that a major problem of Petrarch's lyric subject is that it is attracted by earthly things, especially earthly glory.

²³ Cf. Gerhard Regn: *Allegorice pro laurea corona*. Dante, Petrarca und die Konstitution postmittelalterlicher Dichtungsallegorese. In: Romanistisches Jahrbuch 52 (2000), pp. 128–152, esp. p. 142.

²⁴ Novati (n. 3), 3.5.3–8.

You admire her outward appearance, praise her attractiveness, make her eyes equal the stars, her face equal the sun, you affirm that you are her servant and confess that she is your mistress, and in doing so you forget that in the beginning she [the woman as such] has been given as a mate to us and that after the violation of god's law she has been relegated to servitude.

It is interesting to note once more the tension between Salutati's biblical-religious perspective on women as the 'servants of men' and Zambeccari's allegedly (known only from Salutati's version) *literary* perspective which turns his beloved into his mistress, thus referring to the ancient and medieval topos of *servitium amoris*. In fact, almost everything that (according to Salutati) Zambeccari has used when describing Giovanna are topical descriptions of women in both Roman love elegy and/or in the *dolce stil novo*, and thus also in Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.²⁵ In another passage from the second letter, he adds more features: apart from the blond hair ("flavis crinibus") and star-like eyes ("oculis sidereis"), Zambeccari loves (and writes about) Giovanna's delicate conversation („placabiliter loquatur"), fine movements ("venuste moveatur"), and especially her refined dancing ("saltet egregie") that has allowed her to become the leader of a chorus of dancers ("dux choree mille modis noverit variare gressus", suggesting the image of the beloved leading a circular dance of the Muses on Mount Helicon).²⁶ The description again is part of the long tradition of love poetry since antiquity, but the graciousness of movement and talking is especially reminiscent of the beloved women in the *stil novo* (it suffices to think of Beatrice in the *Tanto gentile*-sonnet from Dante's *Vita nova* 26) and in Petrarch. In RVF 90 Laura's physical beauty is praised, before Petrarch turns to extolling her moving and talking in the third stanza. Her total appearance is then compared to a living sun (again). All elements together form the typical *donna angelica* known from Italy's late medieval literary tradition:²⁷

²⁵ For the eyes equalling the stars, cf. e.g. Petrarch, RVF 157.1–12: "hebeno i cigli, et gli occhi eran due stelle, | onde Amor l'arco non tendeva in fallo" (cf. Ovid, *Amores* 2.16.44: "per me perque oculos, sidera nostra, tuos"; Propertius 3.9.14: "non oculi, geminae, sidera nostra, faces"); for the face equalling the sun, cf. Petrarch, RVF 37.81–85: "Le treccie d'òr che devrien fare il sole | d'invidia molta ir pieno, | e'l bel guardo sereno, | ove i raggi d'Amor sí caldi sono | che mi fanno anzi tempo venir meno".

²⁶ Novati (n. 3), 3.18.27–19.6.

²⁷ Cf. Santagata (n. 20), p. 445 ad loc., and Francesco Petrarca: *Canzoniere* = *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Ed. by Rosanna Bettarini. Turin 2005, 438 ad loc., who both refer to Dante's sonnet 26, as well.

Non era l'andar suo cosa mortale,
ma d'angelica forma; et le parole
sonavan altro, che pur voce humana.

Uno spirito celeste, un vivo sole
fu quel ch'i' vidi: et se non fosse or tale,
piagha per allentar d'arco non sana.²⁸

Her walk was no mortal thing, but had the essence of angels;²⁹ and her words sounded differently than a normal human voice: a celestial spirit, a living sun was what I saw. And if now she would not be as she was then, the wound does not heal, even if the bow is no longer bent.

It is thus quite obvious that Salutati connects Zambeccari's praise of Giovanna (no matter whether in verse or prose) to the tradition of the *dolce stil novo*, which found its sublimation and suspension in Petrarch's poetry.³⁰ This truly Petrarchan tone in Zambeccari's representation of his beloved obviously went so far

28 Petrarch, RVF 90.9–14. The last verse is proverbial, cf. Santagata (n. 20), p. 446 ad loc. and Bettarini (n. 27), p. 439 ad loc.

29 For my translation of forma as essence, cf. Bettarini (n. 27), p. 439 ad loc.

30 Salutati also recurs to intertextual allusions in order to show Zambeccari the fruitlessness of his love. In the third letter, he compares this love to that of Apollo and Daphne through a quotation from the standard version of the story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "sicque 'ureris et sterilem sperando nutris amorem'. spectas enim flavos 'collo pendere capillos', 'vides igne micantes | sideribus similes oculos, vides oscula, que non | est vidisse satis; laudas digitosque manusque | brachiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos; | si qua latent, meliora putas', ut de Phebo et Daphne dixit Ovidius" [thus 'you burn and foster a sterile love with hopes'. For you see how her blond 'hair hangs from her neck', 'you see her eyes, sparkling like fire and similar to the stars; you see her little mouth, and it is not enough to see it; you praise her fingers and hands, her arms and upper arm, more than halfway naked; and if something is hidden, you think it is even better,' as Ovid said about Apollo and Daphne], Novati [n. 3], 3.32.29–33.3, quoting Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.496–502. Famously, the Apollo and Daphne myth is a major constituent of Petrarch's collection, cf. esp. the famous 'metamorphosis canzone' (RVF 23). In RVF 34 Petrarch invokes Apollo and asks whether his love for Daphne is still burning (the blond hair in vers 3 is also referred to by Salutati; according to Santagata (n. 20), 187 ad loc., "il biondo è attributo laurano, non dafneo"); in a second step, then, Petrarch cross-fades his own lyrical persona with Apollo through the figure of the beloved girl: Laura is Daphne (see above for her being the laurel as well). In the sonnet, this is condensed in verses 7–8, "difendi or l'onorata et sacra fronde, | ove tu prima, et poi fu' invescato io" and vers 13 where he speaks of Laura/Daphne as "la nostra donna". The Daphne theme in Petrarch has been widely studied, cf. e.g. Peter Hainsworth: *The Myth of Daphne in the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. In: *Italian Studies* 34 (1979), pp. 28–44; Sarah Sturm-Maddox: *Petrarch's Metamorphoses. Text and Subtext in the Rime sparse*. Columbia (MO) 1985, pp. 9–38.

that he, too, characterized Giovanna as a kind of *angelica figura* or *donna celeste*,³¹ as Salutati suggests in his second letter:

celica quidem, inquis, inter alias est, morum omnium exornata decore. sit hoc ultimum, ut libet: celicam tamen unde potes asserere? secundum animam equidem de nichilo facti sumus aut, si placuerit cum Platoniciis delirare, non ipsa solum sed omnes e celo sumus.³²

You say that she is heavenly among the other women, adorned with the grace of all moral behaviour. Leave this last point as you wish. But how can you claim that she is heavenly? We have been created from nothing according to our soul, or, if we want to rave with the Platonic philosophers, not only she [sc. Giovanna], but we all stem from heaven.

Strictly speaking, what I have presented so far does not prove that Salutati with his heavy criticism of Zambecari's passion also rejects the poetic model of Petrarch evoked by Zambecari (via Salutati). Therefore, I now turn to the passage of the letters where the connection is made explicit. An important reason for Salutati rejecting Zambecari's love is that his addressee muddles the distinction between fiction and real life and lives his public life according to the Petrarchan poetic model. This inappropriate behaviour leads to criticism from his fellow citizens and reduces his public authority.³³ But even this criticism is a reference to Petrarch's literary world, more specifically to the prefatory sonnet RVF 1.9–11 ("ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto | favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente | di me mesdesmo meco mi vergogno" [but now I see well that I have long been a reason for rumours among the people, and for this I often am ashamed of myself]). Obviously Salutati is keen on balancing himself on the edge between real life and poetic imagery, all the while criticizing his fellow politician. He can do so because he himself is also a poet. At one point, he adduces verses of his own to argue that love for earthly beauty is doomed to end soon.³⁴ More relevant is a second passage where he admits that in his youth he also was in love and even

31 It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss at length how exactly Petrarch reacted to the existing tradition of the *donna angelica* (most notably of Beatrice in the *Comedia*). Cf. Bernsen (n. 18), pp. 303–319 for a nuanced treatment of the theological and philological discussions that Petrarch incorporates in the female protagonist of his *Canzoniere*. Whereas Bernsen nevertheless stresses the earthly focus of Petrarch's poetry, Bernardo (n. 21) develops the figure of Laura from Petrarch's deep spiritualism.

32 Novati (n. 3), 3.11.31–12.3.

33 Cf. the second letter (Novati [n. 3], 3.14.6–8): "sic amas ut te putent omnes, hoc est vulgus, [...] insanire."

34 Ibid., 3.29.26–30.2.

wrote poetry about his amorous passion – his lost *Bucolicum carmen*.³⁵ He even confesses that the erotic thoughts returned to him when he was already an elderly man. Again he dealt with his passion in poetry, but the verses he wrote then were no longer sentimental, but full of self-incrimination: “vulgariter cecini: ‘quid facies, o senex crispe et cane, compulse per virtutum tertii celi?’ sed – laus Deo! – sic michimet displicui quod laqueum preparatum rupi et fugi” [I sang in the vernacular: ‘What are you going to do, curly white-haired old man, rushed through the third sphere of heaven?’ But – praise to god! – I displeased myself so much that I broke and fled the snare that was already prepared].³⁶ The lesson to learn for Zambeccari is easy: love might be acceptable for youngsters, but as soon as one grows older, one must no longer yield to it and surely not write enthusiastically about it without any form of critical distance.

It is exactly at this point of his argument that Salutati explicitly adduces Petrarch, whom Zambeccari in vain invokes as witness of the defence:

nec, ut me ad amorem horteris aut te excuses, Petrarcam nostrum ponas in exemplum. amavit ille, nec, ut arbitraris, honeste, imo ad libidinem et furiose. hoc ipse fatetur in principio suorum ‘Fragmentorum’, ubi se apud amantes veniam reperturum esse confidit ex iuvenilibus suis erroribus.³⁷

And please, do not come up with the example of our Petrarch in order to seduce me to love or to excuse yourself! He loved, but not honourably, as you think, but lustfully and madly. He himself says this at the beginning of his (*Rerum vulgarium*) *fragmenta*, where he trusts that lovers will be indulgent with his juvenile errors.

The passage seems to overturn the hymnic praise of Petrarch's moral integrity, which we have seen above. Even the ethical *exemplum* Petrarch was not virtuous, but salacious in his love for Laura. Nonetheless, one has to be careful – the quoted passage does not mean that the revered predecessor is now presented as utterly immoral. He is seen as a man who has gone through immoral behaviour in his youth (cf. again RVF 1.9.3–4), but has freed himself from it, exactly as Salutati has done, but Zambeccari has not yet done. The difference between the latter and Petrarch is that the author of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* in his own poems distances himself from his passion by invoking the temporal gap which divides the moment of writing the poems from the moment of the first *innamamento*. Thus (as most modern commentators would say), Petrarch might not free

35 Ibid., 3.17.24–27: “arsi, cum etas tulit, et ego Iohannem habui meam, quam bucolico carmine ficto ex interpretatione vocabuli sub nomine Caristes, quod ‘Dei gratia’ sonat, cecini.”

36 Ibid., 3.17.33–18.2.

37 Ibid., 3.18.2–7.

himself completely from his love, but (as Salutati hints) he is at least aware of the moral problem.³⁸ The reason for this lies in the acknowledgment that love is the enemy of reason, the basis of moral behaviour.³⁹ This means that according to Salutati, love poetry in the vein of Petrarch is not good *per se*, but it has at least potential for the good in that it can show the moral development of its author at the moment he distances himself from his amorous feelings. It is only when a man and author, like Zambecari, does not reach this reflective mode and remains chained to his immediate sensual and passionate feelings, that love and love poetry are a danger to one's moral stance.

To sum up this first part on Salutati: as Marc Laureys has argued in a chapter on Salutati's Latin poetry, the author's attitude towards poetry in general is ambiguous: on the one hand he often defends poetry (especially the ancient poets) against *maligni* in terms of the fourteenth book of Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium*; on the other hand he never questions the unavoidable primacy of Christian culture.⁴⁰ We see this attitude *in nuce* in his letters to Pellegrino Zambecari written between 1392 and 1394. Salutati chastises his friend for his love on the grounds of a Christian countermodel of love, which should be directed to god instead of god's creature ("creaturam plus Deo diligis",⁴¹ is one of his charges).⁴² Second, he criticizes Zambecari's way of writing about love through many formulations that echo the *discours amoureux* of Petrarch's vernacular poetry – although this criticism is more nuanced, as Salutati does not condemn Petrarch's poetry, but only the amorous feelings that have triggered it and the hope to gain renown from this poetry. As Laureys writes, "con la poesia si può conquistare soltanto una fama superficiale e transitoria, che non ha nessun valore in

38 Cf. Kablitz (n. 21), p. 65, who asserts that from the moment of the innamoramento on Good Friday "konstituiert sich im Canzoniere die 'Liebesgeschichte' des Sängers gerade gegen die Zweifel an ihrer Legitimität".

39 Cf. Sabrina Stoppa: Amore. In: Lessico critico petrarchesco. Ed. by Luca Marcozzi and Romana Brovia. Rome 2016, p. 49. I recall that Salutati had said a similar thing already in 1374 in the phrase "suis operibus omnium passionum fece purgatis" quoted above.

40 Marc Laureys: La poesia latina di Coluccio Salutati. In: Coluccio Salutati e l'invenzione dell'umanesimo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Firenze, 29–31 ottobre 2008. Ed. by Concetta Bianca. Rome 2010, pp. 295–314, here p. 305.

41 Novati (n. 3), 3.5.19.

42 Therefore, his criticism is also framed as helping Zambecari's earthly honour (as a friend) and religious salvation (as a brother) at the same time: "non enim intendo te amicum meum et fratrem meum [...] non in viam rectam salutis et honoris quantum potero revocare" (ibid., 3.20.16–19).

confronto ai fondamentali valori cristiani".⁴³ If this conclusion is true for all kinds of poetry, it might be even more adequate for the love themes Petrarch had treated in his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Indeed, the text about Petrarch's poetry quoted above continues like this: "nec umquam memini me legisse quenquam ob amorem nomen eternum fuisse consecutum" [and I do not remember having read that anyone procured eternal fame for himself because of love]⁴⁴ – not even the great Petrarch.

4 The challenge of the *innamoramento* in fifteenth-century elegy

The case of Coluccio Salutati shows how ambiguous the Petrarchan model could be: respect for the great poet and great philosophical mind clashes with a distancing from the theme proper of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*: the succumbing to love. The problem was increased (or perhaps even triggered) by the fact that Zambecari and Salutati had chosen a different concept of how to lead one's life: whereas Petrarch advocated a secluded life dedicated to studies and meditation, Salutati and Zambecari both were active politicians and tried to combine their humanistic interest with the service for the common good and the state. Part of Salutati's criticism centres around Zambecari's improper amorous behaviour as a distinguished representative of his community; he simply is too old and lives too honourable a life to be allowed to surrender to love any longer.⁴⁵ It is this articulated attitude towards love poetry that continued to be present in early fifteenth-century humanism, especially in Tuscany. Here humanists developed an ideal of a politically relevant humanism, for which Hans Baron has coined the term 'civic humanism'.⁴⁶ When in the generation after Salutati's death

⁴³ Laureys (n. 40), p. 305. Laureys' view is more nuanced than that of David Robey: Humanist Views on the Study of Italian Poetry in the Early Italian Renaissance. In: The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson. Cambridge 2005. Vol. 2, pp. 626–647, here pp. 630–631, who argues that Salutati radically assimilates poetry to Scripture and thereby attributes a huge value and even truth to it.

⁴⁴ Novati (n. 3), vol. 3.18.7–8.

⁴⁵ See above n. 42 (Zambecari's religious *salus* and political *honor* are at stake).

⁴⁶ Baron's notion has been criticized for having followed the ideal too much and for having underestimated the rhetorical elements of the writings especially of Leonardo Bruni, cf. e.g. James Hankins: The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni. In: Journal of the History of Ideas 56 (1995), pp. 309–338, here p. 326: "Florentine republicanism

poets turned to ancient love elegy as a model for their own poetry, they had to find answers to the question of why such a topic would be a fitting theme. The problem increases if one considers that most of the authors were also using their poetry as a means to win the favour of patrons who would finance their lives and eventually allow them access to high-ranked offices like secretaries, university lecturers or even politicians.⁴⁷

Partly, the poems could build their apologies on ancient intertexts. Catullus (who was considered a proto-elegist)⁴⁸ served as a model for the distancing of the œuvre from the poet's biography, but this happened more explicitly in epigrams than in love elegies.⁴⁹ Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid were evoked as models for both the implied author and for his beloved *puella*. But even if ancient elegists reflected their own opposed attitude compared to traditional Roman morals, the genre was never self-defensive with regard to its theme: love was only metapoetically relativized in comparison to the higher epos, but hardly as a morally inferior topic. This means that within the ethical standards advanced by Coluccio Salutati, ancient elegy was a problematic genre. The elegiac speaker is attracted to the girl's physical appearance, to her dancing and singing, the aim is pleasure and the incitement for both love and life is non-rationality.⁵⁰ The humanists of Northern Italy in the Quattrocento therefore often transformed the ancient

as presented by Salutati and Bruni was a rhetorical artefact and not necessarily in keeping with either private beliefs." But apart from this, the term 'civic humanism' is still a useful category if applied in a less emphatic way as describing humanists' attempts to reconcile humanistic studies and active political life.

47 For the theme of patronage in humanist poetry, see Susanna de Beer: *The Poetics of Patronage. Poetry as Self-Advancement in Giannantonio Campano*. Turnhout 2013.

48 He served as a model for the mixed content of poetic collections which we would rather define as a mixture of elegiac and epigrammatic poetry. Cf. on the closeness of elegy and epigram in fifteenth-century poetics, *The Neo-Latin Epigram. A Learned and Witty Genre*. Ed. by Susanna de Beer, Karl Enenkel and David Rijser. Leuven 2009.

49 Cf. Catullus 16.5–6: "nam castum esse decet pium poetam | ipsum, versiculos nihil necesse est." Martial imitates it in 1.4.8: "lasciva est nobis pagina, vita proba". See for the topic Donatella Coppini: *Dummodo non castum*. Appunti su trasgressioni, ambiguità, fonti e cure strutturali nell'*Hermaphroditus* del Panormita. In: *Filologia umanistica*. Per Gianvito Resta. Ed. by Vincenzo Fera and Giacomo Ferrà. Padua 1997, pp. 407–427; and ead.: *Dummodo non castum a Nimium castus liber*. Osservazioni sull'epigramma latino nel Quattrocento. In: *Les Cahiers de l'humanisme* 1 (2000), pp. 185–208. Her articles focus on epigram, but as epigram and elegy were closely connected genres in the Quattrocento, she also treats some elegiac collections *en passant*.

50 Suffice to think of Propertius' programmatic definition of the attitude of an elegiac lover: "nullo vivere consilio" (Propertius 1.1.6). Also Ovid's self-conscious and proud role of *praeceptor amoris* could be seen as frivolous. A very good introduction to Roman love elegy is Niklas Holzberg: *Die römische Liebeselegie*. Eine Einführung. 6th edition. Darmstadt 2015.

elegiac discourse by blending it with elements of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. In his poetry, they found a less physical and more detached concept of love, as Salutati had already observed. By focusing on the virtues of Petrarch's poetic *ego*, they implicitly increased the positive evaluation of love poetry and downplayed the moral complexities that had troubled Salutati in his letters to Zambecari.⁵¹ The development of Petrarch's cycle turned out to be especially inspiring: the transformation of erotic love into a kind of religious poetry, particularly through the second part in which dead Laura is hailed as a virtuous ideal:⁵² a quick check for the words *castità* and *virtude* relating to Laura reveal an increasing frequency the further we get in the collection.⁵³ In sonnet 261, one of the last poems in part one, we find the following extraordinary characterization of Laura's ability to inspire virtuous behaviour:

Come s'acquista honor, come Dio s'ama,
come è giunta honestà con leggiadria,
ivi s'impara, et qual è dritta via
di gir al ciel, che lei aspetta et brama.⁵⁴

How to achieve honour, how to love God, how to combine honesty with grace: this can be learned here, and also which is the direct way to heaven, which expects and desires her.

The very end of the first part, sonnet 263, culminates in an apotheosis of Laura's celestial chastity:

⁵¹ Cf. Mauro de Nichilo: Petrarca, Salutati, Landino. RVF 22 e 132. In: *Italianistica* 33.2 (2004), pp. 143–161, here p. 144, who recalls that not all readers of the fifteenth century agreed with such a positive interpretation. He quotes Francesco Patrizi who was not charmed by Petrarch's poems and considered them trivial and vain.

⁵² For Laura as a representative of virtue, cf. Sister Prudence Allen: *The Concept of Woman*. Vol. 2.1: *The Early Humanist Reformation (1250–1500)*. Grand Rapids (MI), Cambridge (UK) 2002, p. 266; cf. also Annelise Morani Brody: *Laurus semper castissimus sed non redemptor*. In: *Italica* 81 (2004), pp. 297–310, who stresses that Laura is virtuous and chaste, but does not help Petrarch to ascend into divine spheres himself.

⁵³ In my view, the most striking occurrences are: 'castità': RVF 263.12–14, 286.10, 317.10, 343.9, 351.2; 'virtù/vertù': RVF 29.53, 47.13, 73.38, 211.9, 213.2, 228.9, 240.10, 248.9, 254.7, 289.14, 295.14, 325.91, 337.6, 338.7, 351.7, 354.7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.5–8.

L'alta beltà ch'al mondo non à pare
noia t'è, se non quanto il bel thesoro
di castità par ch'ella adorni et fregi.⁵⁵

The sublime beauty, which is unequalled on earth, is tedious for you, was it not that it seems to crown and decorate the beautiful treasure of chastity.

The crown of chastity takes up the first stanza of the sonnet, where the laurel crown of generals and poets is mentioned, thus linking Laura's perfection to the poetic exquisiteness of her poet Petrarch.⁵⁶ If, furthermore, Renaissance readers were inclined to read Petrarch's final canzone to the *vergine bella* Maria as an apotheosis of Laura/love, then it was possible to interpret the cycle of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, in an imitation of Dante, as a way leading from temptation to redemption.⁵⁷

I have suggested that in Salutati's letters to Zambecari love poetry is already framed as a genre that almost paradoxically is at the same time thematically immoral and can be used to suggest the author's moral development. In this, it is considered a rather transitional genre in the process of gaining authorial maturity, but not the final proof of its author's effective ethos. As I have shown elsewhere, this take on love elegy was also prominent among fifteenth-century poets. Often love poetry symbolized the inner development of the elegiac speaker, a development leading from egoistic, carnal love to more altruistic, sociable goals, and thereby also to greater moral stability.⁵⁸ This was also reflected in prose

⁵⁵ Ibid., 263.12–14. Cf. Santagata (see n. 20), p. 1046 ad loc.: “[...] la frustrazione amorosa legata all'imprendibilità di Laura-Dafne si rovescia nella elevazione della castità dell'amata”.

⁵⁶ Cf. Bettarini (n. 27), 1168 ad loc.

⁵⁷ Cf. e.g. below for Francesco Filelfo's interpretation. Modern interpretations often highlight the difference from the last canto of Dante's *Paradiso*, cf. e.g. Bernsen (n. 18), pp. 317–319, who argues that even the last canzone to the Virgin Mary remains secular poetry in that it addresses once more earthly love; the attempt to read the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* as a religious conversion is thwarted by the “Liebescogitatio” of the lyrical subject; “[d]ie dichterische Rede ist aus der sie vormals umgreifenden religiösen bzw. theologischen Superstruktur freigesetzt” (p. 319). One could mention as further evidence one of the last sonnets, RVF 364.5–7, where the speaker expresses his despair and loss of all virtue (“[...] et mia vita represso | di tanto error che di vertute il seme | à quasi spento [...]”).

⁵⁸ Cf. Christoph Pieper: *Xandrae cesserunt illa vel illa simul*. Landinos *Xandra* und die sogenannten ‘poeti medicei’ (Ugolino Verino, Naldo Naldi und Alessandro Braccesi). In: Cristoforo Landinos *Xandra* und die Transformationen römischer Liebesdichtung im Florenz des Quattrocento. Ed. by Wolfgang Kofler and Anna Novokhatko. Tübingen 2016, pp. 61–80, esp. p. 77: “Andererseits hat gerade Landino vorgezeichnet, wie innerhalb einer elegischen

treatises of the time. Leon Battista Alberti's *Amator*, for example, defines two *genera* of love, "alterum omni ... turpitudine vacuum, ... virtute et moribus magis quam utilitate voluptateque aliqua productum..., alterum ... corruptum et minime perfectum" [the one kind free of all ignominy, shaped more by virtue and moral behaviour than by egoism and any lust; the other corrupt and all but perfect].⁵⁹ The two are a constant source of strife between reason and desire.⁶⁰ Similarly, Francesco Filelfo, who wrote a commentary on the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* in the 1440s, read the collection as a retrospect of a poet who has defeated his sensual voluptuousness and has now attained the victory of the rational soul.⁶¹ Filelfo, like Salutati, sees this conversion especially expressed in poem 1. In RVF 1.4 the speaker says that he "was partly another man than he is now" ("quand'era in parte altr'uom da quel ch'i'sono"); Filelfo has the following note: "perho che allora io obediva <al>la parte irrationale delanima cioè allappetito sensitive nel cui tempestoso domicilio habitano le turbulentissime passioni; ma hora obedisco alla parte rationale" [this is because then I obeyed the irrational part of the soul, that is the sensual appetite, in the stormy house of which live the most tumultuous passions; but now I obey the rational part].⁶²

5 Putting morality to the test: love and virtue in Beccadelli, Marrasio and Landino

In the following, I will build on the train of thought outlined above when turning to a few examples of early humanistic poetry and looking especially at the

Sammlung die poetische Entwicklung der Ich-persona (die von den *tenues versus* der Elegie zum *genus grave* fortschreitet) mit seiner moralischen Entwicklung kombiniert werden konnte."

⁵⁹ Leon Battista Alberti, *Amator*. In: id., *Opera inedita et pauca separatim impressa*. Ed. Girolamo Mancini. Florence 1890, pp. 1–18, here p. 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 2: "enutritur duello rationis adversus desiderium".

⁶¹ Thus Ezio Raimondi: Francesco Filelfo, interprete del Canzoniere. In: *Studi Petrarqueschi* 3 (1950), pp. 143–164, here p. 154. Filelfo dedicated the commentary to Filippo Maria Visconti, who might have been interested in the project because he wanted to stress the historical bonds between Petrarch and Milan against the Florentine appropriation of the 'tre corone' Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, as is suggested by Carlo Dionisotti: *Fortuna del Petrarca nel Quattrocento*. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 17 (1974), pp. 61–113, here p. 79.

⁶² I quote from the edition Petrarcha con doi commenti sopra li sonetti e canzone. Venice: Bernardino Stagnino 1522, p. IIIr. In the commentary of the other poems (which according to Filelfo were still written under the influence of irrationality), Filelfo is quite severe with Petrarch's utterances of penitence, cf. Dionisotti (n. 61), pp. 81–82.

beginning of love, which is the moment when rationality is the farthest removed from the speaker. Therefore, I contend, it is a moment in need of special argumentative commitment and auto-defensive strategies. I will argue that several elegiac poems show an awareness of this moral complexity centred around erotic love.

One strategy could be to label amorous passion explicitly as error. The poem *Laus Elisiae* by Antonio Beccadelli (Panormita), for example, refers to the potential *crimen* of loving a girl because of her beauty. Although the poem is not part of an elegiac corpus, it shows typical characteristics of elegiac discourse of the Quattrocento. The text was most probably written in Beccadelli's Paduan years (1429–1434). In the first verses of the poem he describes Elisia's outward beauty, her attractive speech and her hand that can work so well (probably a reference to the traditional spinning or tissue work). But, so the speaker continues, Lisia possesses one *crimen*: she captures many men with her singing: “unum crimen habes, sed si modo crimen amari est, | quod cantu nolens pectora multa capis” [you have one fault, if it really is a fault to be loved: you capture many hearts with your singing, against your will].⁶³ The relativizing sentence ‘if it is indeed a *crimen* to be loved’ reminds the readers of the moral discussions regarding love poetry. Beccadelli's poem suggests that any alleged immorality is questionable (*si ... crimen est*) if the object of love is worthy enough. Fittingly, he mentions the girl's moral perfection and how it matches the same excellence of the poetic speaker; both are therefore not to be reproached: “hoc etiam felix, quod formosissima pulchro | scilicet et casto casta puella places” [And also in this aspect are you blessed that you, most lovely, please the beautiful [i.e., the elegiac speaker], and that you, chaste, please the chaste].⁶⁴ Even if the poem is written in a light tone and even if the tone of verses 11–12 show an almost Ovidian irony, they nevertheless suggest that in early humanistic elegiac poetry love and guilt could be closely connected.

Beccadelli's poem was probably composed only slightly later than the famous ‘first’ elegiac collection, the short *Angelinetum* by Giovanni Marrasio. In the

⁶³ Antonio Baccadelli, *Laus Elisiae* 11–12. The text is quoted from Francesco Arnaldi, Lucia Gualdo Rosa, Liliana Monti Sabia (eds.): *Poeti latini del Quattrocento*. Milan and Naples 1964, pp. 18–20 (Lucia Gualdo Rosa was responsible for the edition of Beccadelli, she dates it to around 1430). There is a variant of the distich, which is printed in editions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (e.g. in *Quinque illustrium poetarum ... lusos in Venerem*. Ed. by Angelo Maria Bandini. Paris 1791, p. 46; and *Antonii Panormitae Hermaphroditus*. Ed. by Friedrich Karl Forberg. Coburg 1824, p. 189) and which Gualdo Rosa has retained as verses 9–10 in her edition: “inter opus tantum dulce, o dulcissima cantas, | et cantu nolens pectora multa capis”.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 21–22. The word *castus* might be an allusion to Catullus 16.5–6 (see n. 49).

prefatory poem Marrasio addresses Leonardo Bruni. He praises the Florentine chancellor as the champion of Greek and Latin learning and as the hero of a new era of erudition, and twice asks forgiveness for his own much less rational behaviour, as is testified by the poems he sends to Bruni. The little refrain “indulgere velis nostro, Arretine, furori, | sive sit ille furor, sive sit ille dolor” [be indulgent with my fury, Leonardo Arretinus [Bruni], be it fury or love]⁶⁵ has become especially famous because it induced Bruni to answer Marrasio with a letter on the Platonic concept of *furor poeticus*. The letter was useful for the reassessment of love poetry as such in that Bruni explicitly defines divine love as having sprung from the contemplation of beauty via a sensual perception of a beautiful object.⁶⁶ Marrasio's poem, however, also lines up with the one by Beccadelli quoted above. Amorous poetry is presented as at least potentially irrational and thereby morally feeble. But at the same time, even if it is less worthy than Bruni's historiographical works and his Latin translations of Aristotle and Plato, it is still sufficiently worthy to be sent to the Florentine humanist as an appeal for protection as a patron.

My third example is elegy 1.3 from Cristoforo Landino's *Xandra*.⁶⁷ The collection plays a major role in the development of humanistic elegy in the first half of the fifteenth century, comparable only to Tito Vespasiano Strozzi's *Eroticon libri*.⁶⁸ Landino's poem on the beginning of his amorous feelings is known in two

⁶⁵ Giovanni Marrasio, *Angelinetum* 1.21–22 and 1.31–32 (quoted from Giovanni Marrasio: *Angelinetum et carmina varia*. Ed. by Gianvito Resta. Palermo 1976).

⁶⁶ Cf. Leonardi Bruni Arretini Epistolarum libri octo. Ed. Laurentius Mehus. Florence 1741, vol. 2, pp. 36–40, here p. 39: “oritur autem ex verae pulchritudinis contemplatione, cuius effigiem visu intuentes acerrimo ac violentissimo sensuum nostrorum, stupentes ac velut extra nos positi totis affectibus in illum corripimur.” [It arises moreover from the beholding of true beauty; looking at its image with the most passionate and violent gaze, confounded and, as it were, placed outside ourselves, we are carried away with all the feelings of our senses fastened on it.] Translation: Giovanni Marrasio: *Angelinetum and Other Poems*. Transl. by Mary P. Chatfield. Cambridge (MA) 2016, p. 47.

⁶⁷ The following is based on my previous interpretation in Christoph Pieper: *Elegos redolere Vergiliosque sapere*. Cristoforo Landino's *Xandra* zwischen Liebe und Gesellschaft. Hildesheim 2008, pp. 101–117, esp. 109–112. However, here I focus more on the role of Petrarch's intertext, which has also been identified by Natascia Tonelli: Landino. *La Xandra*, Petrarca e il codice elegiaco. In: *Il rinnovamento umanistico della poesia. L'epigramma e l'elegia*. Ed. by Roberto Cardini and Donatella Coppini. Florence 2009, pp. 303–320, here pp. 312–313.

⁶⁸ I have already argued elsewhere that Strozzi's poem *Quod die solemnibus divi Georgii amare Anthiam coeperit* imitates Petrarch in that it connects a specific date to the moment of him falling in love. Whereas Petrarch had chosen Good Friday, i.e. 6 April 1327, Strozzi refers to St George's day (23 April). Cf. Christoph Pieper: Medievalisms in Latin Love Poetry of the Early Italian Quattrocento. In: *Early Modern Medievalisms. The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and*

versions. The first, written for the first edition of the *Xandra* in 1444 by the then 19-year-old poet, is not yet very much interested in questions of the morality of its implied author. The poem begins with a medieval *Natureingang* and describes the beauties of spring. In this pleasant setting Xandra shoots an arrow into the speaker's breast: "tunc tua me primum certissima, Xandra, sagitta | fixit et in pectus ducit amoris iter" [Then your arrow hit me for the first time, Xandra, and led love the way into my heart].⁶⁹ It is possible, but by no means certain that Landino already wanted to refer to Petrarch's third poem in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, a poem that is fascinating not only for the superimposition of a religious and an amorous discourse (famously, the *innamoramento* happens on Good Friday and thus immediately evokes the word field of sin and redemption), but also for the double role of Amor/Laura in the act of turning the speaker into a lover. In the first stanza, it is Laura who captures him with her eyes ("quando i' fui preso, et non me ne guardai, | ché i be' vostr'occhi, donna, mi legaro" [when I was captured, and I was ill-prepared that your beautiful eyes, lady, tied me]).⁷⁰ But towards the end, Amor turns out to be the *agens* in that he has shot the wounding arrow into the speaker's heart.⁷¹ This agency of the god of love himself had of course already been announced in RVF 2, when Amor is said to have taken vengeance on Petrarch by shooting his arrows at him. In the words of Natascia Tonelli, Laura owes her sheer existence to a whimsy of Amor.⁷²

Landino's *innamoramento* poem in the earlier version of the *Xandra* has obvious parallels with Petrarch's, such as the woman catching and binding her lover, and the arrows and the entering of love into the heart, but also the

Artistic Production. Ed. by Alicia Montoya, Sophie van Romburgh and Wim van Anrooij. Leiden, Boston 2010, pp. 45–65.

⁶⁹ Cristoforo Landino, *Xandra* first version 4.7–8 (= second version 1.3.33–34). I quote from the edition Christophori Landini Carmina omnia. Ed. by Alessandro Perosa. Florence 1939.

⁷⁰ Petrarch, RVF 3.3–4.

⁷¹ Cf. *ibid.* 3.9–14, esp. 12–13: "non li fu honore | ferir me de saetta." On the double role of Laura as Amor's medium (and thus potentially an enemy) and salvation for the speaker, cf. Adelia Noferi: Frammenti per i Fragmenta di Petrarca. A cura e con una nota di Luigi Tassoni. Rome 2001, p. 66.

⁷² Natascia Tonelli: I sonetti 2 e 3 dei Rerum vulgarium fragmenta. In: *Lectura Petrarce* 20 (2000), pp. 173–190, here p. 178: "è l'arcano maggiore di Laura che trae origine da una vendetta di Amore". It is worth mentioning that according to the commentary of the *Canzoniere* by Francesco Filelfo the order of sonnets 2 and 3 should be turned around, so that the *innamoramento* poem should be read before the one on Amor's vengeance. This makes the changed agency from Laura to Amor in RVF 3 more conspicuous, as Amor is not introduced as an *agens* before. Cf., however, Raimondi (n. 61), p. 153, who speaks of Filelfo's arbitrary, "fantastica cronologia" throughout his commentary.

important difference that in Landino Amor is not mentioned as *agens* – Xandra alone wounds her lover. The second edition of the *Xandra* dating from 1458 had a much more public context in that the author probably used it as part of his attempt to be appointed professor of Latin poetics and rhetoric at the Florentine *Studium urbis*. As such, the question of whether the elegiac speaker can show his own moral development in elegiac poetry becomes more urgent. It is therefore not surprising that the Petrarchan overtones are massively increased.⁷³ As well, the poem about the beginnings of love gets a quite drastic new shape: a section is added at the beginning, in which the speaker invokes the Muse Erato to help him and in which he remembers with grief his youth when he had not yet been captured by love.⁷⁴ Then, he continues as follows:

heu quis tunc fueram, quis nunc? an vertere mentes
 ius tibi, pro, tantum, saeve Cupido, datur?
 tu mea servitio pressisti colla nefando
 ut primum dominae vidimus ora meae.⁷⁵

Alas, who had I been then, and who am I now? Cruel Cupido, have you been given such a huge right of changing the minds of men? You have pressed my neck in abominable servitude, as soon as I first saw the face of my mistress.

Within this chapter I do not want to comment on the obvious ancient models Landino is invoking,⁷⁶ but instead to focus on Cupido's role. In the new version, the god of love begins the attack on the speaker, and this means that the verses about Xandra's eyes capturing him, which follow later, are presented as a logical consequence of Amor's assault. Thus, Xandra is turned into an ally of the god of love.

⁷³ Cf. Gernot Michael Müller: Zwischen Properz und Petrarca. Strategien der *aemulatio* im *Xandra*-Zyklus des Cristoforo Landino. In: Abgrenzung und Synthese. Lateinische Dichtung und volkssprachliche Traditionen in Renaissance und Barock. Ed. by Marc Föcking and Gernot Michael Müller. Heidelberg 2007, pp. 133–164; cf. also the summary in Pieper: *Elegos redolere* (n. 67), pp. 318–321, and now Bruce McNair, Cristoforo Landino. His Works and Thoughts. Leiden, Boston 2019, pp. 14–19. See also Müller, in this volume, p. 126–132.

⁷⁴ Cf. Landino, *Xandra* 1.3.5–10: “hic libet, heu, primae tempus meminisse iuventae, | cum vacuum tanti pectus amoris erat, | cum poteram totas securus stertere noctes | et ridere miser si quis amator erat, | necdum turbabant moestum suspiria pectus, | ore nec a tristi salsa fluebat aqua.” [Here it is allowed, alas, to remember my first youth, when my breast was still free from such love, when I could safely snore whole nights long and mock anyone who was a lover. Sighs did not yet disturb my sad breast, and salty liquid did not yet flow from my sad face.].

⁷⁵ Landino, *Xandra* 1.3.11–14.

⁷⁶ In Pieper: *Elegos redolere* (n. 67), pp. 103–106, I have also analysed intertextual relations with the ancient pretexts, i.e. Propertius and Ovid's *Amores*.

This new order closely imitates Petrarch's two sonnets about the beginning of love. In RVF 2, haughty Amor takes vengeance and wounds the speaker, whereas in poem 3 Laura and Amor work together as double *agentes* in harming him.⁷⁷ The results of Landino's revision of his poem are manifold: it is at the same time more classical and more Petrarchan; and it reflects a more mature nature of the elegiac speaker. If Xandra has been assimilated to Laura, then he also shapes himself at least in parts as a Petrarchan voice, one who is conscious of love poetry as a transitional phase of the development of a young man. There has been a time when he was untouched by love, and now he is in love. The adding of these temporal layers already prelude the end of the collection when Landino will free himself from love's enchainment and will turn to patriotic, and this means non-egoistic themes: the praise of Florence and the Medici. The third book of the *Xandra* can be read as an emulation of Petrarch, whose final canzone to the Virgin Mary opens the collection to a realm of love that is far removed from carnal egoism.⁷⁸

If we accept the suggestion that Landino attempted to approach the second version of the *Xandra* as being closer to the Petrarchan model, did he also imitate Petrarch's first sonnet? This poem, in which Petrarch partly distances himself from his own youthful involvements and looks back on them with a mixture of shame and self-defence, was a major reason why Salutati could harmonize the love poetry of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* with his overall concept of Petrarch as a virtuous man. In a similar vein, Francesco Filelfo's above-mentioned commentary of the *Canzoniere* (datable around 1446 and which Landino might have already known when working on his second edition) defines the poem as remedy against disgrace. According to him Petrarch, when writing the sonnet, had indeed freed himself completely from love's wounds.⁷⁹ According to Filelfo's interpretation, Petrarch presents love as an intolerable passion against which every wise man should defend himself.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Cf. Pieper: *Elegos redolere* (n. 67), pp. 110–111.

⁷⁸ Cf. Pieper: *Elegos redolere* (n. 67), ch. 5 for an in-depth analysis of this thematic switch.

⁷⁹ Petrarcha con doi commenti (n. 62) (my emphasis): "Ilche [sc. the first poem] principalmente mi par lui havere fatto per potere inqualche parte remediare alla infamia [...] et per mostrare se essere al tutto libero da quello arciero e da cui strali era già molti e molti anni stato con amorosi incendii vulnerato." [He seems to have composed this poem in the first instance to be able to diminish the disgrace ... and in order to show that he is completely free from the archer, by whose arrows he had been wounded for many, many years with loving blaze.] For the date of the commentary cf. Gino Belloni: *Laura tra Petrarca e Bembo. Studi sul commento umanistico-rinascimentale al Canzoniere*. Padua 1992, p. 58, and Dionisotti (n. 61), p. 79.

⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. IIIIr (on RVF 3): "[...] ciascuno da cui la ragione al tutto fugita e sbandita non sia, non altrimenti da ogni strale damore se suol defendere che da cosa abhominabile e mortale; il

In Landino's second version of the *Xandra*, we indeed have a similar beginning. In the prefatory poem, with which he dedicates his collection to Piero de' Medici, he plays with the ancient *topos* of dedications:⁸¹

qui nunc censuram mavult tolerasse legentum
terna olim potuit lustra latere liber.
namque pudens gnarusque sui sapienter ineptas
in lucem nugas noluit ire suas.⁸²

The book, which now prefers to bear the censorship of the readers, has been able to hide for fifteen years. For it is modest and knows itself, and prudently it did not wish that its silly trifles should be visible.

But compared to the ancient models, Landino enhances the idea of alleged ineptitude. The book is said to have hidden for fifteen years – which corresponds more or less to the time between the first and the second version of the *Xandra* – because it was aware of its own weakness. It is not exactly the same idea as expressed in Petrarch, indeed, as the reason for the auto-defence of Landino's book is poetical immaturity, whereas Petrarch's first sonnet speaks about moral immaturity. But what is similar is the fact that the two texts mark a temporal distance between the writing of the poems and the publication, and that some kind of development within the speaker has taken place, which partly distances his present state from his juvenile work.

Taken together with the Petrarchan re-writing of elegy 1.3, I argue that Landino alludes to the first three sonnets of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* at the beginning of his first book of the *Xandra*. From the very beginning Petrarch is programmatically included in the canon of important elegiac models, with an equal status as the ancient *auctoritates*. This claim will continue in the following three books, most visibly with a translation/adaptation of a poem by Petrarch in Latin *senari* and by including two epitaphs for Petrarch in the third book of the *Xandra*, in which he is hailed as the vernacular Pindar and Horace. On this point Landino differs most from Coluccio Salutati, who had claimed that no one had

perché manifesta la intollerabile possanza di tal passione." [Everyone whose rationality has not fled and left him completely, uses to defend himself against all arrows of love, not differently than against an abominable and mortal thing; this reason shows how intolerable it is to be possessed by such a passion.]

⁸¹ Cf. Catullus 1 ("lepidum libellum"); but (more importantly) many of Martial's books open with poems that send the book on a journey to the dedicatee. Cf. Mario Citroni: Le raccomandazioni del poeta. Apostrofe al libro e contatto col destinatario. In: *Maia* 38 (1986), pp. 111–146.

⁸² Landino, *Xandra* 1.1.1–4.

ever become famous because of love, or from Filelfo's commentary, in which love is presented as an utterly unworthy theme for a wise man.⁸³ Landino, instead, confers eternal poetic fame on the poet of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* – hoping, of course, to achieve part of the same glory for his own achievements. His *Xandra* therefore is an important step towards accepting the vernacular Petrarch as a full-fledged poetic authority.

6 Conclusion

Landino's *imitatio Petrarcae*, which turned out to be highly successful (his *Xandra* was copied and much read, and its author was rewarded with the hoped-for position at the *Studium Florentinum*) was a milestone in the increasing interest in Petrarch's vernacular poetry as a model for imitation. A fascinating way to check how contemporaries read Landino's poetry is offered by the elegiac collections of three younger Florentine poets who, inspired by Landino's success, used him as a model to such an extent that Nikolaus Thurn has even spoken of Landinism.⁸⁴ A close connection to Landino's opening is found in Alessandro Braccesi's *Amores*. Braccesi also has a prefatory poem to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro in which he excuses his poems as a product of his younger years and furthermore praises Guidobaldo's *virtus*. The actual start of love is then narrated with many hints at Petrarchan and Landinian beginnings, especially by referring to Amor's *tela* and to the *lumina* of the beloved Flora, who helps Amor to capture the speaker.⁸⁵ Interestingly, however, Braccesi's following poem starts with a long and explicit discussion of *virtus*, which has always been the guiding principle of the speaker's life: "sed mihi tu fulvo, virtus, pretiosior auro | sola places, probitas ingenuusque pudor" [but you alone, virtue, more precious to me than yellow

⁸³ Cf. Dionisotti (n. 61), p. 83.

⁸⁴ Cf. Nikolaus Thurn: *Neulatein und Volkssprachen. Beispiele für die Rezeption neusprachlicher Literatur durch die lateinische Dichtung Europas im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*. München 2012, p. 143.

⁸⁵ Alessandro Braccesi, *Amores* 4.3–4 and 7–10: "nondum expertus eram pharetrati numinis arma | nec mea dum pallens tinxerat ora color [...], | armatus cum me iaculis aggressus inermem | in caput insiluit fortibus ille meum | opposuitque mihi radiantia lumina Florae | pulchrius in tota qua foret urbe nihil." [I was not yet experienced with the weapons of the quivered god, and no bleak colour had ever been on my cheeks ..., when he attacked me with weapons, whilst I was unarmed, and jumped on my head with his strong javelins; and he set the radiant eyes of Flora before my eyes – nothing could have been more beautiful in the whole city.] I quote from the edition Alexandri Bracci Carmina. Ed. Alessandro Perosa. Florence 1943.

gold, please me, and you, honesty and natural modesty].⁸⁶ The second half of the poem then continues the expected laments of a lover whose *puella* does not want to pity him.

Braccesi's collection was finished in the 1480s and thus in the heyday of Lorenzo de' Medici's reign. It was also a time when Plato's philosophy had become the leading philosophical trend among Florentine humanists. Salutati in his correspondence with Zambeccari had still mocked the Platonic philosophers for their raving thoughts (see above, "si placuerit cum Platonicis delirare"). In late fifteenth-century Florence, Plato had become an authority of the highest degree. This changed philosophical attitude also influenced the way of reading Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Salutati in 1374 insisted on Petrarch's virtuous character and in the 1390s felt the need to stress that the author had distanced himself from his immoral love in his youth, an interpretation still visible in Filelfo's commentary. In the *Xandra*, instead, and even more clearly in later Florentine poets, love became one of the four Platonic frenzies and as such a means towards philosophical insight. In Cristoforo Landino's *Prolusione petrarchesca*, an opening lecture of a course at the Florentine *Studium* in 1467 (and thus in the years in which Marsilio Ficino's Neo-Platonism had already influenced Florentine culture),⁸⁷ the content of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* needs no defence any longer. Instead, Landino feels the need to explain his reasons for offering a course on *vernacular* poetry:

Saranno per aventura alcuni [...] e' quali si persuaderanno o già per insino ad ora s'hanno persuaso, questa mia impresa di volere in sì celebre ginnasio e nobilissimo Studio [...] leggere il poema di Francesco Petrarca essere piuttosto di riprensione che di laude degna, stimandosi forse che questo medesimo tempo più utilmente nella investigazione o delle latine o delle greche lettere spender si potessi.⁸⁸

There will eventually be some who will be persuaded or have already been persuaded until now that my intention and wish to read the poem by Francesco Petrarch in this famous gymnasium and very distinguished *Studium* is rather worthy of criticism than of praise, because they may think that this time could be spent more usefully with researching Latin or Greek literature.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 5.21–22.

⁸⁷ Roberto Cardini (in Cristoforo Landino: *Scritti critici e teorici*. Ed. by Roberto Cardini. Rome 1974) dates it to 1467 against earlier suggestions that it was delivered in 1460.

⁸⁸ Cardini (n. 87), vol. 1, p. 33, ll. 4–11.

Obviously Landino did not agree. For him, Petrarch had become one of the classical models, and his love poetry was therefore a fitting subject of study, also and especially for a professor of Latin rhetoric and poetics.⁸⁹

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