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The Shape of Desire
Metamorphosis and Hybridity in *Rvf* 23 and *Rvf* 70

CITE AS:

RIGHTS STATEMENT:

1. The Shape of Desire
Metamorphosis and Hybridity in *Rvf* 23 and *Rvf* 70

This chapter, like the ones that follow, explores lyric textuality as a privileged space for articulating a particular form of desire and subjectivity. It focuses on two *canzoni* from Petrarch's lyric sequence, 'Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade' (*Rvf* 23) and 'Lasso me, ch'io non so in qual parte pieghi' (*Rvf* 70).[1] By reading them together, we investigate how they blur the distinction between transformation and return and between beginnings and ends, and how, defying conclusion, they give shape to a paradoxical form of pleasure.

Rvf 70, the so-called '*canzone* of citations', opens by staging a state of impasse where the 'I' is overwhelmed by

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1   We refer to Petrarch's lyric sequence using the authorial Latin title. All quotations are taken from Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Marco Santagata, rev. ed. (Milan: Mondadori, 2010). Unless otherwise stated, English translations of lyric poems by Dante, Petrarch, and Cavalcanti are by Caroline Dormor and Lachlan Hughes. All emphasis is ours.

sensual desire, and contemplates correcting it. It is an intertextual poem (and part-cento) that culminates in an explicit textual return of the poet's own poem 23, the so-called '*canzone* of metamorphoses', in which the poetic subject undergoes a series of transformations explicitly modelled on Ovid. The incipit of *canzone* 23 forms the final line of *canzone* 70 and is the last in a series of quotations of the incipits of earlier poems, each of which closes one of the stanzas of Petrarch's *canzone* and reconstructs what Franco Suitner has termed 'il retroterra della lirica romanza' (the hinterland of romance lyric).[2]

All the incipits closing the five stanzas relate to a concept of love as essentially tyrannical, obsessive, and compulsive. The first stanza ends with the incipit of the Occitan poem now thought to be by Guillem de Saint Gregori, 'Drez et rayson es qu'ieu ciant e·m demori', which Petrarch attributed to Arnaut Daniel and which depicts the state of subjecting oneself to love even to the point of death, and finding pleasure in it.[3] The other incipits belong to the Italian lyric tradition. The second stanza ends with Guido Cavalcanti's 'Donna me prega, per ch'io voglio dire', the doctrinal *canzone* that explains the nature and effects of love as a sensual passion that infects the body and annihilates reason and the faculty of judgment.[4] The third stanza incorporates the incipit of Dante's 'Così nel

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2   Franco Suitner, *Petrarca e la tradizione stilnovistica* (Florence: Olschki, 1977), p. 12.

3   On this misattribution see Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotations and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 189–95 (especially pp. 189–92); and Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Santagata, p. 352, which both provide a survey of literature on the subject.

4   On Cavalcanti's concept of love as lethal in a moral and physical sense, respectively, see Giorgio Inglese, *L'intelletto e l'amore: Studi sulla letteratura italiana del Due e Trecento* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 2000), pp. 3–55, and Natascia Tonelli, *Fisiologia della passione: Poesia d'amore*

mio parlar voglio esser aspro', one of four *rime petrose*, or 'stony rhymes', which also express the lethal and paralyzing effects of sensual love and in which the harshness of the content is matched by the harshness of the style. The fourth stanza ends by citing the incipit of Cino da Pistoia's *canzone* 'La dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave', an exile poem that laments the anguish and torment of being separated from the lady but in a sweeter style, one of *dolcezza*.[5] Finally, the last stanza ends by returning to Petrarch's own *canzone* 23, whose incipit closes the poem.

The trend has been to read *Rvf* 70 teleologically and as a narrative of conversion,[6] where conversion is not about turning to another faith or confession but rather about moving towards a better moral position and a greater coherence of the self, to which would also correspond a better poetics.[7] In this way the poet is said to renounce the errant desire of his youth, represented by all these incipits, achieving a new mode of loving and speaking. As each voice of the earlier romance tradition is reiterated and surpassed, so the 'I' apparently learns how to control his desire and

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e medicina da Cavalcanti a Boccaccio (Tavarnuzze [Florence]: SISMEL · Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015), pp. 3–70.

5   Cf. Teodolinda Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*', *MLN*, 104.1, Italian issue (Jan. 1989), pp. 1–38 (p. 23), in which she notes that 'Cino's verse […] is tonally similar to the Petrarchan verse with which the poem ends […] — the main difference, in fact, is the temporal anxiety that Petrarch fuses into Cino's unalloyed sweetness'. On Cino's prolific use of the adjective 'dolce', see Maria Corti, 'Il linguaggio poetico di Cino da Pistoia', *Cultura mediolatina*, 12.3 (1952), pp. 185–223 (p. 193).

6   See in particular Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Santagata, p. 349; Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, pp. 194–95; and Martin Eisner , *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 91–92.

7   In this sense, Petrarch's project dovetails with Dante's in the *Vita Nova*, in which the meditation on desire is also a discourse on poetry.

sets out to relinquish the sensually-directed eros that is the hallmark of the courtly lyric, including his own poetry up to this point in the collection, thereby transforming the poet he is — or can be.

Petrarch's decision to end *Rvf* 70 by referring to the beginning of his earlier poem thus inserts his poetry within a specific lyric and romance genealogy that culminates with him.[8] That point of culmination has been read by Marco Santagata and others as conveying a linear and vertical temporality that leads to conversion.[9] The poem is thereby interpreted as a palinodic gesture through which the poet is at once evoking and recanting his poetic past, specifically its bonds with purely sensual desire, which *Rvf* 23 is taken to represent. Sarah Kay, too, has argued that in *Rvf* 70, through the technique of quotation, Petrarch creates a genealogy of texts that are surpassed one by the other. In the new context of 70, the Petrarchan 'I' would 'disengage' from the earlier subject position implied in the romance lyrics he quotes in order to occupy a different place and thereby 'desire differently'.[10] Kay has also supported her forward reading through analysis of another rhetorical feature of the *canzone*, namely the *coblas capfinidas* structure, which consists of connecting the end of one stanza to the beginning of the next through the repetition of the same word. She argues that 'the resulting interplay of quotation and reaction impels the song forward via a process of self-reappraisal, in which the impulse to break with past guilt and progress toward a new future has to

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8   On poetic genealogy, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'Petrarch's Dialogue with Dante', in *Petrarch and Dante: Anti–Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Theodore J. Cachey, Jr (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 179–81.

9   See the works cited in n. 6.

10   Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, pp. 194–95.

contend with wistfulness, reluctance and inertia' (193) but ultimately prevails over them.

Kay sees *canzone* 70 as a new beginning, and her reading is thereby in line with those critics who consider the *canzone* as a prelude to the following three poems, the so-called 'canzoni degli occhi', which would express a new lyric mode and, in the vein of the most positive poems of the *dolce stil novo*, celebrate the spiritual improvement brought about by the encounter with the beloved, as though Laura had morphed into Dante's Beatrice.[11] The fact that the poem lacks a *congedo* (the leave-taking that usually concludes a *canzone*) — a feature which is unusual within the *Rvf* and occurs in only one other poem (105) — can also be read formally as a sign of this apparent opening up to what follows and as a projection forwards.[12]

Therefore, for Kay and Santagata (but also for many others), the fact that *canzone* 70 ends with a quotation from *Rvf* 23 is the sign of a 'subjective transformation' and a move beyond the domain of the earlier lyric.[13] Instead, our interpretation is in tune with the more ambivalent reading that Rosanna Bettarini and Marco Praloran have given of *Rvf* 70, and proposes that the quotations from the previous poems do not mark a complete departure but function as traces of desire that are reactivated in and by the text.[14]

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11   See Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Santagata, pp. 349–50; and on the 'canzoni degli occhi' sequence, see in particular Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence', pp. 21–24; and Corrado Bologna, '"Occhi solo occhi" (*Rvf* 70–75)', in *Canzoniere: Lettura micro e macrotestuale*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone (Ravenna: Longo, 2007), pp. 183–205. For a discussion of Petrarch in relation to the poets of the *dolce stil novo*, see Suitner, *Petrarca e la tradizione stilnovistica*.

12   On the *canzone*'s lack of *congedo*, see for example, Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence', p. 23.

13   Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales*, pp. 194–95.

14   See Bettarini's commentary to *Rvf* 70 in Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere. Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini, 2 vols

Therefore, the questions we are posing differ from the ones previously considered by critics: what if we take *canzone* 70 not as the end of a phase but as a literal return to *Rvf* 23? How would that change our reading of the poems, especially the relationship between them, including the supposed palinode that one makes of the other? Can our analysis tell us something about the subjectivity shaped by textual return in these two poems and in Petrarch's collection more broadly?

TRANSFORMATION

In order to answer these questions, it is important to consider *canzone* 23, 'Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade', which relates how the lyric 'I' was first struck by love. The *canzone* can be interpreted as a manifesto or blueprint

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(Turin: Einaudi, 2005), I, pp. 343–50; and Marco Praloran, *La canzone di Petrarca: Orchestrazione formale e percorsi argomentativi*, ed. by Arnaldo Soldani (Rome-Padua: Antenore, 2013), pp. 52–65. Unlike Santagata and the other scholars mentioned above, and closer to our reading, in her commentary on *Rvf* 70 Bettarini is not interested in the idea that the *canzone* expresses a conversion and a new departure relative to the poetry of the past, but instead proposes that the citation of *Rvf* 23 with which *Rvf* 70 concludes establishes a line of continuity between the two texts and makes the youthful *canzone* appear 'come testo lontano dove il poeta si riconosce e da dove comincia a fluire la memoria poetica di se stesso' (p. 344). Praloran has identified another kind of tension in the Petrarchan *canzone*: on the one hand, he persists with the idea of a new interpretation of desire, according to which through a superior form of sublimation the beloved would no longer be the cause of alienation and anguish, but the means of spiritual elevation. Praloran has also maintained that the different interpretation of amorous desire would result in a new model of the *canzone*-form in which the lyric element perfectly blends with the rational intent (pp. 61–62); on the other hand, Praloran has argued that in spite of the different role of the lady in the process of falling in love, the poet does not manage to diminish the destructive force of desire; on the contrary, he amplifies it because the distance between Laura's 'innocence' and 'the subject's infirmity' is unbridgeable (p. 63).

of Petrarch's early poetry, one centred on the unrequited love of the troubadour and the Ovidian traditions.[15] As mentioned above, it is constructed around the Ovidian paradigm of metamorphosis and entirely focused on the 'I''s transformations through the effects of love — first into a laurel, then into a swan, stone, fountain, flint, voice, and stag, evoking respectively the Ovidian myths of Daphne, Cygnus, Battus, Byblis, Echo, and Actaeon.[16] All these are done to a completely passive and powerless subject who cannot but submit to the power of sensual desire.[17] More significantly, they are all forms of punishment, both for a

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15   For a detailed reading of *Rvf* 23, see Robert M. Durling, 'Metamorphosis', in his introduction to *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. by Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 26–33; Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Santagata, 101–02; John Brenkman, 'Writing, Desire, Dialectic in Petrarch's *Rime* 23', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 9 (1974), pp. 12–19; Annalisa Cipollone, '"Né per nova figura il primo alloro…": La chiusa di *Rvf* XXIII, il *Canzoniere* e Dante', *Rassegna europea di letteratura italiana*, 11 (1998), pp. 29–46; Giovanna Rabitti, '"Nel dolce tempo": sintesi o nuovo cominciamento?', in *Petrarca volgare e la sua fortuna sino al Cinquecento*, ed. by Bruno Porcelli (= *Italianistica*, 33.2 (May–August 2004)), pp. 95–108; and Gur Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism and the Care of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 121–57, in which the author traces an Ovidian style in the poet's corpus that is linked to the inability or unwillingness to renounce sensual desire, which is in tension both with the Virgilian and Stoic styles, aimed at cultivating virtue and resisting passion, respectively; and with the Augustinian style that necessitates a renunciation of both desire for Laura and for poetic glory.

16   On the paradigm of Ovidian metamorphosis as intrinsic to the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, see Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses: Text and Subtext in the 'Rime Sparse'* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 120–45; and Gregory Heyworth, *Desiring Bodies: Ovidian Romance and the Cult of Form* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 179–227.

17   See Zak, *Petrarch's Humanism*, p. 148, in which he argues that 'the language of Ovid, of metamorphosis, stands […] for the loss of reason, of self-control, the succumbing to the grip of the passions'.

desire represented as transgressive and for the urge to voice it in spite of the prohibition to do so.

After describing how 'in the sweet season of [his] first youth' the subject lived in freedom ('libertade'), that is, immune from the effects and pains of love, the second part of the second stanza ends by describing how Love, with the help of a 'powerful lady', who is clearly the poet's beloved Laura, transforms him into a laurel:

> prese in sua scorta una possente donna,
> ver' cui poco già mai mi valse o vale
> ingegno, o forza, o dimandar perdono;
> *e i duo mi trasformaro in quel ch'i' sono,*
> *facendomi d'uom vivo un lauro verde,*
> che per fredda stagion foglia non perde.

> ([he] took into his service a powerful lady, | against whom neither cunning, nor force, | nor begging for mercy ever was (or is) much use; | *and these two transformed me into what I am,* | *making of me, a living man, a laurel tree,* | which, though winter come, never sheds a leaf.) (*Rvf* 23, 35–40)

Thus, the first transformation into the laurel is a punishment for not yet bending to love. As we shall see in more depth in the following chapter, this transformation is astonishing for anyone familiar with Petrarch's poetry for the reversal of roles it implies — usually it is Laura who is turned into a laurel (*lauro*) with reference to the Ovidian myth of Apollo and Daphne.[18] In other words,

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18   See for example, *Rvf* 22, *Rvf* 34, and *Rvf* 197. On the myth of Apollo and Daphne, see Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses*, pp. 35–40; Philip Hardie, 'Ovid into Laura: Absent presences in the *Metamorphoses* and Petrarch's *Rime sparse*', in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and its Reception*, ed. by Philip R. Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 254–70; and Natascia Tonelli, *Per queste orme: Studi sul 'Canzoniere' di Petrarca* (Pisa: Pacini, 2016), pp. 40–41.

the way in which Laura rejects the poet's love is usually presented as analogous to Daphne's refusal to succumb to Apollo's advances and subsequent transformation into a laurel tree. In this case, however, it is the poet who is turned into the laurel. As Santagata and others have explained, this metamorphosis is to be understood in terms of the lover's complete identification with the desired object, the concept that, as Petrarch will later convey in his *Triumphus Cupidinis*, 'the lover turns into the beloved' (l'amante ne l'amato si transforme; III, 162).[19] This transformation of the poetic subject into the laurel confirms the extent to which the poem is about his transformation into a poet dominated by desire: the encounter with Laura is the encounter with poetry.[20] It is also an experience of dispossession of identity and loss of self, and, as the Romantic poet Giacomo Leopardi first suggested, this experience is forever: the image of the evergreen laurel 'signifies the intensity and constancy of the poet's love: first, by saying that he has been turned into the very form of his lady; and second by stating that he, like the laurel, never loses his leaves'.[21]

19   The *Triumphi* are quoted from Francesco Petrarca, *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. by Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino (Milan: Mondadori, 1996). Translations are ours. For Santagata's observation, cf. Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, p. 109. On the relationship between the expression in the *Triumphi* and the Christian idea of compassion, see Chapter 2, pp. 54–55.

20   In her reading of *Rvf* 23, Carla Freccero commented on how Petrarch's poem simultaneously marks the poet's falling in love and his becoming a poet. See Carla Freccero, 'Ovidian Subjectivities in Early Modern Lyric: Identification and Desire in Petrarch and Louise Labé', in *Ovid and the Renaissance Body*, ed. by Goran Stanivukovic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 21–37.

21   See Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Ugo Dotti, with notes by Giacomo Leopardi (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979), p. 68; our translation. For a related observation on these lines of Petrarch's poem, see Leonard

If poem 23 is a manifesto of a certain kind of poetics, as it has so often been read, then the image of the poet it reveals is twofold. It communicates not only that poetry feeds off a painful form of desire-as-loss but also that the poet is controlled by his senses and completely at the mercy of the beloved: he even loses his shape and takes on hers.[22] This concept is already made evident at the end of the first stanza, which identifies:

> un penser che solo angoscia dàlle,
> tal ch' ad ogni altro fa voltar le spalle,
> e mi face oblïar me stesso a forza:
> ché tèn di me quel d'entro, et io la scorza.

> (a single thought which causes only anguish, | and makes me deaf to all other thoughts, | and forces me to forget myself entirely: | for it governs all that is in me, and I only the shell.) (*Rvf* 23, 17–20)

In Robert Durling's words, in the transformation of the lover into the laurel 'the idea is that of the movement of love from potency to actuality in the will's taking on the form of the desired object'.[23]

The first metamorphosis into the laurel is followed by all the others in the subsequent stanzas, but we discover in the *congedo* that all the other metamorphoses have taken

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Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 211.

22 On the concept of desire-as-loss, see Elena Lombardi, *The Syntax of Desire: Language and Love in Augustine, the Modistae, Dante* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 12–13 and 163–64. See also Elena Lombardi, '"I Desire Therefore I Am": Petrarch's *Canzoniere* between the Medieval and the Modern Notion of Desire', in *Early Modern Medievalisms: The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production*, ed. by Alicia C. Montoya, Wim van Anrooij, and Sophie van Romburgh (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 19–41.

23 Robert M. Durling, 'Petrarch's "Giovene donna sotto un verde lauro"', *MLN*, 86.1 (1971), pp. 1–20 (p. 11 n. 14).

place within the laurel and that the 'I' has actually remained fixed in the outcome of the first metamorphosis.

> Canzon, i' non fu' mai quel nuvol d'oro
> che poi discese in pretïosa pioggia,
> sí che 'l foco di Giove in parte spense;
> ma fui ben fiamma ch'un bel guardo accense,
> et fui l'uccel che piú per l'aere poggia,
> alzando lei che ne' miei detti honoro:
> *né per nova figura il primo alloro*
> *seppi lassar*, ché pur la sua dolce ombra
> ogni men bel piacer del cor mi sgombra.

> (Canzone, I never was that cloud of gold | that rained in precious drops | to douse Jove's fire, at least in part; | but, yes, I was a flame lit by a lovely gaze, | and was the bird that soars highest in the sky, | elevating her whom I honour in my verse: | *nor could I ever leave the first laurel behind* | *for a new form*, for its sweet shade | expels all lesser pleasure from my heart.) (*Rvf* 23, 161–69)

Canzone 23 is thus framed around a series of metamorphoses, but it is a strangely circular kind of process that goes back to the first metamorphosis without perhaps ever having left it. Only the first transformation into the laurel can be considered a proper metamorphosis, while all the subsequent ones ultimately seem to be reiterations of the first experience of desire as punishment and self-loss. Thus, the *congedo* clarifies what we have already seen announced at the end of the second stanza, where — by saying that 'i duo mi trasformaro in quel ch'io *sono*', that is, that Love and Laura turned him into what he *is* — the poet already indicates that, having been turned into a laurel, he continues to be one at the time of writing. It is as definitive a type of transformation as the laurel is evergreen: it is

irreversible. In this sense, *Rvf* 23 is a very Ovidian text.[24]
However, what appears as very Petrarchan (and will be
explored further in the following chapter) is the particu-
lar kind of pleasure with which the poem ends and which
seems to turn it around. The laurel, which the poet cannot
bring himself to relinquish and which represents the pain-
ful experience of self-loss provoked by love, is also a site
of pleasure, albeit a paradoxical one.[25] Significantly, the
adjective *dolce* (168), which is present in the incipit and
refers to the time before desire, returns here unexpectedly
bound to desire, with which it seemed incompatible.

NON-RESOLUTION

At this point, we can consider *canzone* 70. This poem opens
with a sense of frustration and reprises the motif of being
forbidden to give voice to desire, which *Rvf* 23 articulates
through an Ovidian paradigm emphasizing its transgress-
ive aspect (in the sense that the metamorphoses are pun-
ishments not only for desire but also for the urge to voice
it). In *Rvf* 70, the problem of adequately voicing desire
is articulated by tracing the genealogy of courtly poetry.
As noted earlier, the final stanza incorporates a quotation
from a poem that Petrarch thought was by Arnaut Daniel, a
twelfth-century singer of sensual, uncontrollable love. The

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24   On the Ovidian dimension of Petrarch's poem, particularly the inter-
relationship between transformation, poetry, and passion, see Barkan,
The Gods Made Flesh, pp. 206–14.

25   On paradoxical pleasure, see Christoph F. E. Holzhey, 'The Lover of a
Hybrid: Memory and Fantasy in *Aracoeli*', in *The Power of Disturbance:
Elsa Morante's 'Aracoeli'*, ed. by Manuele Gragnolati and Sara Fortuna
(Oxford: Legenda, 2009), pp. 42–58; and Christoph F. E. Holzhey,
*Paradoxical Pleasures and Aesthetics: Masophobia, Sexual Difference,
and E. T. A. Hoffmann's Kater Murr*, Ph.D. Thesis (Ann Arbor, MI:
University of Michigan, 2002).

stanza also reprises the Ovidian motif and locates the intensity of desire in the failure to possess the beloved and the violent, anguished struggle to write about it. The ultimate fantasy here seems to be that of speaking freely, which would reverse the prohibition that was the mark of *Rvf* 23:[26]

> Non gravi al mio signor perch'io il ripreghi
> di dir libero un dì tra l'erba e i fiori:
> *Drez et rayson es qu'ieu ciant e· m demori.*
>
> (let it not displease my Lord if I ask again | to give me leave to say, one day, among the grass and flowers: | *Drez et rayson es qu'ieu ciant e·m demori.* [It is right and just that I should sing and be happy])
> (*Rvf* 70, 8–10)

The following two stanzas — which quote two poems by Cavalcanti and Dante embodying irrational and painful desire — emphasize and reiterate the trap of sensual attraction, centred on the subject's obsession with the 'phantasm' of the lady and his enslavement to it, so powerfully expressed in Cavalcanti's and Dante's poems.[27] In particular, stanzas 1 and 2 play with the fantasy not only that it might be possible to 'dir libero' — make an open avowal of one's love and receive satisfaction from the beloved — but even, in the Cavalcantian stanza, that she might call on the lover to speak, which reverses Laura's command in *canzone*

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26 On the frustrated desire for speech in *Rvf* 23, see especially Brenkman, 'Writing, Desire, Dialectic', pp. 15–18.

27 Cf. Dante's *rime petrose* and the so-called 'canzone montanina', 'Amor, da che convien ch'io mi doglia', his last *canzone* of exile which is also 'a testament to deadly, Cavalcantian eros' (Barolini, 'Dante and the Lyric Past', p. 41). On the phantasm in medieval lyric poetry, see Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. by Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

23, 'di ciò non far parola' (make no word of this; 100). In
Rvf 70, the movement is that of a katabasis into the pain of
love, and the nadir is reached at the end of the third stanza,
where the *aspro* — harsh — language is meant to match
the harshness of suffering:

> Ella non degna di mirar sì basso
> che di nostre parole
> curi, ché 'l ciel non vòle
> al qual pur contrastando i' son già lasso:
> onde, come nel cor m'induro e 'naspro,
> *così nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro.*

> (She does not deign to look down so low | as to
> take note of our words, against the will of heaven,
> | so that I'm already weary from the struggle: | and
> so, as my heart grows hard and harsh, | *così nel mio
> parlar voglio esser aspro.* [so in my words I want to
> be harsh]) (*Rvf* 70, 25–30)

Having reached this 'hell-like stasis' of being trapped in
sensual love, there is a turning point at the start of stanza
4.[28] Here the poet acknowledges the excessive desire ex-
pressed in the poem and in the lyric sequence itself up to
this point — what the poem calls 'disïar soverchio' (ex-
cessive desire) — just as he begins to reflect on his actual
responsibility in letting himself be taken by this excess. If
up to this point the poem stresses the ineluctable force of
love, which does not leave any room for the will to resist it,
here the fault is acknowledged as belonging to the poetic
subject alone:

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28   See Zygmunt G. Barański, 'Petrarch, Dante, Cavalcanti', in *Petrarch
      and Dante: Anti–Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G.
      Barański and Theodore J. Cachey, Jr (Notre Dame, IN: University of
      Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 50–133 (p. 85). On petrified immobility
      as the hallmark of *canzone* 23, see Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric
      Sequence', p. 30.

Che parlo? o dove sono? e chi m'inganna,
altri ch'io stesso e 'l desïar soverchio?
Già s'i'trascorro il ciel di cerchio in cerchio,
nessun pianeta a pianger mi condanna.
Se mortal velo il mio veder appanna,
che colpa è de le stelle, o de le cose belle?
Meco si sta chi dí et notte m'affanna,
poi che del suo piacer mi fe' gir grave
la dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave.

(What am I saying? Or where am I? And who is
deceiving me, | other than me and my excessive de-
sire? | If I search the heavens from sphere to sphere,
| no planet condemns me to tears. | If a mortal veil
dims my sight, | what fault is it of the stars, | or of all
that is lovely? | Tormenting me night and day, she
has dwelt in my heart | since the day I was burdened
with pleasure by | *la dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave.*
[the sweet countenance and the lovely, soft gaze])
(*Rvf* 70, 31–40)

Critics have stressed the change happening in this stanza.
Santagata, for instance, has argued that with these ques-
tions 'the overturning of the discourse so far put forward
begins: both the desire for reciprocation expressed in the
first two stanzas and the impossibility of realizing that de-
sire, because of the lady's fault and an adverse destiny, now
appear as a delirium and as guilty self-delusion'.[29] How-
ever, we argue that the poet's recognition of the possibility
to control desire (and therefore of his own responsibility in
yielding to it) coexists with the reiteration of his passivity
and the pleasure of meditating obsessively on the lady's
image and ceding all control of himself to it. This paradox-
ical sweetness was already a feature of Cino's exile *canzone*,
where the absence from the lady was lamented in a *dolce*

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29   Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Santagata, p. 354; our translation.

style.[30] Therefore, rather than seeing the fourth stanza as a pivotal conversion point, we propose reading it in dialogue with Caroline Walker Bynum's distinction between metamorphosis and hybridity.[31]

For Bynum, metamorphosis is a kind of change that relates to a 'labile world of flux and transformation'. Metamorphosis is a 'process', 'encountered through story'. It 'goes from an entity that is one thing to an entity that is another, and the relative weight or presence of the two entities suggests where we are in the story'.[32] Thus, it seems to us that metamorphosis corresponds to an Ovidian paradigm of change or, in a Christian context, to that of conversion as the abrupt and definitive break with the past that is articulated through a linear temporality and that implies, in Foucauldian terms, 'renunciation' or 'dying to oneself', the idea of 'being reborn in a different self'.[33]

Hybridity, by contrast, 'expresses a world of natures or substances' (often diverse or contradictory to each other) and is 'encountered through paradox' — 'in the instant'. So we understand the hybrid as more static, and Bynum

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30   On Cino's exile poems and his use of the motif of *lontananza* to articulate his obsession with the phantasm of the lady, see Catherine Keen, 'Images of Exile: Distance and Memory in the Poetry of Cino Da Pistoia', *Italian Studies*, 55.1 (2000), pp. 21–36. She notes the Cavalcantian dimension to many of Cino's exile poems, in which the fragmentation of the lady's image corresponds to the lyric subject's own fragmentation. On Petrarch's relationship to Cino more broadly, see Edward L. Boggs III, 'Cino and Petrarch', *MLN*, 94.1, Italian issue (Jan. 1979), pp. 146–52; and Suitner, *Petrarca e la tradizione stilnovistica*, pp. 99–156.

31   See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001).

32   Ibid., p. 30.

33   Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–82*, ed. by Fréderic Gros, trans. by Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), p. 211. As our analysis goes on to show, the primary exemplum of this form of conversion is Augustine's *Confessions*.

underscores that the hybrid is 'not just a frozen metamorphosis' and is 'certainly not the end point or interruption of metamorphosis'. It is rather 'a double being, an entity of two parts — or more'. It makes 'twoness and the simultaneity of twoness visible'. As such, it can be a figure of contradiction rather than change.[34]

On the basis of Bynum's distinction, our reading is that in stanza 4 of *canzone* 70, there is no conversion, and if anything changes, it is only Laura: she is no longer the 'possente donna', the powerful lady of *Rvf* 23, who was blamed for the poet's demise. Instead, in *Rvf* 70 she is exonerated from any fault:

> Se mortal velo il mio veder appanna,
> che colpa è de le stelle,
> o de le cose belle?

> (If a mortal veil dims my sight, | what fault is it of
> the stars, | or of all that is lovely?) (*Rvf* 70, 35–37)

However, although the poet recognizes Laura as the supreme of the 'cose belle' and turns the 'guilt' (colpa) towards himself, this acknowledgment does not liberate him from desire. In this sense, rather than progressive movement or metamorphosis, we see hybridity here as the paradoxical coexistence of recognizing the possibility of resisting desire and yet compulsively surrendering to it.

In a similar vein, the last stanza points to the goodness of creation but ends up confirming the 'I''s continued errancy and powerlessness:

> Tutte le cose, di che 'l mondo è adorno
> uscïr buone de man del mastro eterno;
> ma me, che cosí adentro non discerno,

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34   Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, p. 30–31.

abbaglia il bel che mi si mostra intorno;
et s'al vero splendor già mai ritorno,
l'occhio non po' star fermo,
cosí l'à fatto infermo
pur la sua propria colpa, et non quel giorno
ch'i' volsi inver' l'angelica beltade
nel dolce tempo de la prima etade.

(All things with which the world is adorned | came forth good from the hand of the eternal creator; | but I, who do not see beneath the veil, | am dazzled by the beauty in front of me; | and whenever I return to the true splendour, | my eyes cannot stay focused, | made so weak by their own fault, | and not by the day | when I turned towards such angelic beauty | *nel dolce tempo de la prima etade.* [In the sweet season of my first youth]) (*Rvf* 70, 41–50)

In this last stanza, though there may be Biblical and even Augustinian elements, the latter of which stand in Petrarch for the necessity to turn towards God, the poem reaches an impasse or a suspension, not a point of conversion or change. Therefore it seems that *Rvf* 70 ends in a similar vein to Petrarch's *Secretum* and the supposed 'conversion' *canzone Rvf* 264.[35] In all these texts, when compared to the Augustinian paradigm that comes to the fore in book 8 of the *Confessions* as the fervour to convert that accompanies the recognition of the split will, there is no sense in which Petrarch urgently desires God, nor that he is desperately trying to throw off the chains binding the self. There is just a

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35 The *Secretum* is a fictional dialogue in Latin in three books staged between two characters named 'Franciscus' and 'Augustinus', usually taken to be alter egoes of the poet. On the close connection between this work and *Rvf* 264, see Hans Baron, *Petrarch's 'Secretum': Its Making and its Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 47-57 and Klaus W. Hempfer, 'La canzone CCLXIV, il *Secretum* e il significato del *Canzoniere* di Petrarca', *Studi petrarcheschi*, 14 (1994), pp. 263–87.

slightly greater self-awareness, without the impulse to then push it a step further. As Christian Moevs has insightfully put it, in Petrarch one can only join with God through a superhuman effort, through a 'macho act of the will', a kind of superego trip that wants to impose a change and never manages it.[36] In this sense, the conclusion of *Rvf* 70 is a non-conclusion similar to that of the *Secretum* and *Rvf* 264, in which, with Michelangelo Picone, we can say that 'the truth that the Petrarchan "I" manages to achieve is related not to his eternal fate but to his earthly destiny; it is not a transcendental revelation but the recognition, rooted in immanence, of his being a sinner and of his living "a brief dream"'.[37]

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36   Christian Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch', in *Petrarch and Dante*, ed. by Barański and Cachey, Jr, pp. 226–59 (p. 246). On this aspect of Petrarch's poetics, see Francesca Southerden, 'The Art of Rambling: Errant Thoughts and Entangled Passions in Petrarch's "Ascent of Mont Ventoux" (*Fam*. IV, 1) and *Rvf* 129', in *Medieval Thought Experiments: Poetry, Hypothesis and Experience in the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Philip Knox, Jonathan Morton, and Daniel Reeve (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 197–221. On Augustine in Petrarch, see Carlo Calcaterra, *Sant'Agostino nelle opere di Dante e del Petrarca* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1931); Nicolae Iliescu, *Il canzoniere petrarchesco e Sant'Agostino* (Rome: Società accademica romena, 1962); Carol E. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine, and the Language of Humanism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); and Dino Cervigni, 'The Petrarchan Lover's Non-Dialogic and Dialogic Discourse: An Augustinian Semiotic Approach to Petrarch's *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 22 (2004), pp. 105–34.

37   Michelangelo Picone, 'Petrarca e il libro non finito', in *Petrarca volgare*, ed. by Porcelli, pp. 83–94 (p. 88; our translation). For a reading of *Rvf* 264 in relation to the *Secretum*, see Teodolinda Barolini, 'The Self in the Labyrinth of Time: *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), pp. 33–62; and Giuseppina Stella Galbiati, 'Sulla canzone "I" vo pensando' (*Rvf* 264): L'ascendente agostiniano ed altre suggestioni culturali', in *Petrarca volgare*, ed. by Porcelli, pp. 109–21.

This is how we read Petrarch's decision to conclude *Rvf* 70 by returning to the beginning of *Rvf* 23. With Bynum, we could say that *Rvf* 70 exhibits the movement of metamorphosis and the fixity of hybridity together. The subject feels the onus to shake the trap of sensual desire in which he is fixed, but there is no change.[38] He is a hybrid: the 'I' neither dismisses self-control nor exercises it, acknowledging the weakness in itself without correcting or renouncing it. What interests us here is that by turning incipits into explicits and, in particular, by concluding *canzone* 70 with a return to the beginning of *canzone* 23, Petrarch interrupts forwardness and embraces backwardness. In this sense, the same formal features of *Rvf* 70 (the use of *coblas capfinidas* and the poem's lack of *congedo*) that, as we indicated earlier, seem to imply progression and an overcoming of past desire simultaneously embody a contrapuntal state of immobility and unwillingness to take leave of the past. Thus, rather than take the quotation with which the poem ends as a sign of surpassing the previous tradition and Petrarch's own earlier poetics, we see it as a literal return to them. As *Rvf* 23 makes clear, the advent of love is the only and definitive transformation:

> e i duo mi trasformaro in quel ch'i' sono,
> facendomi d'uom vivo un lauro verde,
> che per fredda stagion foglia non perde.

> (and these two transformed me into what I am, | making of me, a living man, a laurel tree, | which, though winter come, never sheds a leaf.) (*Rvf* 23, 38–40)

In other words, a joint reading of *Rvf* 70 and 23 confirms that the only event in Petrarch's collection is the encounter

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38   On this point see ibid., p. 110.

with Laura, which is also the making of the poet as a poet of love — the only 'conversion' that takes place in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. As we shall see in Chapter 2, his state (of being a laurel) will not change; if anything, it will only intensify. Rather than move towards an end point, the poetic subject remains where it is, and the corresponding non-linear and non-teleological temporality operates at both a subjective and a textual level. Textually, 'firstness and lastness collapse into the same point' in *canzone* 70, in the same way that, as Teodolinda Barolini has argued, *Rvf* 23 problematizes the 'nature of all beginnings and endings' within the collection's first poetic micro-sequence (1–23) and in the *Rvf* as a whole.[39] Ultimately, the effect is to dissolve the boundaries between the two poems and to create a kind of hybridity in movement insofar as the poems are distinct within the sequence's macro-structure and yet merge so that the end of one is the beginning of the other, and vice-versa, endlessly.[40]

SHAPE IN MOTION

In order to understand what kind of subjectivity corresponds to this non-linear temporality, we propose engaging with Leo Bersani's concept of aesthetics in his reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Three Essays on Sexuality*. Bersani has argued that sexuality is fundament-

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39   Teodolinda Barolini, 'Petrarch as the Metaphysical Poet Who Is Not Dante: Metaphysical Markers at the Beginning of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*Rvf* 1–21)', in *Petrarch and Dante*, ed. by Barański and Cachey, Jr, pp. 195–225 (pp. 196–97). See also Rabitti, '*Nel dolce tempo*'.

40   On the openness of the form of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, see Picone, 'Petrarca e il libro non finito', pp. 91–93, in which he proposes the concept of 'in-finite' work. On the 'canzoni degli occhi' (*Rvf* 71–73) as a particular embodiment of this dynamic, see Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence', pp. 21–23.

ally paradoxical insofar as it retains the masochistic character of its infantile stage, notwithstanding later attempts to domesticate it according to the normative, teleological model of sexual reproduction. For Bersani, sexuality is characterized by a simultaneous production of 'a pleasurable unpleasure', which is not about final satisfaction or release of sexual tension but rather its increase through repetition and replication. This masochistic repetition produces an 'insistent stasis' and inverts the idea of a movement towards completion: 'the end of the story is already in the beginning of the story; the teleological movement goes into reverse at the very moment when it reaches its goal; and the narrative line of sexuality completes itself as a circle'.[41]

Bersani has also reformulated Freud's concept of sublimation, seeing 'artistic sublimation' as the possibility for textuality not to purify or transcend sexual pleasure but, on the contrary, to extend it to the movement of the text, replicating its paradoxical character and making the reader experience it. More specifically, he has argued that the fundamentally masochistic character of sexuality cannot be articulated through scientific discourse, which inevitably tends to resolve paradox into a linear logic or narrative development, but it is conveyed through the aesthetics of Freudian texts, which engage in self-sabotage and have the proposed arguments continuously fail instead of progressing linearly and reaching a logical conclusion. In this way, Bersani considers aesthetics as 'a perpetuation and replicative elaboration of masochistic sexual tensions', which do not aim for resolution, but rather prolongation and intensification.[42]

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41   Bersani, *The Freudian Body*, p. 35.
42   Ibid., p. 43. See also Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) and the volume of collected essays by the same

Bersani's concept of aesthetics can help us better understand the tensions deployed in Petrarch's textuality and link it to an inherently masochistic form of pleasure: by concluding with the return to *Rvf* 23, *Rvf* 70 not only signals the tenacity with which the subject clings to sensual desire and his identity as a love poet, but also embraces the non-linear temporality of non-conversion as continual deferral and intensification of pleasure. In this sense, rather than working as paradigms of desire to be overcome, the lyric citations that Petrarch includes in *Rvf* 70 reactivate the sensuality of desire, which keeps pleasure in the picture and resists the transformation of the poetic subject.

Rvf 70's return to *Rvf* 23 can even be seen as the poet's tenacious attempt to recuperate the masochistic impulse that concluded *Rvf* 23, 'ché pur la sua dolce ombra | ogni men bel piacer del cor mi sgombra' (168–69), where the 'beautiful pleasure' was that of surrendering the self to passion and its torments, represented by remaining in the sweet shade of the laurel. While in *Rvf* 23 the paradoxical pleasure derives from enjoying the pain of self-loss imposed through punishment, in *Rvf* 70 it consists of lingering in the impasse of assuming responsibility for a transgressive desire without ever relinquishing it.

As is by now evident, our interpretation differs from the more common reading of *Rvf* 70 as the end of one phase of desire and poetry and the start of a new one. Instead,

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author, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). On Bersani in relation to early modern literature, including Petrarch, see Cynthia Marshall, *The Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). On the Bersanian notion of sublimation in relation to Petrarch, see Jennifer Rushworth, *Discourses of Mourning in Dante, Petrarch and Proust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 71.

M. C. Escher, *Möbius Strip II*, 1963, woodcut. All M. C.
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<www.mcescher.com>.

it seems to us that *Rvf* 70's return to *Rvf* 23 signals a non-
conversion that keeps the first phase of desire going and
even revendicates it, particularly since, in the end, *Rvf* 70
defers to 23.

This conjunction of hybridity and metamorphosis,
of movement and return, can be aptly represented as a
Möbius strip. Discovered in 1857 independently by the

German mathematicians August Möbius and Johann List-ing, the Möbius strip is formed by taking a strip of paper and giving a half twist and joining the ends of the strip to form a loop. The Möbius strip is a surface with only one side and only one boundary, and its most significant math-ematical property is that 'it is a non-orientable surface'.[43] As a result of the twist in the strip, 'the inside surface of the strip becomes the outside surface, and viceversa, end-lessly'.[44] There is a beautiful illustration of the strip by M. C. Escher (Fig. 1), and what we find interesting is that 'if an ant were to crawl along the length of the strip, it would re-turn to its starting point having traversed the entire length of the strip (on both sides of the original paper) without ever crossing an edge'.[45] The Möbius strip can therefore be thought of as conjuring hybridity, movement, and re-turn and offers a suggestive parallel with Petrarch's poetry: it looks like it has two sides but actually has only one, and what looks like difference is ultimately about iden-tity. In its combination of oneness and twoness, the strip corresponds to the hybrid Petrarchan subject of *canzone* 70, which appears on the verge of change but does not ultimately change, instead remaining double in its com-bination of incompatible parts. Moreover, much like the movement of the Möbius strip, which seemingly exits one

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43   Robert Tubbs, *Mathematics in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art: Content, Form, Meaning*, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2014), p. 50.

44   Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), p. 221. For discussion of the Möbius strip as a figure for reading, specifically in relation to medieval textuality, see Alexandre Leupin, 'The Roman de la Rose as a Möbius Strip (On Interpretation)', in *The Medieval Author in Medieval French Literature*, ed. by Virginie Greene (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006), pp. 61–75.

45   Stanley Gudder, *A Mathematical Journey* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), p. 108.

plane for another only to return, Petrarch's poem 70 in its relation to 23 does not lead outside of the loop but always reinserts itself within the same arc and literally returns to the beginning. In this way, the return gives form to a desire that holds together contradictory impulses without resolving them in a linear process but instead inserting them into an infinite process of retroaction, as in a Möbius strip.

<div align="center">***</div>

As a final coda, we could add that this process of retroaction is not limited to the relationship between *Rvf* 70 and *Rvf* 23 but could be considered as the form of movement that shapes the whole *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. First, if the poetic subject of the *Rvf* never moves beyond the position it assumes in *canzone* 23, then the paradoxical nature of Petrarch's 'lyric sequence', which Barolini has argued combines fragmentation and sequentiality,[46] is given another dimension and made more ambivalent still. Second, the paradigm of deferral and non-conversion that we have identified in *canzone* 70 can illuminate other moments in the collection that stage an impulse for change and conversion. Remaining in the vicinity of our *canzone* 70, we could consider the three poems that follow, the 'canzoni degli occhi' mentioned above. These poems are meant to prove the change that *canzone* 70 effects in the poetic subject and indeed do express a new lyric mode, one that appears more 'positive'. However, this mode exhausts itself, and the following poems regain the usual Petrarchan tone of the ineluctable submission to Laura and to the forces of eros.[47] Moreover, the old, more 'negative' mode

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46   See Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence', especially pp. 6–7.

47   Cf. Praloran, *La canzone di Petrarca*, pp. 66–109, who underscores how this series of poems highlights the impasse of Petrarchan desire

remains and takes over in the last poem of the sequence, *Rvf* 73 ('Poi che per mio destino'), where reason is 'killed' (la ragione è morta) and abandons itself to sensuality, to the extent that 'dolcezza' (sweetness) becomes 'soverchia' (excessive), the way in which we have seen that 'desir' (desire) was 'soverchio' in *canzone* 70. In this way, even when Petrarch's poetry seems to be on the point of breaking the circle of its own paradoxical desire, it never actually does, like in a Möbius strip.[48] That is even true for *Rvf* 264, which Petrarch placed in the pivotal position between the first and second parts of his collection, or for the final penitential sequence of poems that concludes with the *canzone* 'Vergine bella' (*Rvf* 366).[49] Numerologically speaking, and within the calendrical and cyclical structure of the *Rvf*, which seems to contain one poem for every day of the year, this final poem leads back to *Rvf* 1 and to its paradoxical status as a proemial poem that is meant to abjure everything that follows and so already hints at the inverted and non-linear temporality that is the hallmark of lyric desire in Petrarch.[50] In this way, rather than seeing *Rvf* 366

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resulting from continual distraction of the subject under the influence of desire and the impossibility of finding a foothold in the circulation of transcendence that passes from Laura to himself (p. 107).

48 On the concept of 'form of desire', cf. Manuele Gragnolati, *Amor che move. Linguaggio del corpo e forma del desiderio in Dante, Pasolini e Morante* (Milan: il Saggiatore, 2013).

49 On the irresolution of the *Rvf*'s ending, cf. Natascia Tonelli, 'Vat. Lat. 3195: Un libro concluso? Lettura di *Rvf* 360–366', in her *Per queste orme*, pp. 7–34; and Picone, 'Petrarca e il libro non finito'. For a reading of *Rvf* 366 in light of the desire for conversion and in relation to Dante, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 163–66; Mario Petrini, 'La canzone alla Vergine', *Critica letteraria*, 23 (1994), pp. 33–42; Cervigni, 'The Petrarchan Lover's Non-Dialogic and Dialogic Discourse'; and Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion', p. 231 and pp. 238–39.

50 See especially Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion', pp. 231–34. On the relationship between *Rvf* 1 and *Rvf* 23 specifically, both afforded the status of 'incipit', see Rabitti, pp. 102–08.

as a final and successful conversion, which completes or enacts a linear progression from Laura to God, one could argue that it replicates the feeding of *canzone* 70 into 23, in an endless feedback loop.[51]

51   For a recent study of *Rvf* 366 in relation to the 'ends' of Petrarch's desire, see John Ochoa, 'The Poet Becomes the Poem: The Missing Object and Petrarch's Ends in the *Canzoniere*', *Romance Quarterly*, 65.1 (2018), pp. 38–48.

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