HABEAS CORPUS: THE ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH SONNET FORM

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by

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Abstract

This thesis examines textual representations of the human form in the lyrics which influenced the creation of the early English sonnet and its descriptive strategies. The body as it appears in those first sonnets written by Sir Thomas Wyatt is not only acknowledged as a culmination of convergent English and Italian poetics, but also as being the primary reference point of the introspective 'I' with which the form is synonymous. By extension, textual form provides an analogue of the human form, with the former often displacing the latter as the locus of desire and self-realization.

The first half of the introduction traces the development of the body-text analogy as it relates to the period under examination – *circa* 1326 (when Petrarch began writing his *Rime sparse*) to 1542 (the death of Wyatt). The widespread influence of Ovid provides a concatenating principle as his poetry repeatedly conflates the body with the text via the ambiguity of *corpus* and *forma*. In addition to the *aetas Ovidiana,* the poets whose work I discuss – Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt – all share a concept of selfhood based upon psychosomatic fusion, as opposed to the later Cartesian dichotomy. This understanding of 'I' as constituted by form and matter is duly reflected in the poetics of the period. The second half of the introduction proceeds to trace the evolution of the sonnet and its related forms – the *strambotto*, the *ottava rima* and the rhyme royal – from the creation of the Italian sonnet at the Sicilian court of Frederick II in 1235 to the creation of the English sonnet at the court of Henry VIII three centuries later.

Chapters one and two examine Petrarch's *Rime sparse*, with the former focusing upon the poet-lover's adoption of Ovid's metamorphic textual bodies, and the latter upon his attempts to align corporeal desire with the desired redemption of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. These two elements constitute the sonnet sequence's binary metanarratives, and create the divided Petrarchan 'I' which would come to dominate the early modern sonnet.

Chapter three discusses Chaucer's pivotal transposition of one of Petrarch's sonnets into English. Chaucer's *translatio* effectively provides an Anglicized equivalent to the Italian form through its refraction of the Petrarchan sonnet's dimensions into three stanzas of rhyme royal, which provides a model for subsequent English writers. Chaucer also encapsulates the essential role of the body in Petrarch's sequence, yet adapts it to English poetic sensibility.

Chapter four examines the courtly lyrics of John Lydgate, arguably the most influential poet of the fifteenth century, whose devotion to Chaucer resulted in an unconscious production of Anglo-Italianate poems – yet with an individual concept of the body-text relationship – which helped to create the aesthetic environment that would eventually embrace the English sonnet.

The final chapter reveals the Wyattic form as the culmination of the Anglo-Italianate poetic tradition which began with Chaucer. Wyatt reforms his textual *corpus* out of the various poetics of his predecessors, and yet in doing so provides a body-text contiguous with the dissimulation of the Henrician court, and which serves as a public projection of the 'I'.

The conclusion examines the image of the body as it relates to literary discourse; how it plays a key role in a literary tradition which has been questioned in recent years; and why the sonnet form is the most responsive poetic analogue to the human form. In addition to a thesis drawn from the recapitulation of the examined material – that the sonnet is the body made literary discourse, a poetic exposition of an 'I' symbolized and constituted by the *corpus* no less than the mind – the conclusion questions contemporary historical criticism's use of the term *discourse* by examining its basis in, and misreading of, the work of Michel Foucault.

Contents

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Abbreviations

Amores	Ovid, *Amores*; *Medicamina Faciei Femineae*; *Ars Amatoria*; *Remedia Amoris*, ed. by E. J. Kenney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961; repr. 1994)
	_____, *Amores*, in *The Love Poems*, ed. by E. J. Kenney, trans. by A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; repr. 1998)
Benson	Larry D. Benson and others, eds, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; repr. 1988)
Bible	Aloisius Claudius Fillion, ed., *Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatae*, 8th edn (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1887)
	Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, eds, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
CProl.	*The Clerk's Prologue*, in Benson
ChR	*Chaucer Review*
De Anima	Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries, trans., *Aristotle's De Anima in the Version of William of Moerbeke and the Commentary of St Thomas Aquinas* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951)
DoS	Michael Spiller, *The Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992; repr. 2002)
EETS, ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS, OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
ELH	*A Journal of English Literary History*
ELN	*English Language Notes*
EMS	Michael Spiller, *Early Modern Sonneteers: From Wyatt to Milton* (Devon: Northcote House, 2001)
Fam.	Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum familiarium libri: Letters on Familiar Matters*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, 3 vols (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975-85)
HF	*The House of Fame*, in Benson
Inf.	Robert M. Durling, ed. and trans., *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Volume 1: Inferno* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)

Invectives	David Marsh, trans., *Francesco Petrarca: Invectives* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)
JL	Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970)
JMEMS	*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* [formerly *JMRS*]
JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
Kristeva	Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora and others (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980)
KT	*The Knight's Tale*, in Benson
LGW	*Legend of Good Women*, in ibid.
Mazzotta	Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993; repr. 1999)
MED	H. Kurath and others, eds, *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954-2001)
Meta.	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by A. D. Melville, ed. by E. J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; repr. 1998) _____, *Metamorphoses*, ed. by W. S. Anderson (Studtgart: Teubner, 1993)
Minor Poems	Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, 2 vols, EETS, ES 107, OS 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1911, 1934; repr. 1961)
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
N&Q	*Notes & Queries*
OED	James H. A. Murray and others, eds, *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933)
Para.	Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. by Charles S. Singleton, 2 vols (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975; repr. 1977)
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America*
Purg.	Robert M. Durling, ed. and trans., *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Volume 2: Purgatorio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; repr. 2004)

Rs	Robert M. Durling, ed. and trans., *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976; repr. 2001)
SAC	*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*
Sec.	Francis Petrarch, *My Secret Book* , trans. by J. G. Nichols (London: Hesperus, 2002)
Sen.	Francis Petrarch, *Rerum senilium libri: Letters of Old Age*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)
Simpson	James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2: 1350-1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2004)
Spearing	A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985; repr. 1990)
TC	*Troilus and Criseyde*, in Benson
TG	John Lydgate, *Temple of Glas*, ed. by J. Schick, EETS, ES 60 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1891)
Thomson	Patricia Thomson, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964)
VN	Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, ed. by Domenico de Robertis (Milan: Ricciardi, 1980)
	_____, *Vita Nuova*, trans. by Mark Musa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Introduction

I

In noua fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora

<div align="right">(Ovid, Meta., I. 1-2)</div>

This study takes as its background an examination of the Italian and English literary

traditions which converged to produce the English sonnet. At its foreground is a

discussion of descriptive strategies which position the image and the conception of the

human body as being both the central reference point of the poetic 'I' and an analogue

principle of textual organization. Criticism is long-accustomed to discussing the

sonnet's proclivity towards psychological self-interrogation and formal self-

reflexivity, but the pre-Cartesian age into which the sonnet was born and developed

associated both self and text with corporeality.[1] Michael Schoenfeldt concisely

expresses this trinity of mind, body and text when he talks of late-medieval and early-

modern writers exploring 'the mysteries of psychological inwardness that are folded

into the stories of the body'.[2] And as the body tells stories, so do those stories often

tell of the body through which the world is experienced.

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[1] See for example Christopher S. Celenza, 'Petrarch, Latin and Italian Renaissance Latinity', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 509-36: 'Petrarch's creative historical imaginings – and indeed his approach to philosophy as a whole [...] reflects the pre-Cartesian version of what philosophy represented for most of its history: not the teaching of abstract principles to bodyless minds or the writing of books of philosophy, but the development of systems of living' (p. 512).

[2] Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2. Future citations will be included in the body of the text. Schoenfeldt's study is part of a much wider trend within late-medieval / early-modern studies of the past decade, see also Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995); David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, eds, *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997); Piero Boitani and Anna Torti, eds, *The Body and Soul in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999); Lynn Enterline, *The Rhetoric of the Body from Ovid to Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); R. Allen Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body: The Anxiety of Circulation in the "Canterbury Tales"* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), to name but a few.

Yet this conception of the body as being both textual referent and analogue reaches back to antiquity, and is encapsulated by the epigraph that opens this introduction, which translates as 'Of bodies changed to other forms I tell'. Even if all other claims to kinship were to be refuted, the *aetas Ovidiana* is one element that the poets whose lyrics I shall be discussing – namely Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt – most definitely have in common. Ovid's declaration of intent, which opens the *Metamorphoses*, succinctly emphasizes the ambiguity of the terms which provide this study with its title, and upon which it is predicated: *corpus* and *form*. These are the points at which the somatic and the poetic interact and conduct their intercourse, and which testify to the body's primacy in the sphere of textual reference. The body effectively becomes an hermeneutic template which is superimposed on to the text in order to provide it with a recognizable order, and so an author's works become his or her *corpus*; poetic structure becomes form; individual grammatical units become *membra*; and to this day we are careful to keep our footnotes distinct from the main body of the text. These terms are taken for granted so often that it becomes easy to forget that they were not always dead metaphors. Indeed, Ovid's emphasis upon 'formas' and 'corpora' at the opening of the *Metamorphoses* is dependent upon the text's organic half-life, and has been discussed in such terms by Joseph Farrell:

> the poem itself is a substantial thing, a kind of body, something that grows and changes through the application of poetic intelligence to inert matter, like the mythic bodies that are its subject. [...] A poem like the *Metamorphoses* is thus a literary *corpus*, a 'body' of which the individual books are the limbs or members and which is analogous to the poet's actual body.[3]

It is this model of the body-text that informs the 'Ovidian tradition, which extends in English writing from Chaucer right through to Surrey and beyond' (Simpson, p. 121).

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[3] Joseph Farrell, 'The Ovidian Corpus: Poetic Body and Poetic Text', in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*, ed. by Philip Hardie and others (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), pp. 127-41 (p. 128).

However, whilst I agree with Simpson's acknowledgement of this tradition, I do not subscribe to the exclusion of Petrarchan influence upon which he bases its continuity. The argument that 'Ovid, not Petrarch is the key figure in what is taken to be a characteristically "Renaissance" elegiac tradition' (p.121), and which claims that it is 'incontrovertibly clear just how distorted is this account of Petrarch's influence' (p. 153), appears to be based upon a false dichotomy. Petrarch, like the majority of his contemporaries, was devoted to Ovid, and the decision to place him in opposition to an established Ovidian influence suggests that Petrarch's lyrics were other, not of that tradition which Simpson rightly views as a concatenating principle between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. One of the reasons for Petrarch's enormous (posthumous) influence upon English poetics – which I do not believe to be a distortion – is his appeal to a literary aesthetics formed through interaction with Ovidian *corpora*.[4]

Furthermore, this distaste for Petrarch, or rather for the critical portrait of Petrarch as the father of the Modern, also tends to obscure a formal link between the English sonnet and the Chaucerian verse forms which immediately preceded and created the environment for its arrival:

> in the sixteenth century, small, retracted forms became the prime vehicle of elegiac expression [...] But the novelty of the sonnet [...] should not be allowed to occlude the fact that earlier forms like the roundel and ballade were also exploited for the expression of a voice locked into a cycle of divided positions. Neither should it be allowed to disguise the Ovidian background to those retracted forms. (Simpson, pp. 154-5)

Shorter Chaucerian verse, such as Lydgate's *A Ballade, of Her that hath All Virtues* or *The Floure of Curtesye*, was indeed 'exploited for the expression of a voice locked into a cycle of divided positions'. Yet the decision to place those 'earlier forms' in

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[4] Simpson continues his refutation of Petrarch's influence in 'Subjects of Triumph and Literary History: Dido and Petrarch in Petrarch's *Africa* and *Trionfi*', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 489-508. However, he does admit that Petrarch has 'an Ovidian inheritance' in this article (p. 490).

direct contradistinction to 'the novelty of the sonnet' effectively forbids any interaction between them, and stems from the latter's critical affinity with a periodization largely undermined.[5] In other words, the Burckhardtian Renaissance was not the sonnet's fault. And as will become evident, the links between established forms, in particular the rhyme royal, and the sonnet are historically viable, and reinforce rather than threaten Simpson's reformist model. It is the sonnet's familiarity, as much as its novelty, which ensures its success at the Henrician court, both in terms of form and Ovidian matter.

Yet Farrell's discussion of the Ovidian body-text also directs us beyond the classical world towards later influences upon the poets whose lyric *corpora* I will be examining. For example, the reference to 'the application of poetic intelligence to inert matter' indicates the philosophical and aesthetic environs of the *aetas Ovidiana*. I would suggest that Farrell is here alluding to the Aristotelian model of the psyche's relation to the body, as it was interpreted by Scholasticism – *id est* from a Judaeo-Christian perspective – and disseminated throughout Western Europe between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. The constituents of being are discussed in book II of *De Anima*, a text which was not only influential in terms of Schoenfeldt's 'materialist psychology' (p. 2), but also, as Farrell implies, in relation to poetic *principia*:

> Now, we say that one of the kinds of things that there are is substance. Of this, there is one element, matter, which of itself is no particular thing; another, the form or species according to which it is called 'this particular thing'; and a third, that which is from both of these. Matter is, indeed, potency, and the form, act [...] Therefore every natural body sharing in life will be a substance, and this substance will be in some way composite [...] The soul, therefore, is the primary act of a physical body capable of life.
> Such a body will be organic. (II. 1. 212-30)

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[5] The question of periodization versus Hegelian organicism as competing historical discourses is one that I will return to throughout.

The Aristotelian *psyche*, as it animates matter (*hyle*) and in conjunction with it dialectically produces the third element, the 'living body' (*De Anima*, II. 1. 220), is duly brought in to relation with the Judaeo-Christian soul that is breathed into the nostrils of the inert Adam in Genesis, 2. 7 – prior to God's inspiration, Adam would have existed only in a state of potential capacity (*dunamis*). Moreover, this Scholastic marriage of Aristotelianism and Judaeo-Christianity, especially when considered in conjunction with the widespread conception of God the Author (*deus artifex*), inevitably has implications for the perceived role of His mortal counterpart, as Petrarch states:

> Among the pagan nations, the first theologians were poets. This is attested by the greatest philosophers, confirmed by the authority of saints, and indicated by the very name of poet, if you don't know.[6]

Petrarch here provides a chronological bridge across our retrospective periodical divide, as he is drawing upon that medieval mainstay, Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (VIII. 7. 1-3), and anticipating one of the key works of the English Renaissance.[7] Petrarch pre-empts Sidney's asseveration in *The Defence of Poesy* that poetry is 'not to be scourged out of the Church of God' because it 'cometh of this word *poiein*, which is, to make: wherein, I know not whether by luck or wisdom, we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker'.[8] The poet, by virtue of his etymology, thus imitates the Divine Maker, and as He wrote the Book of Nature so the poet 'lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or quite anew, *forms*

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[6] See *Invectives against a physician* (*Invective contra medicum*), in *Invectives*, pp. 2-179 (p. 115).
[7] See W. M. Lindsay, ed., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarvm sive originvm, libri XX*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), I [n. p.].
[8] See *The Defence of Poesy*, in *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; repr. 2002), pp. 212-50 (p. 215). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

such as never were in nature' (p. 216, my italics).[9] Sidney here employs that crucial

term which links Ovid's *corpora* to the Aristotelian *anima*, namely form. The poet

imitating the *deus artifex*, whose sublunary magnum opus was the 'living body',

reproduces that action by creating a textual *corpus* which corresponds with that same

divine work.

The Aristotelian-Thomistic influences upon the concept of the body-text may be

seen to inform C. S. Jaeger's discussion of 'the trajectory of the body-text dynamic' in

the late-medieval period:

> Bodies need texts. The living human presence has vitality, emotion, sexuality,
> authority, charisma and fate. But these qualities weaken, play themselves out, fade
> and die. [...] For this purpose the body seeks textualizing, and it goes to the artist to
> get it [...] texts also need bodies. They have their own form of incompleteness. They
> have no substance. They are nothing in themselves but words and sounds, weaving
> and patching, ink and paper, stone and canvas. They are not alive, but not exactly
> dead. [...] The textual contract arises from this mutual insufficiency of bodies and
> texts. Because each has what the other lacks, they enter an agreement. The body says
> to the text: 'Give me permanence, and I may have something you want.' The text
> answers the body: 'If you give me life and life-likeness, I will make you immortal.'[10]

Jaeger's 'textual contract' is clearly predicated upon the dialectical Aristotelian model

of being, whereby reciprocal interdependence counteracts a 'mutual insufficiency' in

order to enable existence. Jaeger uses a key Aristotelian term, 'substance' (*ousia*), and

the textual state of being 'not alive, but not exactly dead' defines the concept of

unfulfilled capacity (*dunamis*) as it relates to the uninformed body. In this application,

however, the soul is replaced by the text as animating principle, although body

remains matter. Indeed, the body is in many ways the matter in the lyrics which I will

be discussing, that which is given *anima* and form by the text.

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[9] This point is of particular interest in relation to Lydgate's reception of Father Chaucer, as Spearing
terms him, who represents the Barthesian Author-God to Lydgate's *Natura*, which will be discussed in
chapter 4. E. R. Curtius relates the origins and development of the Book of Nature topos in *European
Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Bollingen, 1953), pp.
302-26.
[10] C. Stephen Jaeger, 'Charismatic Body – Charismatic Text', *Exemplaria*, 9 (1997), 117-37 (pp. 127-
8).

However, this is not to say that Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt all adhere

to the same conception of the body-text function (that which initially serves as a

surrogate for, but which usually ends up displacing the human form within the text as

the locus of selfhood and/or desire).[11] Such an homogenous conception of the *corpus*

would suggest that the literary period which this study covers – from the birth of the

Petrarchan sonnet (*c*. 1326) to the death of Wyatt in 1542 – was itself uniform, when

even the most cursory examination of its production will show that it was anything

but. I am not claiming that these four figures constitute a poetical coterie; as has been

said, apart from the general stylistic and philosophical tenor of the period – such as

Ovidianism in literature and post-Scholasticism in thought, amongst multiform other

elements – that which connects them is their contribution to the corporeal descriptive

strategies which inform the production of the first English sonnets. Nor am I averring

that similarities do not arise, inevitably they do: between Wyatt and Petrarch; Lydgate

and Chaucer; Chaucer and Wyatt; even, somewhat surprisingly, between Lydgate and

Petrarch. Certain correspondences in style and diction are only to be expected, just as

they are to be expected between any poets whose chronologies overlap. We would

anticipate some similarities between, for example, Spenser and Donne, yet we would

not say that they were similar poets. To reiterate, what links these poets, in so far as

my argument is concerned, is their individual contributions to a cumulative whole (the

concept of the body-text as it is superimposed upon the English sonnet), a whole

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[11] Although my focus is upon the body-text function as it is formulated in the secular lyric, this is not to say that it is an isolated artistic phenomenon. The sacral equivalent of the secular body-text may be found in what Paul Binski terms the 'image-relic': 'a synthesis of the relic and the image into the "image-relic". The power of the image-relic was based upon its authenticity in recording the bodily likenesses of Christ or Mary' as part of 'the synechdochal relationship, where part of the body stood for the whole [...] [and] physical remains served to substantiate and authorize the Christian imagination, and literally to flesh out the Gospel text'. See Chapter 3 of *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 123-63 (p. 124).

which is informed by contemporary poetico-rhetorical, aesthetic, and philosophical metanarratives.

Petrarch's conception of the body-text function, as it appears in his sonnet sequence, the *Rime sparse*, is in many ways dependent upon his ability both to differentiate between classical and Judaeo-Christian textual *corpora*, and to recognize their intercourse. This 'double consciousness', as Charles Trinkaus terms it, rather than separating Petrarch from his late-medieval contemporaries in accordance with Simpson's revolutionary idiom, emphasizes his correspondence with them, as it is born of that same impulse which aligned Aristotle with Scripture.[12] Yet whilst Petrarch adheres to Augustine's belief, expressed in book II of *De doctrina Christiana*, that 'the teachings of the pagans contain not only simulated and superstitious imaginings [...] but also liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals. Even some truths concerning the worship of one God', he also acknowledges that the relationship between the classics and Scripture is in many ways a binary opposition, whereby each can only be defined in virtue of the fact that it is not the other.[13] Whilst this does not prevent the margins from blurring, the overall attitudes toward each are distinct, and it is for this reason that I divide my discussion of the Petrarchan body-text into two chapters.

The first examines Petrarch's appropriation of the Ovidian *corpus*. The *Rime sparse*, as many critics have testified, is densely populated by the 'mutatas [...] formas | corpora' of the *Metamorphoses*.[14] These *corpora*, which as Farrell noted are

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[12] See chapter 2 of Trinkaus's *The Poet as Philosopher: Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), entitled 'Petrarch and the Tradition of a Double Consciousness' (pp. 27-51).

[13] See Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by D. W. Robertson Jr (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 75. For the original Latin see William M. Green, ed., *De doctrina Christiana*, in *Sancti Aureli Augustini: Opera* (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963), VI. 6.

[14] For example, Sara Sturm-Maddox, Lynn Enterline, Nancy J. Vickers, Barbara Estrin, Kathleen Anne Perry and Robert Durling, amongst others.

already synonymous with textual production, and which themselves constitute 'the limbs or members' of the gestalt *corpus*, provide a template by which Petrarch may negotiate the desire attendant upon his own corporeal and textual existences. Not only does the poet-speaker's 'I' gain definition from the metamorphic Ovidian body-texts, but the beloved (who brings that 'I' into being by virtue of her otherness) is also subsumed by the mythic *corpora*. Petrarch configures "his" relationship with Laura through a series of Ovidian dyads – for example Apollo/Daphne; Actaeon/Diana; Narcissus/Echo; Pygmalion/Galatea – dyads which prove both the interchangeability of lover and beloved, and of body and text.

The second chapter develops out of the first in that it engages with the poet-lover's Christian response to the transgression that underpins his somatic relationship with Ovid. The illicit pangs of physical longing, which express themselves in textual desire, need to be validated, and so Petrarch turns to the Scriptural *corpus*, and specifically the matrimonial model of Adam and Eve as constituting 'one flesh' ('duo in carne una', Genesis 2. 25). The import of the second Ovidian term ('formas') emerges as Petrarch's desire for legitimate fleshly union with Laura is enacted primarily within the circumscription of the sonnet form, and secondly within the *corpus* of the entire sequence. The sonnet's circumscription symbolically marries the two elements of matter and form, with the poet-speaker's desire connoting the bodily element, and Laura – as the origin of that desire – signifying the animating principle. However, such a model verges on idolatry, as the Divine Author must be acknowledged as the source of *anima*. This dilemma lies at the heart of Petrarch's internal division, which is discussed in relation to what I term the semiotics of *cupiditas* and the semiotics of *caritas*. Petrarch's poet-lover knows that ultimately he must follow Dante and the *stilnovisti* up the Neoplatonic ladder, yet he cannot

transcend the corporeal, which produces the paradoxical impasse central to the European Petrarchan tradition. As Valeria Finucci has argued recently, 'Petrarchism and humanist culture strongly characterized the way bodies and subjects came to be represented'.[15]

The third chapter focuses on Chaucer's rhyme royal translation of Petrarch's sonnet 'S' amor non è', and discusses its transposition not only of Petrarch's form but also of his *corpus*; *id est* his concept of the body-text function. The chapter will therefore examine Chaucer's emulation of the Petrarchan sonnet's dimensions (form), Troilus's vociferation of Petrarchan 'materialist psychology' (matter), and the whole they effect (being, or 'living body[-text]'). However, as I have said, the body-text is not an homogenous conception, but varies from poet to poet, sometimes almost imperceptibly, at other times drastically. With this in mind, my discussion of the *Canticus Troili* will incorporate an acknowledgement of the distinction between Chaucerian and Petrarchan *translatio* which goes beyond Chaucer's transformation of Petrarch's sonnet *corpus* into 'strange new forms' (namely rhyme royal). I pay particular attention to R. Allen Shoaf's assertion that Petrarch's method of translation is based upon an ethic of '*tradittore tradutorre*' in which the 'translator betrays the body of the original by effacing it, substituting his body for the original's – he puts his in (the place of) the other', and as such commits a molestation of the anterior body-text.[16] Chaucer's method, in contradistinction to that of Petrarch, is said to constitute 'the marriage of the translator with the original' (p. 116). However, both translative methodologies converge upon the body-text function, and there are similarities

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[15] Valeria Finucci, 'In the Footsteps of Petrarch', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 457-66 (p. 457).
[16] Shoaf, p. 116. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

between Chaucer's *translatio* in the *Canticus Troili* and Petrarch's desire for valid corporeal union as discussed in chapter two.

Chapter four's examination of Lydgate's rhyme royal lyrics testifies to the body-text's heterogeneity as it is revealed through a diaphanous homogeneity; Lydgate appears to be reproducing Chaucer's *corpus*, but does so only as a point of departure. Lydgate abandons the *effictio*, the head-to-toe catalogue of corporeal excellences as laid out by late-medieval *artes rhetoricae*, and replaces it with a self-reflexive textuality which aligns the description of the figure – or 'non-description' (*JL*, p. 98), as Pearsall terms it – with the textual form in which it appears. In doing so Lydgate dispels any misconceptions concerning his obliviousness to *ironia*, and corresponds with Petrarch, who also shunned the *effictio*; although the Italian's reasons for doing so were different to Lydgate's. Importantly, Lydgate's fondness for Chaucer's Italianate works, in particular his reproduction of the *Canticus Troili* within *The Complaint of the Black Knight* (which was ascribed to Chaucer); his ability to produce 'small group[s] of rhyme royal stanzas' which, following Chaucer, became 'a medieval equivalent to the Renaissance sonnet' (Thomson, p. 116); and his unconscious mass production of an Italianate form (rhyme royal) all contribute to the institution of a *rezeptionästhetik* which would embrace Wyatt's translations from Petrarch.

Yet as my final chapter shows, Wyatt's own conception of the body-text function, informed as it is by both the Italian and the English literary traditions, or rather by the established Anglo-Italianate tradition, differs again from those models provided by his predecessors. The Wyattic body-text is self-fashioned in relation to the Henrician court, and as such provides a complementary movement from text to body which

resembles Vickers' description of Laura as being 'flesh made words (made flesh)'.[17]

Wyatt's body is displaced by text, as in Petrarch, Chaucer and Lydgate, yet the resultant body-text constitutes the 'I' which Wyatt presents to the world as being the true, inner self, in accordance with sonnet's inherent introspection. That is, body becomes text only in order that the text in turn may represent 'I' at court; a surrogate self professing its *trouth*, behind which lies either the core subject, or nothing at all. Wyatt, as far as his audience(s) are concerned, may be irreducible beyond his body-text façade – a truly 'materialist psychology'.

However, I am aware that I have thus far placed greater emphasis upon what was termed, at the opening of this introduction, the foreground. Yet the formal background must be *in situ* in order for this foreground to exist, and it is to this background, what may be referred to as the organic evolution of the English sonnet *form*, that I will turn for the second half of my introduction.

II

then have you Sonnets, some thinke that all Poemes (being short) may be called Sonets, as in deede it is a diminutive worde derived of *Sonare*, but yet I can beste allow to call those Sonets whiche are of fouretene lynes, every lyne conteyning tenne syllables. The firste twelve do rhyme in staves of foure lines by crosse meetre, and the last twoo ryming togither do conclude the whole.

(George Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes of Instruction*, pp. 471-2)[18]

The sonnet is the bicycle of literature: a design so perfectly adapted to the human frame that it has never been fundamentally changed since its invention, though all sorts of variations and improvements have been made: and before you get on it, you know how you will have to balance and steer, even before you decide where you will go.

(Michael Spiller, *EMS*, p. 6)

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[17] See Nancy J. Vickers, 'The Body Re-membered: Petrarchan Lyric and the Strategies of Description', in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols Jr (London: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 100-9 (p. 109).
[18] George Gascoigne, *Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English, written at the request of Master Edouardo Donati*, in *The Complete Works of George Gascoigne*, ed. by John W. Cunliffe, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907-10), I, 465-73.

George Gascoigne, writing in 1575, confidently asserts the laws of the "true" sonnet, or *quatorzain*, when only half a century earlier the form had yet to be introduced into English poetry. How did the sonnet form manage to establish itself with such celerity and definition in so short a space of time? More importantly, how and why did the English sonnet evolve as and when it did, as Gascoigne describes it? In order to answer these questions and procure the key to the sonnet's rapid assimilation and ascendancy we must return to its birth in *duecento* Sicily; trace its cultivation in the hands of the Italian sonneteers; and examine the metamorphoses it underwent, not only via the early sixteenth-century translations of Wyatt and Surrey, but also through Chaucer's pivotal redaction of Petrarch's *Rs* 132 as three stanzas of rhyme royal in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. The development of the English sonnet is indeed dependent upon 'all sorts of variations and improvements', its is a journey of translation, tradition and diplomacy.

The Italian *sonetto* came into being *circa* 1235 at the Sicilian court of Emperor Frederick II, an absolute ruler who was also a great patron of the arts.[19] A notary of the Emperor named Giacomo da Lentino is consensually accredited with the creation of the form.[20] As Spiller argues, Lentino 'seems to have got it right first time' (*EMS*, p. 7): all of the twenty-five sonnets attributed to him are fourteen hendecasyllabic lines in length, with fifteen rhyming ABAB ABAB CDE CDE, nine with the sestet

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[19] As Spiller posits, the 'first sonnets in Italian, and thus the first in the world, emerged from an environment strikingly similar to that of the first sonnets in English' (*DoS*, p. 14). The derivative nature of the English sonnet's invention is also reminiscent of the creation of its Italian predecessor, which was 'a prime example of "imitative invention"'. See Christopher Kleinhenz, 'Giacomo da Lentini and Dante: the early Italian sonnet tradition in perspective', *JMRS*, 8 (1978), 217-34 (p. 234). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[20] Not a great deal is known about Lentino's life – who is also known as Giacomo da Lentini or Jacopo da Lentini – and as such it cannot be ascertained when he was born, or when he died. However, Ernest F. Langley provides a number of details concerning the likely dates of Lentino's poetic output in the introduction to *The Poetry of Giacomo da Lentino* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), pp. xiii-xxvii.

rhyming CDCDCD, and a single sestet of CCD CCD.[21] Crucially, Lentino imbues his

sonnets with many of the stock images and epithets which he inherited from the love

poetry of the Provençal troubadours, images which would later be used by the poets

of the *dolce stil novo* (the 'sweet new style'),[22] which included the young Dante, Cino

da Pistoia and Guido Cavalcanti, and Petrarch. As we see for example in sonnet XXV:

> Angelica figura e conprobata,
> dobiata – di riqura e di grandeze,
> di senno e d'adorneze sete ornata,
> e nata – d'afinata gentileze.
> Non mi parete femina incarnata,
> ma fatta – per gli frori di beleze,
> in cui tutta vertudie è divisata,
> e dat'a – voi tuta avenanteze.
> In voi è pregio, senno e conoscenza
> e soferenza, – ch' è somma del bene,
> como la spene – che fioresce in grana.
> Come lo nome avete la potenza
> di dar sentenz'a – chi contra voi vene,
> sì com'avene – a la Città Romana.

> (Angelic and proven figure, combined – with riches and with greatness, with sense
> and with ornate adornments, and born – of refined gentleness.
> [You] appeared to me not a mortal woman, but made – by the flowers of beauty, in
> which all virtues are divided, and given to – your complete attraction.
> In you are my prayers, sense and understanding, and suffering, – which is the
> greatest good, like the seeds that flourish in grain.
> As your name has the power to pass sentence on whoever comes before you, so will
> they come – to the Roman City.)[23]

There are a variety of precursors here, not least of all the opening 'Angelica

figura', which provides the model for the *donna angelicata* of the *stilnovisti*. As

Dante terms Beatrice in *La Vita Nuova* (*New Life*), she was 'a thing come | from

heaven to earth' ('una cosa venuta | da cielo in terra', XXVI. 6). The idealized

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[21] In *DoS* Spiller argues that this last sestet is actually AAB AAB (p. 13). E. H. Wilkins imputes only nineteen indisputable sonnets to Lentino in his excellent study, 'The Invention of the Sonnet', in *The Invention of the Sonnet and Other Studies in Italian Literature* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1959), pp. 11-39 (pp. 14-15). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[22] The phrase comes from *Purg.*, XXIV. 55-7, in which Dante's Pilgrim is addressed by Bonagiunta da Lucca: '"O my brother, now I see," said he, "the knot that held the Notary [da Lentino] and Guittone [d'Arezzo] and me back on this side of the sweet new style I hear."' ('"O frate, issa vegg'io," diss'elli, "il nodo | che'l Notaro e Guittone e me ritenne | di qua dal dolce stil novo ch'i' odo."')
[23] Langley, p. 83. The translation is my own.

beloved also anticipitates Petrarch's Laura, whose descriptions in *Rs* 149, as 'l'

angelica figura' (2), and in *Rs* 90, in which she is not a 'mortal thing but of angelic

form' ('cosa mortale | ma d'angelico forma', 9-10), directly echo Lentino's sonnet.[24]

Interestingly, Lentino's catalogue of virtues also correlates with a descriptive strategy

which emerged in English poetics of the later *medium aevum*. For example, the

following *descriptio* from John Lydgate's *A Ballade, of Her that hath All Virtues*:

> Fresshe lusty beaute, ioyned with gentylesse,
> Demure appert, glad chere with gouuernaunce,
> Yche thing demenid by avysinesse,
> Prudent of speeche, wisdam of dalyaunce,
> Gentylesse, with wommanly plesaunce,
> Hevenly eyeghen, aungellyk of vysage:
> Al þis haþe nature sette in youre ymage. (1-7)[25]

Furthermore, the possible paronomasia on the beloved's name ('Romana') with which

da Lentino's poem concludes prepares the way for the accretive signification that

would later characterize the lyrics of Guittone d'Arezzo (*c*.1230-94), and serve to

obfuscate and disseminate the image of Petrarch's Laura.[26]

However, our central concern here is with form rather than content, and its

relation to the later English sonnet. Da Lentino's form, with its demanding number of

rhymes, places considerable strain upon the sonneteer, and in this particular instance

he also incorporates a number of *rimalmezzi* (mid-line rhymes), signified in Langley's

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[24] Thomas Greene has suggested that the 'angelica forma' epithet may stem from the first book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which Venus appears to her son Aeneas. See *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 112-3. Yet it in all likelihood stems from the troubadours; Peire Cardenal for example refers to his beloved as speaking 'Ab votz d'angel' ('With angel's voice'). See Alan R. Press, ed. and trans., *Anthology of Troubadour Lyric Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971), pp. 294-5.

[25] *Minor Poems*, pp. 379-81 (p. 379). Although the Italian tends more towards hypotaxis, compared to the paratactic style of Lydgate's stanza, the cumulative effect is the same.

[26] The term for such a pun on the beloved's name is *senhal*: 'a secret name bestowed on a Lady (or on himself) by a Provençal poet – the name of a flower, for example, so that the poet could praise the flower as a covert praise of his Lady. Laura is certainly the right kind of name for a *senhal*' (*DoS*, p. 206). Guittone is described by Lowry Nelson Jr, for example, as 'a displayer of rhetorical tricks, and a teaser in word play' (*The Poetry of Guido Cavalcanti* (London: Garland, 1986), p. xxiii). For a more detailed discussion see Vincent Moleta, *The Early Poetry of Guittone d'Arezzo* (London: MHRA, 1976). Petrarch, who was also born in Arezzo, praises Guittone, along with Dante, Cino da Pistoia and Franceschino degli Albizi, in *Rs* 287.

edition by hyphenation. Such a sonnet would be far more difficult to produce in English, due to its relatively scarce number of rhyming words. However it is worth noting that the earliest Italian sonnets uniformly employ an octave of *rime incatenate*, or 'linked rhymes' (ABAB ABAB), akin to that adapted by Surrey three centuries later (ABAB CDCD).

As Spiller points out, this basic 'frame' of the sonnet 'has never been fundamentally changed since its invention'; nevertheless, it is difficult to establish exactly what constitutes the frame and what the periphery of the form. There remains some disagreement over this point. We know that the sonnet's rhyme scheme was altered rather early on in its development thanks to Guittone d'Arezzo's incorporation of *rime incrociate*, or 'crossed rhymes', within the octave (shifting from ABAB ABAB to ABBA ABBA), which became the normative model for the *stilnovisti*, Petrarch and Wyatt. It may then be extrapolated that the rhyme scheme of the sonnet is not a fundamental, immutable, element. We also know that upon its arrival in England, the Italian 4/4:3/3 sequence became the now traditional 4/4:4/2 structure; ergo the "stanza" ratio likewise is not a fundamental feature.[27] What remain are two constants: one is the requisite 'fourtene lynes', as posited by Gascoigne, the other being the 8:6 line ratio of the octave and the sestet. However, these two basic elements, in keeping with the form's divisive critical lineage, are often forced against one another in the quest for the "true" sonnet:

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[27] Wilkins argues that the fundamental unit of the early sonnet octave is the distich, rather than the quatrain, not only due to the four sets of A/B rhymes but also because the *sonetti* in the earliest manuscripts, from around 1300, are laid out as follows: 'the scribes write the octave in four lines, a distich to a line, with a capital or other initial sign at the beginning of each distich, and without any indication of a division into quatrains.' ('The Invention of the Sonnet', p. 19). There is nevertheless some disagreement over this, with Spiller – following the *quattrocento* poet Pieraccio Tedaldi – claiming that the individual line or *verso* is the basic unit (see *DoS*, pp. 11-12). Kleinhenz claims that 'to think in terms of division is perhaps the most serious pitfall of all; rather, we should consider the octave to be an organic whole' (p. 223). Rather than side with one school of thought I think it possible to view the octave both as 'an organic whole' and as an overlapping series of units, with stichs inside distichs inside quatrains inside the octave which is itself enveloped by the wider sonnet whole.

> The essence of the sonnet's form is the unequal relationship between octave and sestet. This relationship is of far greater importance than the fact that there are fourteen lines in the sonnet.[28]

Fuller's statement would seem to discount Gascoigne's original assertion – despite their agreement over the number of lines – and thereby questions the legitimacy of the English form, which tends to blur the octave-sestet division by way of its three quatrains and closing couplet. In fact, both Fuller's and Gascoigne's pronouncements seem somewhat illegitimate when discussing a form that is constantly inconstant. To disagree with Fuller on this point, and to side rather with Kleinhenz's 'organic whole', I would argue that the fourteen lines of hendecasyllabic verse in the Italian, and decasyllabic in the English, has remained the "legitimate" sonnet's mainstay. Furthermore, Kleinhenz's concept of the sonnet as an organic, gestaltist totality is reinforced by Spiller's argument that the form does indeed appear to be 'perfectly adapted to the human frame', or Paula Johnson's definition of it as being a 'skeletal model'.[29] The sonnet is a form that is in constant flux, and yet which remains instantly recognizable – to maintain Spiller's and Johnson's analogy, the body kneeling and the body in repose share the same parameters and constituents, those constituents are simply rearranged in accordance with environment, or context. As Delany avers, 'if we are to imagine text as a naked body, we can only think of it as Protean, capable of infinite incarnations'.[30] In this sense, both the sonnet form and the human form share what might be termed a rigid adaptability. However, it needs to be stressed that fourteen lines of hendecasyllables / decasyllables alone do not a sonnet make.

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[28] John Fuller, *The Sonnet* (London: Methuen, 1972; repr. 1986), p. 2. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[29] Paula Johnson, *Form and Transformation in Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 64.
[30] Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 135.

The sonnet as Lentino fashioned it, with its concatenated octave, in all likelihood stemmed from the popular Sicilian *strambotto*, an eight line song form originally rhyming ABABABAB (hendecasyllabic), which was possibly influenced by the poetic forms of the Provençal troubadours.[31] Yet this too remains a highly contentious critical issue. And whilst the question of the sonnet's potential basis in the *strambotto siciliano* is not a matter which we need to discuss in any great detail – as the source and progression of the original sonnet are important to this examination only in so far as they bear upon the development of the English form – it is necessary to acknowledge the relationship between the two forms in order that we may subsequently appreciate the degree of poetic consanguinity which exists between the Wyattic sonnet, the *strambotto*, and Chaucer's rhyme royal stanza.

Wilkins argues that the original sonnet's octave developed out of the *strambotto siciliano*, and the sestet devised, 'without any reference to any pre-existing form', whilst taking great pains to stress, and show, that the sonnet 'has no model among the Frederican *canzoni*', and that there is also no direct input from Provençal forms ('Invention of the Sonnet', pp. 31-8). Kleinhenz, on the other hand, claims that Lentino 'conceived the sonnet precisely in terms of the [Provençal] *canso* and that he consciously imitated those formal features of the *canso* which would best serve his purpose' (p. 226). In any case, Kleinhenz's declaration may be read as contradicting his earlier comment that the sonnet was a new poetic form which was invented 'in protest against the pervasive, stifling influence of the troubadour tradition' (p. 224).

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[31] The ABABABAB form is known as the *strambotto siciliano*. This was quickly followed by the *strambotto toscano*, rhyming ABABABCC, which we shall discuss subsequently. There are a number of texts which examine Provençal poetics; the best introduction perhaps is to read the poems themselves, for which see Press. See also Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay, eds, *The Troubadours: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Also, Wilkins cites a large degree of evidence which contradicts the possibility of Provençal influence. For example, he argues that out of

> the 893 different rhyme-schemes (used in a total of 1841 poems [by the troubadours]) [...] there are 34 (used in a total of 72 poems) that begin *ababab*: but (aside from two schemes [...] used in the second half of the 13th century [i.e. post-Lentino]) there are none that are similar to the scheme of the sonnet. Two only [...] are of 14 lines: in one of them each of the first 13 lines is of five syllables and the last is of three syllables, and the last six lines rhyme CCDCCD, and in the other the first eight lines are alternately of seven and five syllables and the last six are of ten syllables, rhyming CCDDEE. ('Invention of the Sonnet', p. 30)

Yet this is not to aver that the Provençal *canso* and its Sicilian equivalent, the *canzone*, did not have a more general influence on the formation of the sonnet, in that 'the relationship between octave and sestet can be said to resemble the relationship between strophes in a *canso*, just as together the two parts of the sonnet resemble the internal division of the *canzone* stanza' (Kleinhenz, p. 226). Spiller supports the view that the *canso / canzone*'s stanzaic division into *fronte* and *sirma* is a likely influence for the sonnet's bipartite structure – a dichotomy which Kleinhenz, somewhat confusingly, disputes – whilst conceding that 'We cannot prove this debt' (*DoS*, p. 16). I would argue that the answer lies somewhere between the two positions. In terms of specific formal debt, the *strambotto siciliano* appears to be the main benefactor, but in terms of a more generalized, dichotomous structure, the *canso / canzone* must receive some credit.

However, the import of the formal interrelation between the *strambotto siciliano* and Lentino's sonnet lies in the fact that the accretionary process is repeated three centuries later by the cumulative formation of the English form. The *strambotto toscano* (ABABABCC) becomes one of the central influences upon Wyatt's alterations to the sonnet – particularly upon his inclusion of an epigrammatic rhyming couplet at its close.

A bifurcation may be said to have occurred prior to the development of the English sonnet, a separate poetic evolution which converges upon Wyatt's form. Just as the original sonnet emerged, at least in part, from the *strambotto siciliano*, so may we observe a similar formal interdependency between the *strambotto toscano*, the *ottava rima* (both ABABABCC), and the English rhyme royal stanza (ABABBCC). I would have to disagree with Thomson's assertion that 'the strambotto is not related to the *ottava rima*' on the grounds that although 'metrically identical these are independent literary forms, the one essentially narrative, the other lyrical' (p. 211). David Wallace, for example, implies the link between the two forms which Thomson puts asunder when he argues that 'the evolution of Chaucerian rhyme royal [...] owes much to a careful study of the Boccaccian *ottava*',[32] and discusses

> the tradition of narrative that supplied Boccaccio with a stanzaic model for his *Filostrato*: the *cantare* [...] the *cantare* stanza is invariably composed of eight hendecasyllabic lines rhyming abababcc. However, attempts to define the *cantari* more narrowly run into difficulties. The form and content of the *cantare* has much in common with that of the *strambotto* or *rispetto*.[33]

Giulia Natali also reinforces this blurring of lyric and narrative margins by arguing that

> the structure of the *Filostrato* is altogether unusual in that it adopts a narrative form traditionally employed to entertain the public with accounts of battles to relate a story of love [...] the relationship between eros and epos has been reversed both quantitatively and qualitatively so that the former has taken over the space and importance which was previously given to the latter.[34]

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[32] David Wallace, 'Chaucer's Continental inheritance: The early poems and *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 19-37 (p. 25). See also Martin Stevens, 'The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature', *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 62-76: 'possibly [Chaucer] was influenced by Boccaccio's use of *ottava rima* in the *Filostrato* and the *Teseide*, two poems that served as models for his own longer compositions. Certainly, in the years after Chaucer and Boccaccio, rhyme royal and *ottava rima* served a similar purpose in their respective national literatures' (p. 74).

[33] David Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* (Suffolk: Brewer, 1985), p. 76. The *rispetto*, a form of *strambotto*, is a Tuscan stanza form consisting of either six or eight lines, which ends in a rhyming couplet.

[34] Giulia Natali, 'A Lyrical Version: Boccaccio's *Filostrato*', in *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 49-73 (pp. 50-9).

The *ottava rima* ("eighth line") is, from a purely formal perspective, a narrative form constructed out of *strambotti toscani*. The form, which, as Natali points out, obfuscates the distinction 'between eros and epos' by conflating the narrative and lyric modes, was pioneered by Boccaccio in works such as the *Teseida* (*c.* 1341) and *Il Filostrato* (*c.*1339); the latter of which was the primary source of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, wherein we find embedded the translation of Petrarch's *Rs* 132. Crucially, Chaucer did not invent, or at least he did not employ, the rhyme royal, until after he returned from his first documented embassy to Italy in 1372-3.

Earlier critics such as Ten Brink argued that the rhyme royal was in fact based on a French model, and some modern critics such as Julia Boffey and James Wimsatt have reiterated this view.[35] Wimsatt's argument is particularly convincing, and it would be erroneous to suggest that the French equivalent of the rhyme royal as employed by Machaut (*c.* 1300-1377) and Deschamps (*c.* 1346-1406) played no part in the development of the Chaucerian stanza, especially given the *strambotto*'s potential origin in a Provençal form. Indeed, the use of what is ostensibly a rhyme royal stanza within a French *ballade* structure occurs both in Chaucer (in *LGW*) and recurs in Lydgate (*A Ballade, of Her that hath All Virtues*), although the latter may be said to filter the French elements through those Italianate works of Chaucer of which he was so fond.[36] However, the argument for the rhyme royal as being of entirely French provenance does not correlate with the chronological and metrical

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[35] See Bernhard Ten Brink, *The Language and Metre of Chaucer*, trans. by M. Bentinck Smith, 2nd edn (London: Macmillan, 1901), pp. 255-6. For the reiteration see Julia Boffey, 'The Reputation of Chaucer's Lyrics in the Fifteenth Century', *ChR*, 28 (1993), 23-40 (pp. 28-9); James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 30, 137-44.

[36] Ergo when I refer to the Chaucerian stanza as being Italianate, I am not only referring to its dimensions, but also to its matter. Also, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, which Lydgate's *Ballade* takes as its source, was written after his visit to Italy, as is attested to by its reliance upon Boccaccio's *De casibus* and *De claris mulieribus*, and an Italian translation of Ovid's *Heroides* (see Benson, p. 1059). For a discussion of the body-text in Chaucer's poem see Delany. See also chapter 2 of Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

circumstances. For example, Wimsatt posits Chaucer's use of the rhyme royal in the *Complaints* as proof of their French origin, despite the likelihood of their being written at the onset of what was formerly known as Chaucer's 'Italian period [...] under the influence of Boccaccio's narrative stanza' (Benson, p. 1077). Moreover, *The Complaint unto Pity* and the *Complaint unto his Lady* (the earliest poems in which the rhyme royal appears), simultaneously showcase Chaucer's introduction of iambic pentameter into English metrics. Duffell has capably shown that the English iambic pentameter takes the Italian *endecasillabi* (hendecasyllabic line) as its model, and if we need to reinforce the Italianate tenor of these poems we need only recall that the *Complaint unto his Lady* also shows 'the first attempt in English at the imitating of Dante's *terza rima*'.[37] That Chaucer could splice a French form with an Italianate metre is possible, but not probable, and it is more likely that the rhyme royal stanza was to some extent, as Wallace suggests, an Anglicized version of Boccaccio's *ottava rima*; a form which – along with the sonnet – locates its source in the *strambotto*. Yet if the *strambotto*'s *terminus a quo* is a Provençal form, then the critical debate over the French or Italian origins of the rhyme royal ought to be reconsidered, as both the *ottava rima* and the *ballade* equivalent of the Chaucerian stanza as practised by Machaut and Deschamps would, in all likelihood, share a poetic gene pool via the troubadours.

As such I do not doubt that the French forms influenced rhyme royal, but believe that it was the *ottava rima* which ultimately solidified not only the shape but also the

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[37] See Martin J. Duffell, '"The craft so long to lerne": Chaucer's Invention of the Iambic Pentameter', *ChR*, 34 (2000), 269-88. For Chaucer's introduction of *terza rima* into English see F. N. Robinson, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 519. The *terza rima* was later translated with greater success by Wyatt, in his translation of Alamanni's satires. Robert B. Ogle has made a convincing argument for the Italian origin of Wyatt's ostensibly uneven metrics, see 'Wyatt and Petrarch: A Puzzle in Prosody', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 53 (1974), 189-208 (p. 193). Thomson also subscribes to the opinion that Wyatt was imitating Petrarch's prosody (p. 178).

use and the metre of Chaucer's stanza form. However, Wimsatt's study is vital to an understanding of Chaucer's poetry, and in conjunction with Wallace's examination of Chaucer's relationship with Boccaccio, serves to remind us of how intertwined French, Italian and English literatures were during this period.

Whilst Thomson refutes the connection between the *strambotto* and the *ottava rima*, she nevertheless emphasizes the link between the English sonnet and rhyme royal forms by arguing that

> the small group of rhyme royal stanzas, often without the ballade's refrain, became following Chaucer, an extremely popular form, appropriate to a love complaint, compliment, moralization, or any passing occasion. It provides a medieval equivalent to the Renaissance sonnet -- an equivalence to which some colour is lent by the 'Canticus Troili'. (p. 116)

Indeed, it is with these various interrelationships, dependencies and correlatives in mind that we must consider the formal implications of Chaucer's translation of Petrarch's *Rs* 132:

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh
my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
When every torment and adversite
That cometh of hym, may to me savory thinke,
For aye thurst I, the more that ich it drynke.

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
ma s'egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa et quale?
se bona, ond'è l'effetto aspro mortale?
se ria, ond'è sì dolce ogni tormento?

And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
From whennes cometh my waillynge
and my pleynte?
If harm agree me, whereto pleynte I thenne?
I noot, ne whi unwary that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in swich quantitie,
But if that I consente that it be?

S'a mia voglia ardo, ond'è 'l pianto e lamento?
s'a mal mio grado, il lamenter che vale?
O viva morte, o dilettoso male,
Come puoi tanto in me s'io nol consento?

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. Thus possed to and fro,
Al stereless withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye.

Et s'io consento, a gran torto mi doglio.
Fra sì contrari venti in frale barca
mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
sì lieve di saver, d'error sì carca
ch'i medesmo non so quel ch'io voglio,
e tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno.

(*TC*, I. 400-20)[38]

Chaucer's interpretation of Petrarch's sonnet is a mixture of direct translation and adaptation, of metaphrase and paraphrase – as, of course, are the later redactions by Wyatt and Surrey. The Petrarchisms are unmistakable: the use of antitheses ('For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye'), paradox ('For aye thurst I, the more that ich it drynke'), and the familiar image of being 'Al stereless withinne a boot'.[39] Certain tropic devices of the Italian then are immediately obvious to Chaucer, but what of the form? It may be, as Spiller hypothesizes, that Chaucer simply did not recognize it, although this reasoning perhaps runs contrary to his belief that 'it is fairly certain that Chaucer was working from an Italian manuscript of the poem' (*DoS*, p. 65). Fuller also argues that Chaucer may 'have written sonnets if he had wished', but as a caveat adds that in all probability 'for him [Chaucer] the nature of the form went unrecognized' (p. 14).

Perhaps the question of Chaucer's failure, or refusal, to recognize the sonnet is a matter of era and ethos:

> Though medieval poets do not eschew translation, their successors of the Renaissance attempt to copy the form as well as the substance of the originals. Imitation of classical and modern European forms becomes a valid creative activity.[40]

Chaucer did by no means 'eschew translation', far from it; he was dubbed 'Grant translateur' by Deschamps, and his introduction of rhyme royal suggests a certain willingness to transpose poetic form.[41] Yet as Thomson states, the emphasis is more on matter rather than form; the adoption of ideas is the 'valid creative activity' for

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[38] I will not dwell on Chaucer's translation in any detail here as chapter 3 addresses its key contribution to the development of the English sonnet.

[39] The most famous translation of this metaphor being Wyatt's 'My galley charged with forgetfulness'.

[40] Patricia Thomson, 'Wyatt and Surrey', in *English Poetry and Prose 1540-1674*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, The Penguin History of Literature, 2 (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 1-20 (p. 4).

[41] 'Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier', in *Eustace Deschamps: Selected Poems*, ed. by Ian S. Laurie and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi, trans. by David Curzon and Jeffrey Fiskin (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 70-71.

Chaucer, as is signified by his transformation of Petrarch's introspective complaint into a metaphysical medieval 'pleynte'.[42] Also, Chaucer died in 1400, seventy years prior to the birth of Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) and the establishment of Petrarch as the primary poet of modernized *amour courtois*, or rather *amore cortese*. His fame prior to the Bembist propaganda stemmed more from his scholarly, humanist credentials.[43] This is not to say that Petrarch failed to influence Chaucer. The English poet could not have escaped the Italian laureate's reputation whilst he was travelling in Italy, although the story of their meeting is highly dubious.[44] However, Chaucer was influenced more by Petrarch's predecessor Dante and his disciple Boccaccio than he was by the introspective sonnets of the *Rime sparse*, which Petrarch himself considered inferior to his Latin works. And whilst it would be erroneous to aver that English poetry of the late middle ages did not concern itself with imported poetic forms, it would be equally mistaken to suggest that the translation of form was as important to the poets of the fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries as it was to those of the sixteenth century.

Nevertheless, the self-contained song of Troilus does appear to acknowledge structural elements of the Italian form, as the organization of the three stanzas mirrors the dimensions of Petrarch's sonnet:

> [Chaucer] might not even have recognized what the form was; but he does seem to echo Petrarch's sectioning in his own 21 lines, thus: 4 to 7; 4 to 7; 4 and 2 to 5 and 2 [...] Hence, if we feel like blaming him for failing to invent the English sonnet, we must remember that he may not have known exactly what a sonnet was. (*DoS*, p. 66)

Is it then possible that Chaucer recognized the structure underpinning Petrarch's *Rs* 132, but was unfamiliar with the formal concept of the sonnet? There is an extant

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[42] See Noel Harold Kaylor Jr, 'Boethian Resonance in Chaucer's *Canticus Troili*', *ChR*, 27 (1993), 219-27.

[43] As he is termed in *CProl.*, 'a worthy clerk' (IV E 27).

[44] It had been thought that Chaucer attended the wedding of Prince Lionel and Violante Visconti in 1368, which Petrarch certainly attended, but this is now seen as unlikely.

symmetry between the positioning of Petrarch's and Chaucer's respective lines: 'S' amor non è' ('If no love is'); 'S'a mia voglia ardo' ('If willingly I burn'); 'Et s'io 'l consento' ('And if that I consente'). Petrarch's first, fifth and ninth lines, which open the first quatrain, the second quatrain and the sestet respectively, are reflected exactly by the opening lines of each of Chaucer's three stanzas of rhyme royal, which is by no means coincidental. Yet the importance of this reflection lies not only in what it meant to Chaucer's understanding of the sonnet's dimensions, but also in the legacy it left for later English poets. Chaucer's endorsement of Petrarch, combined with the aesthetic propaganda of Bembo, provides the sonnet form with a legitimacy or cachet which it may not have otherwise achieved.

As we have seen, from a strictly formal standpoint, there remains a distinct similarity between the rhyme royal and the *strambotto / ottava rima* verse forms. The resemblance may be coincidental – despite the context for Chaucer's introduction of the rhyme royal providing circumstantial evidence to the contrary – but it nevertheless contributes to the cumulative effect that stimulated the English sonnet form. The key feature of both the rhyme royal and the *strambotto* in connection with the English sonnet is, of course, the rhyming couplet that concludes both. Considering the weight of Italian and English poetic tradition behind him, it must not have seemed such a great formal leap for Wyatt to incorporate the couplet into the English sonnet (just as it would find its way into the French form), as Spiller's discussion of the *strambotto* conjectures, 'it is the likeliest source for Wyatt's major contribution to the sonnet; that is the alteration of the sestet from 3 + 3 to 4 + 2, ending with a rhymed couplet' (*DoS*, p. 86).

It is not too inconceivable therefore to suppose that Chaucer's stanza may have also influenced 'Wyatt's major contribution', especially when considering the

genealogy of the two forms. Indeed, the case for the rhyme royal's influence upon Wyatt's insertion of the couplet into the sonnet form was made long ago by Walter L. Bullock:

> We must not forget, of course, that Wyatt was introducing an Italian verse form; but he was introducing it into English poetry, and he would surely adopt it in the form least strange and awkward to that poetry.[45]

Thus Wyatt can cite a very English precedent in his pursuit of the English form. And whilst Chaucer may not have written sonnets, there is no lack of Italian influence evident in his work. But what was it that ultimately urged Wyatt to introduce the Italian form to England, to translate Petrarch's 'sweete and stately measures'?[46] The answer to this question lies in diplomacy. Wyatt would have encountered the sonnet during his ambassadorial missions to the continent. He travelled to the court of Francis I in 1526, and although the first French sonnets would not be written until 1529, Italian sonnets were likely to be circulating largely thanks to the influence of Pietro Bembo's *Prose della Volgar Lingua*, which had appeared five years previously. Also, the Spanish poet Juan Boscán (*c.* 1493-1542) had recently revitalized the sonnet vogue at the court of Emperor Charles V; the first Spanish sonnets having been composed by the Marqués de Santillana (*b.*1398) who, between the years 1438 and his death in 1458, produced around 42 sonnets in the Italian style. This too would have helped to account for the popularity of the sonnet at the French court due to the close ambassadorial relations between the major continental power centres of the

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[45] See 'The Genesis of the English Sonnet Form', *PMLA*, 38 (1923), 729-44 (p. 736).

[46] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 60. There are far too many critical works which address the multiformity of Chaucer's Italian inheritance to list here: for an informative introduction to the subject see *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), or the opening chapter of Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence* (London: Longman, 1995).

early sixteenth century.[47] It has been suggested that Wyatt may have been introduced

to the French Petrarchists Mellin de Saint Gelais (1487-1558) and Clemént Marot

(1492-1549) at the court of Francis I, just as it is possible that he met Boscán at the

court of Charles V – although he did not travel to Spain until 1537, *id est* after he had

written his first sonnets. Interestingly, the French sonnet (ABBA ABBA CC DEED),

or *sonnet marotique*, with its internal couplet, may also have influenced Wyatt's

decision to incorporate the couplet as the culmination of the English form. The French

couplet appears immediately after the octave, thus constituting the opening lines of

the sestet and placing greater emphasis upon the *volta* ("turn"), which traditionally

intercedes between the eighth and ninth lines.[48] But did Wyatt compose the first

Anglicized sonnet after his encounter with the French form? It is tempting to think

that he simply inverted the French sestet by closing with the couplet as opposed to

beginning with it, but the near simultaneity of the respective births of the two forms

prevents us from knowing exactly who influenced whom – if either – in an echo of the

formal wrangling over the rhyme royal's Franco-Italian inheritance.

It is more likely that Wyatt introduced the English sonnet form following the 1527

embassy to the Papal court in Italy, although this does not discount a possible French

influence. It was in Italy that Wyatt would have encountered the cult of Petrarch as

Neoplatonic court poet *par excellence*; unsurprisingly, it has been suggested that

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[47] The embassy to the French court was, in fact, to congratulate Francis I on his release from imprisonment by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, or Charles I of Spain. As R. J. Knecht has shown, Francis was not mistreated, but rather 'was given a truly royal welcome in Barcelona.... [and in Madrid] Banquets, bullfights and other entertainments were laid on for him'. See chapter 11 of *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: The Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 216-48 (p. 243). It is likely that Francis's captivity would have had provided him and his fellow captives with great opportunity to witness other forms of the Imperial court's cultural life, including its poetry. For details of Wyatt's peregrinations on the continent and a glimpse of the ambassadorial relations between the Renaissance courts see Kenneth Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1963), pp. 13-171 (hereafter *LL*).
[48] The shift following the octave may stem from the possibility of the original *sonetti* being set to music, with a different tone being adopted in the sestet.

Wyatt may have even met Pietro Bembo himself in Padua. And it was also in Italy

that Wyatt first became directly acquainted with the *strambotto*, in particular the

strambotti of Serafino dell'Aquila (1466-1500), which held an instant appeal for him.

As has previously been mentioned, the *strambotto* is a possible source of the sonnet

form, and its capacity for terse witticism appealed to Wyatt, as did its resemblance to

> short lyric stanzas which English poets, including Wyatt, were accustomed to use in
> the vernacular [...] It seems most probable that Wyatt, working with the strambotto of
> Serafino, was impressed by their epigrammatic neatness, and as a means of enforcing
> the wit and elegance of his own sonnets transferred the concluding couplet to his
> versions of Petrarch. (*DoS*, p. 85)[49]

It is precisely this resemblance to established stanza forms, such as the rhyme royal,

that guaranteed the *strambotto*'s lack of success in England, at least when considered

in comparison to the much broader appeal of its offspring; it was simply too familiar.

So familiar in fact that Wyatt could employ a single rhyme royal stanza as a surrogate,

English *strambotto*. The sonnet on the other hand was *nuovo*, continental, alien but

with a reassuring element of familiarity which perhaps stemmed from its origins in

the *strambotto*, and the latter form's relation to the established rhyme royal.

And so by 1530 the English sonnet, replete with closing couplet, had arrived. It

was a truly multicultural form, combining as it did elements of English, French,

Spanish and Italian poetic *corpora* within its small but sturdy frame. Yet its gradual

development means that we can no longer accept George Puttenham's précis of the

English form's origin at face value:

> [Wyatt and Surrey] trauailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately
> measures and stile of the Italiā Poesie [...]the first reformers of our English/meetre
> and stile [...] their meetre sweete and well proportioned, in all imitating very
> naturally and studiously their Maister *Francis Petrarcha*.[50]

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[49] See also chapter 7 of Thomson (pp. 209-37). For a brief, informative account of Serafino's Petrarchism in relation to the progression of the sonnet see Mario Praz, *The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli, and Other Studies in the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot* (Gloucester, MA: Smith, 1966), pp. 266-71.
[50] Puttenham, pp. 60-2. I will return to the ramifications of this statement in chapter 5.

Whilst it is true that Wyatt and Surrey travelled into Italy and tasted the 'stile of the Italiã Poesie', we know that the sonnet's eventual appearance in England was not so much a straightforward translation as it was an evolution or gestation process. This graduated development is implied, intentionally or unintentionally, by Puttenham's specific terms: 'well proportioned', and 'naturally'. The sonnet is naturalized as an English subject only after it has been rendered palatable ('sweete') for the Henrician court. Wyatt and Surrey did not therefore imitate Petrarch as 'studiously' as Puttenham would have his readership imagine, in fact they were very deliberating in their production of an English form.

Wyatt, however, was somewhat more studious, more loyal to his 'Maister' than Surrey in his retention of the ABBA ABBA octave. And although my focus throughout will remain fixed upon the establishment of the Wyattic sonnet form, it is worth briefly considering Surrey's contribution.[51] Why did he alter the sonnet as he did, why did it prove so popular, and why do we still consider Surrey's lyrics as sonnets when they are so removed from Petrarch's 'meetre sweete and well proportioned'? In fact, Surrey's sonnets may be thought of as being more traditional than Wyatt's in their adhesion to the original, Sicilian form. Surrey's opening quatrain, rhyming ABAB, echoes the original *rime incatenate* of Giacomo da Lentino's octave, whereas Wyatt adopts the *rime incrociate* octave (ABBA ABBA) as introduced by d'Arezzo and practised by both Dante and Petrarch. Similarly, it may be argued that Surrey's alternating rhymes followed by a couplet pay homage to the *strambotto toscano* (ABABABCC). This idea is reinforced by the fact that Surrey experimented with a sonnet form rhyming ABAB ABAB ABAB CC before arriving

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[51] My reasons for doing so correspond with those given by Thomson: 'Of the two Petrarchans, Wyatt deserves the major emphasis. This is not because he is judged a priori superior to Surrey. Wyatt was first in the field, Surrey still being a boy at the time of the 1527 embassy to Italy. Furthermore, in terms of sheer bulk, Wyatt's Petrarchan poems outweigh Surrey's' (pp. 168-9).

at his more illustrious model. Nevertheless, I concur with Spiller that it is more likely that Surrey was 'keeping but building on Wyatt's idea of a change of rhyme at the sestet with his final couplet', and that henceforth would-be sonneteers 'could choose Surrey's model (ABAB CDCD EFEF GG), or Petrarch's (ABBA ABBA CDE CDE), or Wyatt's as a halfway house (ABBA ABBA CDDC EE)' (*EMS*, p. 22). Bullock also dismisses the possibility of the *strambotto* as a contributive factor in Surrey's modifications, when he argues that

> it was his familiarity [...] with rhyme royal, surely, rather than any influence from the strambotto, that caused such changes or combinations as he made of Wyatt's model [...] [Surrey] examined Wyatt's sonnets, saw their general scheme to be three quatrains and a couplet (the first two quatrains having the same rhymes), and followed that scheme. (p. 72)

Even though Surrey did write *strambotti* it is more likely that he found the model through Wyatt, who translated a number of dell'Aquila's, rather than through any direct familiarity with the Italian form.[52]

And so Surrey invented the Shakespearean sonnet, or the "English" form. Wyatt's sonnets, oddly, are said to be exemplary of the Italian form despite his structural alterations. Yet Surrey would not have been able to add his finishing touches to the English sonnet form had he not had Wyatt's blueprint to draw upon, as he admits in the elegy he wrote for his predecessor:

> A hand that taught what might be sayd in ryme,
> That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit:
> A mark the which (vnparfited, for time)
> Some may approche but never none shall hit. (13-16)[53]

Crucially, Surrey acknowledges his teacher's debt to Chaucer, thus establishing a literary lineage – or intertext – between them, a succession which Surrey, in composing this poem, adjoins himself to. Furthermore, Surrey notes that Wyatt's

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[52] See for example nos 10 and 35 in *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, ed. by F. M. Padelford, rev. edn (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1928), pp. 60-91.
[53] No. 46. 13-6, in ibid. (pp. 98-9).

rhymes were 'vnparfited', at least from a metrical perspective ('for time'), which again aligns the poet with his subject; Surrey shall perfect what Wyatt crudely wrought. The double-edged compliment of the double negative creates an ambiguity, intended or simply idiomatic, that is correlative with the Petrarchan style, the implication being that Wyatt's poetry is impressive but not of a standard unapproachable for other poets, 'never none shall hit'. The elegy is itself written in quatrains of *rime incatenate*, such as make up the *douzain* of the Surrey sonnet, the rhyme perhaps hinting at the perfection that Surrey felt he could bring to Wyatt's form.

Yet again, for Surrey as for Wyatt, the unifying element is the couplet, the receptacle for that 'wit' which is praised in the elegy. Surrey appears to work backwards from Wyatt's couplet in order to create his own form, it is a matter of deconstruction and rebuilding rather than slight ornamentation. Surrey views Wyatt's couplet as being both a culmination of and a turning away from its prelude. His own alternating rhyme moves steadily towards the couplet in a single, 'organic' progression that creates a fluid 'approche' – which the discrete octave and sestet model of the Italianate, Wyattic form prevents – an approach that is both shocked and consummated by the couplet which it is so ineluctably drawn to.[54] Yet why did the couplet prove such a popular addition to the form, retained as it was by Surrey after Wyatt's introduction? It cannot be solely due to the rhyme royal's precedent. It is rather that the couplet embodies a style of courtly wit or *eloquentia* which manifests itself in proverbs, *sententiae* or apophthegms. Maxims extracted from the classics were available in manuals, *florilegia*, which were circulated in order to deepen the

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[54] Paula Johnson terms it '*terminal heightening*', whereby 'the last segment will function as a reversal by means of a striking alteration in confluent factors such as tempo, dynamics, texture, allusion, diction' (p. 66).

courtier's apparent eloquence and wit, and the maxim itself comes naturally to a form ostensibly based upon a kind of *chiaroscuro* (*gravitas* and *dolcezza*), as it allows for a witty encapsulation of a universal or social truth. Wyatt himself was fond of *sententiae*, as he argues in his 'Defence': 'I am wonte some tyme to rappe owte an othe'.[55] The couplet in the English form encapsulates the moral or realization learned by the poet through the writing of the sonnet, which is finally offered up to the social sphere as both a lesson and a demonstration of the poet's skill. It marks the shift from subjectivity to objectivity, and thereby arrests the experience of the poem.

Furthermore, as the couplet is an epigrammatic display, it coheres perfectly with a poetic form which is synonymous with emblazoning. Not only is the sonnet concerned with the revelation of the emotional inner life or philosophical wit, but also with physical show, tangible beauty, and the self-reflexive awareness that its formal aesthetic is negotiated between these elements – Schoenfeldt's 'mysteries of psychological inwardness that are folded into the stories of the body'. The mind of the 'I' within the 'organic' body of the form remains constant: from Lentino's 'formata naturalemente'; through the Petrarchan *psychomachia*; to Wyatt's 'I my self' which is inversely 'bridilled of my mynde'; and beyond to Shakespeare's admission in sonnet 24 that 'My body is the frame wherein 'tis held [...] Thy beauty's form in table of my heart'.[56] As Kleinhenz argues, the sonnet from its inception can be both an 'harmonious union of form and content, where the surface pattern contains and reflects the semantic content of the poem' and

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[55] '(37) Wyatt's Defence: *To the Iudges after the Indictement and the evidence*', in *LL*, pp. 187-209 (p. 199).

[56] See sonnet no. III.11 in Langley, p. 61; no. XXVII.1 in Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds, *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969); and no. 24. 2-3, in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones, Arden 3rd series (London: Arden, 1997; repr. 2002), p. 159, respectively.

a battleground on which the poet wages war with the fixed form, on which grammar and syntax come to blows with metrics and versification, and on which spirit confronts matter. (p. 224)

This binary opposition between 'form and content', or 'spirit' (mind) and 'matter' (body), directs us back to Jaeger's account of late-medieval Aristotelian poetics and their influence upon the *principia* of the *artes rhetoricae*, which frequently employ the image of the body as a textual foundation and emphasize the correlation of corporeal and textual display. This perhaps is a further reason why the sonnet prospered not only at the Henrician court, but also across the courts of Europe. These were monarchs who believed in pomp, ostentation and physical overwhelming:

the physical presence of the European rulers – the actual body of Henry VIII, Wolsey, Francis I, Charles V – impresses us intensely for the first time during this period. The ruler's social identity seems to be absorbed into his personal being; his power, for all its dependence upon loyal troops, merchant fleets, treasuries, natural resources, seems to breathe forth from his body.[57]

The sonnet is a physical verse form that adapts itself to the courts of these most physical rulers, a complex public exhibition of the 'I' in its abstract and material states. Its form is instantly recognizable, 'well proportioned' as Puttenham termed it; palpable enough for Gascoigne to give it clear definition and physical boundaries; 'perfectly adapted to the human frame' as Spiller admits; or as Johnson terms it, a 'skeletal model'. And as the various contributors to the development of the sonnet show, it possesses an innate ability to transpose whilst remaining fundamentally the same, as does the human form which serves as its central reference point. The constant evolution and transformation of the sonnet displays an 'organic' capacity for physical (formal) development, and it is from this perspective that we must now revaluate the substance, the multiform textual *corpora* that bring flesh to the frame of the English form.

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[57] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; repr. 1984), p. 140.

Chapter 1
'Membra iacent diversa locis': Petrarch's Re-membering of the Ovidian *Corpora*

seu pendent niuea pulli ceruice capilli,
Leda fuit nigra conspicienda coma;
seu flauent, placuit croceis Aurora capillis:
omnibus historiis se meus aptat amor
[...]
prodigiosa loquor, ueterum mendacia uatum:
nec tulit haec umquam nec feret ulla dies.

(Ovid, *Amores*, II. 4. 41-3 – III. 6. 17-8)[1]

In rereading and rewriting Ovidian stories, Petrarch necessarily worked through a relationship fundamental to the *Metamorphoses*'s poetic project: the mutually constituting, and mutually interfering, relationship between rhetoric and sexuality. [...] [Petrarch] concisely captures Ovid's penchant for turning stories about bodily 'form' into commentary on poetic form. [...] Ovid's text, in forging a connection between body, desire, and language [...] constantly confronts the violence latent in both rhetoric and sexuality.

(Lynn Enterline, 'Embodied Voices: Petrarch Reading (Himself Reading) Ovid', pp. 120-1)[2]

I

Petrarch's incorporation of the metamorphic Ovidian body in many ways constitutes the intertextual core of the *Rime sparse*'s descriptive and figurative strategies. The shifting corporeal forms of the *Metamorphoses* serve both as a means of embodying the mutable, fragmentary 'I' of Petrarch's vernacular sonnet sequence, and provide a narrative structure which situates that 'I' in relation to the position of the desired other (Laura), who is continually dismembered and 're-membered' by the poet-lover.[3] Yet the labile, reflective relationship between lover and beloved, whilst dependent upon

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[1] 'If dark hair dangles down a snowy shoulder, | Her sable locks were Leda's crowning glory; | Or if they're gold, Aurora charmed with saffron; | My love adapts to every ancient story. [...] | All lies, the fairy tales of ancient poets; | Such things were not and never will be found.'

[2] See *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. by Valeria Finucci and Regina Schwartz (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 120-45 (pp. 120-1). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[3] See Nancy J. Vickers, 'The Body Re-membered: Petrarchan Lyric and the Strategies of Description', in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols Jr (London: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 100-9. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

Ovid's unstable body-signifiers, is temporarily arrested by the physical boundaries of

the sonnet form; as Enterline posits, Petrarch, in the *Rime sparse*, encapsulates

'Ovid's penchant for turning stories about bodily "form" into commentary on poetic

form'. A fundamental tension is thereby instituted between the dynamic *corpora* of

Ovid's text which, in Petrarch's rewriting of them, evolve differentially into one

another, and the spatiotemporal stasis of the sonnet – the 'rigid adaptability' of which

nevertheless allows for the inclusion of Ovid's shifting, 'permeable forms'.[4]

Crucially, Petrarch's re-membering of the Ovidian *corpus* is validated both by Ovid's

own declaration in the *Amores* that 'My love adapts to every ancient story' ('omnibus

historiis se meus aptat amor', II. 4. 44), and by late-medieval exegesis of Ovidian

myth. Through such readings each metamorphosis is revealed as containing an

underlying Judaeo-Christian lesson or *exemplum*, despite the paganism of the author;

metamorphoses becomes metaphors 'in order to grant them admittance into the

Catholic cosmos', and the exegete is then able to 'turn these remarkable images into

evidence of God's power'.[5] Indeed, the period which spanned the twelfth and

fourteenth centuries is often termed the *aetas Ovidiana*, as a reference to its

overriding literary influence. Petrarch is then adjoining himself to a lengthy

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[4] Mazzotta implies that this differential metamorphic model serves as a structural principle in the *Rime sparse* when he argues that 'each poem's autonomy is unreal, that the origin of each lyrical experience lies always outside itself, and that each reverses and implicates others in a steady movement of repetition', which reduces each lyric to 'a fragment that re-enacts within its formal boundaries the same splits and tensions that exist between it and the adjacent poems in the sequence' (p. 172). Barbara Estrin reinforces Mazzotta's reading when discussing generic mutation in relation to Petrarchan metamorphoses: 'genre is not a fixed construct; rather it generates permeable forms even as the forms provide a locus around which amorphous feeling can be turned into art'. See Barbara L. Estrin, *Laura: Uncovering Gender and Genre in Petrarch, Wyatt and Marvell* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 3.

[5] For an informative account of metamorphic exegesis from Augustine through to Petrarch see chapter 3 of Leonard Barkan's *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 94-136 (pp. 105, 99). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

interpretative tradition which began with Ovid's own reception of the already multiform myths, but he is also breaking with that tradition by emphasizing subjective (lyric) metamorphosis, as opposed to the more recognizable objective (narrative or exegetical) model familiar to readers of the *Roman de la Rose* or the *Ovide moralisé*. Furthermore, Petrarch is returning to an Ovidian concept of metamorphosis as art form working upon the natural form, *id est* the body, whereby not only 'the gods function as divine poets, turning their victims into frozen poetic images', but also 'human beings can shape their own lives' (Barkan, pp. 67-70).

Ovid's description of Orpheus's dismemberment ('All around his limbs | Lay scattered', 'membra iacent diversa locis', *Meta.*, XI. 50), when read in conjunction with his earlier asseveration from the *Amores*, serves as a particularly apposite starting-point for a discussion of Petrarch's descriptive and tropological methodologies.[6] Although Orpheus appears only *passim* – scattered as it were – throughout the sequence (for example in *Rs* 187 and 332), he is effectively the first figure into whom the poet-lover metamorphoses. Petrarch's sonnet *corpus*, the official Latin title of which is *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* ('Fragments of vernacular poetry'), and which is described in the proemical sonnet as 'scattered rhymes' ('rime sparse', 1) written 'when I was in part another man' ('quand'era in parte altr'uom', 4), provides a textual equivalent to Orpheus's *membra*.[7] This equivalence between

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[6] For an account of Orpheus's presence in the *Rime sparse* see Thérèse Migraine-George, 'Specular Desires: Orpheus and Pygmalion as Aesthetic Paradigms in Petrarch's *Rime sparse*', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 36 (1999), 226-46. Future citations will be included in the body of the text. See also chapter 6 of Mazzotta (pp. 129-46), entitled 'Orpheus and Rhetoric'.

[7] Petrarch, a devotee of Saint Augustine, would also have understood *membra* in its grammatical sense, as discussed in book IV of *De doctrina Christiana*. See Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by D. W. Robertson Jr (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), pp. 124-6. As Robertson clarifies, 'a *membrum* contains a complete meaning and a complete rhythm, but the meaning is not complete when it is considered in relation to the sentence as a whole.' (p. xix). Future citations will be included in the body of the text. It is possible that the description 'rime sparse' owes something to Virgil's 'disordered shreds of song' ('iactabat inani', *Eclogues*, II. 5). See Virgil, *The Pastoral Poems* (*The Eclogues*), trans. by E. V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949), p. 27; Virgil, *Eclogues*, ed. by Wendell Clausen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994; repr. 2003), p. 5. For Petrarch's relationship with Virgil see *Fam.*, 24.

textual and corporeal scattering, what Valeria Finucci terms 'the Petrarchan practice of textual dismemberment', is reinforced by the parametric positioning of 'rime sparse' and 'in parte' at either end of the opening quatrain, and the fact that both phrases are divided between metrical units ('ri | me spar | se', 'in par | te').[8] More importantly, in the *Rime sparse*, 'the lady is corporeally scattered; the lover emotionally scattered; and the relation between the two is, by extension, one of mirroring' (Vickers, 'Body Re-membered', p. 104). This reflection is crucial to our understanding of the sequence's figurative logic. Whilst the narrator's assumption of the Orphic role implicitly superimposes Eurydice's text on to Laura – a text which tells of the absent beloved who cannot be reanimated by the poet-lover, and the latter's dissection brought about by his artistic failure – the metamorphic interchangeability that characterizes their relationship means that she is also Orpheus to the poet-lover's Eurydice: Laura's body is scattered across the sequence's Ovidian landscape whilst the narrator descends into his own personal underworld. Orpheus's *disjecta membra poetae* are thus re-membered only to be divided again into a self constituted by both the poet-lover and his text, and an Other constituted by the figure of the beloved and the anterior text, as Migraine-George argues:

> Just as Petrarch can be metaphorically seen as gathering the scattered parts of Orpheus' dismembered body and, Pygmalion-like [the tale told by Orpheus], re-shaping them into his own Orphic alter-ego, the reader has to develop a synthetic, syncretic gaze in order to re-assemble and fully grasp the kaleidoscopic intertextual fragments scattered in the *Rime sparse*. (p. 246)[9]

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11 ('To Publius Virgilius Maro, epic poet and prince of Latin Bards'); Janet Smarr, 'Petrarch: A Vergil Without a Rome', in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. by P. A. Ramsey (Binghamton, NY: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1982), pp. 133-40; Nicola Gardini, 'Un Esempio Di Imitazione Virgiliana Nel Canzoniere Petrarchesco: Il Mito Di Orfeo', *MLN*, 110 (1995), 132-44.

8 Valeria Finucci, 'In the Footsteps of Petrarch', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 457-66 (p. 461). Finucci refers to 'the concept of dissolutio' in relation to Petrarch's 'aesthetics of disjunction and opposition' (p. 461).

9 The phrase *disjecta membra poetae* is Horace's, taken from the *Satires*, I. 4: 'With these verses which I'm writing now [...] if you stripped away the pattern of quantities and rhythm and put the earlier words later, interchanging first and last, you wouldn't find [...] the limbs of even a dismembered poet' ('his, ego quae nunc, [...] eripias si | tempora certa modosque, et quod prius ordine verbum est | posterius facias, praeponans ultima primis, non [...] invenias etiam disjecti membra poetae'). See Horace, *Satires I*, trans. by P. Michael Brown (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1993), pp. 46-7.

The reflective configuration of the sequence then entails that the 'membra iacent diversa locis' are not only those of the poet-lover, but that they are also Laura's ineffable *belle membra*, which Petrarch incorporates as his own, and yet which remain permanently, exquisitely other to him. These shared *membra* in turn signify the scattered *corpus* of Ovidian metamorphosis that is re-membered by both the poet-lover and the reader, the variegated myths which, beneath their veneer of coherence and unity, are in fact as disjointed and disjected as Petrarch's 'rime sparse', and their fragmented 'io'. Re-membering that *corpus*, and that of his beloved in the process, thus becomes the central task of the poet-lover, as Durling posits:

> the experience of love makes possible the only integration the lover does in fact achieve, however temporary or imperfect it may be. Absence is an experience of scattering, presence one of synthesis; the image of Laura in the memory is a principle of integration [...] Thus in the *Rime sparse* memory is revocation and synthesis, it must be constantly renewed. (*Rs*, pp. 21-4)

To remember Laura, Petrarch must literally re-member (*rimembra*) her, reincarnate (in the Italian sense of "giving flesh back" to), ergo the *Rime* become 'her flesh made words (made flesh)' ('Body Re-membered', p. 109). Yet according to Vickers' argument, the totality of Laura's body-image, the beloved as *gestalt* – correspondent with our understanding of the form which contains her as constituting a gestaltist totality or an 'organic whole'[10] – not only threatens the poet's sense of unified self, but is also impossible to recall, in accordance with the Renaissance notion of the

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[10] See Christopher Kleinhenz, 'Giacomo da Lentini and Dante: the early Italian sonnet tradition in perspective', *JMRS*, 8 (1978), 217-34 (p. 223), and Introduction, pp. 16-7.

paragone which Petrarch helped to evolve.[11] The body-gestalt is replaced by the text-gestalt as a means of surmounting these problems of impossible representation and potential disintegration. Hence Laura's body is scattered throughout the lexicon of the *Rime sparse*, filtered through Ovidian myth, emblazoned and metamorphosed into an 'erotically charged plane of words' that,[12] in conjunction with the reader's ability to locate and collect the *disjecta membra* from the sonnets amongst which they were scattered, creates the sequence's figurative interior. We too assume the artist's mantle through our intertextual re-membering of the corporeal Ovidian landscape.

What then constitutes the Ovidian interior? It is the internal landscape of the Ovidian imagination as laid out in the *Metamorphoses*, the world in which corporeal form is as unstable as language itself, a world constantly in flux, where the body becomes the signifier-in-play undermining any possibility either of a fixed signified or a fixed subject. This is the world Petrarch retreats to, or rather attempts to re-member, when the stasis of his own exterior existence — made manifest to the reader by Laura's stony refusal to reciprocate his desire — becomes too unbearable, as it frequently does. However, both the interior and the exterior are contained and conflated within the sequence, and we must not be tempted into the facile antithesis of understanding Petrarch's biography as constituting the latter, and the sequence as the former. Indeed, Petrarch himself textualized his biography to the extent that even one

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[11] According to Elizabeth Cropper the paradox of the *paragone* can be separated into three interrelated 'problems': 'Broadly speaking these problems are the following: that the physical beauty of the beloved is necessarily beyond representation, that the representation of intrinsic beauty is specifically beyond the painter's reach, and, finally, that the painting of a beautiful woman, like the lyric poem, may become its own object, the subject being necessarily absent [...] the woman is displaced by the work [...] his ability to represent perfect beauty is prized more highly than the beauty of the woman he represents'. See 'The Beauty of Woman: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture', in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Margaret W. Ferguson and others (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 175-90 (p. 181), for a brief, enlightening discussion of the Renaissance *paragone* and its relation to Petrarch.
[12] Sandra Bermann, *The Sonnet Over Time: A Study in the Sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare and Baudelaire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 27.

of his closest friends, Giacomo Colonna, could famously question the very existence of Laura outside of the poetic sphere.[13] For Petrarch *'Il n'y a pas de hors-texte',*[14] only worlds within worlds, or bodies within, and without, bodies – an ethos which corresponds with Ovid's own understanding of his 'bookish *corpus*' as being 'explicitly correlated with his actual body, which is in turn likened to the changed bodies of his mythological heroes'.[15]

Notwithstanding the implicit reference to Orpheus in the opening sonnet, our first explicit encounter with the *corpora* of the Ovidian landscape occurs in *Rs* 5 via the second myth which overarches the entire *Rime sparse*, that of Daphne and Apollo:

> Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi
> e'l nome che nel cor mi scrisse Amore,
> LAU-dando s'incomincia udir di fore
> il suon de' primi dolci accenti suoi;
>
> vostro stato RE-al che 'ncontro poi
> raddoppia a l'alta impresa il mio valore;
> ma 'TA-ci,' grida il fin, 'ché farle onore
> è d'altri omeri soma che da' tuoi.'
>
> Così LAU-dare et RE-verire insegna
> la voce stessa, pur ch' altri vi chiami,
> o d'ogni reverenza et d'onor degna;
>
> se non che forse Apollo si disdegna
> ch'a parlar de' suoi sempre verdi rami
> lingua mor-TA-l presentuosa vegna.

> (When I move my sighs to call you and the name that Love wrote on my heart, the sound of its first sweet accents is heard without in LAU-ds.
> Your RE-gal state, which I meet next, redoubles my strength for the high enterprise; but 'TA-lk no more!' cries the ending, 'for to do her honor is a burden for other shoulders than yours.'
> Thus the word itself teaches LA-ud and RE-verence, whenever anyone calls you, O lady worthy of all reverence and honor;
> except that perhaps Apollo is incensed that any mor-TA-l tongue should come

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[13] Petrarch refutes the suggestion in *Fam.*, II. 9.

[14] Derrida's famous maxim on our inability to move beyond language to the "real", which translates as 'there is no outside-text'. See Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p. 227.

[15] See Joseph Farrell, 'The Ovidian *Corpus*', in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*, ed. by Philip Hardie and others (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), pp. 127-41 (p. 140). See also the essays by Elena Theodorakopoulos, Philip Hardie, Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos in the same volume.

presumptuous to speak of his eternally green boughs.)[16]

The tale of Daphne's flight from the god Apollo and her subsequent transformation into the laurel tree appears in the opening book of the *Metamorphoses*, and of course 'Petrarch expects the reader to know Ovid and be alert to subtle changes' (*Rs*, p.27):

> timido Peneia cursu
> fugit cumque ipso verba imperfecta reliquit,
> tum quoque visa decens; nudabant corpora venti,
> obviaque adversas vibrabant flamina vestes,
> et levis inpulsos retro dabat aura capillos,
> auctaque forma fuga est.
> [...]
> '[...] si flumina numen habetis!
> qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram!'
> [...]
> vix prece finite torpor gravis occupat artus:
> mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro,
> in frondem crines, in ramos bracchia crescent
> [...]
> remanet nitor unus in illa.
> [...]
> cui deus 'at quoniam coniunx mea non potes esse,
> arbor eris certe' dixit 'mea. semper habebunt
> te coma, te citharae, te nostrae, laure, pharetrae.
> [...]
> utque meum intonsis caput est iuvenale capillis,
> tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores.'

> (she in fear
> Fled on and left him and his words unfinished.
> Enchanting still she looked – her slender limbs,
> Bare in the breeze, her fluttering dress blown back,
> Her hair behind her streaming as she ran;
> And flight enhanced her grace.
> [...]
> '[...] If mystic power
> Dwells in your waters, change me and destroy
> My baleful beauty that has pleased too well.'
> Scarce had she made her prayer when through her limbs
> A dragging languor spread, her tender bosom
> Was wrapped in thin smooth bark, her slender arms
> Were changed to branches and her hair to leaves
> [...]
> all that remained
> Of Daphne was her shining loveliness.
> [...]

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[16] The date of this sonnet's composition is unknown. See 'A Chronological Conspectus' in E. H. Wilkins' *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951), pp. 347-59 (p. 358). All of the metamorphic sonnets which I examine however are included in the *in vita* section of the sequence (pre-April 1348, which is when Laura died).

'My bride', he said, 'since you can never be,
At least, sweet laurel, you shall be my tree.
My lyre, my locks, my quiver you shall wreathe
[...]
My brow is ever young, my locks unshorn;
So keep your leaves' proud glory ever green.') (I. 525-65)

Ovid provides Petrarch's sequence with a great deal of its language, themes and tropes here: the emphasis upon imperfect words ('verba imperfecta') which attempt to embody both the beloved and the poet-lover's desire through the wind of 'sospiri' or sighs ('venti'); Laura's adored tresses ('capillos') which enflame the lover's heart ('so love's fire | Consumed the god, his whole heart was aflame', 'sic deus in flammas abiit, sic pectore toto | uritur', I. 495-6); and the glorification of the 'laure' which is synonymous with the transformation of the desired body into text ('libro').[17]

The poet's beloved is literally scattered throughout the sonnet via the repetition of the Latinized Laureta in both octave and sestet, and as such is reduced to a metamorphic linguistic existence. In the *Rime sparse* Laura is paronomastically transposed onto all signifiers redolent with her name: hence she is not only Laura but also Laureta or *lauro* (the 'sempre verdi rami' of the laurel, a direct echo of Ovid's 'semper gere frondis'); *l'aurora* and *l'ora* (the dawn which awakens the poet-lover from his slumber and its golden rays that blind him); and *l'aura* (the gentle breeze of his sighs which carries her name). She embodies, and is disembodied by, Bermann's 'erotically charged plane of words'. Yet Laura's metamorphosis into Daphne, through the poet's assumption of the Apollonian role, inevitably reflects back upon Petrarch himself. Daphne signifies the *lauro*, which is the masculine form of Laura and therefore symbolic of the poet who metamorphoses into her. Similarly, *l'aura* is produced by his, not her 'sospiri'. This curious symbiosis between subject and object not only confirms the idea espoused by recent Petrarchan criticism of their

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[17] See Farrell's discussion of Daphne's transposition into *liber* (p. 134).

interchangeability,[18] but also the poem as a whole serves as an indication of Petrarch's metamorphic lexicon:

> Metamorphosis is for Petrarch the metaphor of temporal and spatial dislocation, in the hint that no form is ever stable and that every form is always moving toward still other forms [...] [*Rs* 5] implies that words have no preestablished stability, for, by virtue of the anagram, letters can be extrapolated and reassembled at will – and words become generative of all possible other words. The linear sequence of the text is abolished, and the text loses its quality of being an ordering of signs, each fixed, distinct, and self-containedly referential. (Mazzotta, pp. 66-78)

Through differential linguistic and metamorphic disjection, Petrarch creates multiple textual interiors, a sequence of infinite polysemic *potentia* which he nevertheless manages to prevent from collapsing into a meaningless play of signification by imposing what Kristeva terms an 'infinite concatenation of loops' (p. 56), described by Durling as

> the extreme narrowness of Petrarch's vocabulary in comparison with Dante's [...] Not only do Petrarch's words enter the *Rime sparse* laden with associations, they occur again and again, forming a sharply delimited, intensely reflexive system. The whole range of their meanings is exploited, now one aspect, now another, with elusive overtones. (*Rs*, pp. ix-x)

However, Petrarch does not allow words to alienate themselves completely, rather he 'loops' or directs them back to their anterior usage via the inextricability of subject (poet) and object (beloved), as we witness in *Rs* 5. Laura metamorphoses into lauro, which is the laurel, which signifies the poet-lover, who is Petrarch, who returns focus to Laura, and so on *ad infinitum*. The text thus maintains a degree of semantic integrity but only through the sacrifice or dismemberment of the 'I' into self and other, both of whom cannot choose but to reciprocally reflect and thereby realize each other continuously in an echo of the sign's division into signifier and signified – an association which brings with it the concomitant lacuna that exists at the heart of the sign's dichotomy. Yet this lacuna, which extends from the sign to the 'I', is in fact the locus of the self, as Mazzotta avers when discussing Petrarch's 'poetics of

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[18] As expounded by both Mazzotta and Vickers, for example.

fragmentation [...] The point is that the unity of the work is the unity *of* fragments *in* fragments' (pp. 60-79). The 'I' of the sequence is brought into being by the gap, which is desire, created by fragmentation or division, and as such correlates with Kristeva's explanation of the '*subject-in-process*':

> a subject of enunciation takes shape within the gap opened up between signifier and signified that admits both structure and interplay within [...] It is impossible to treat problems of signification seriously, in linguistics or semiology, without including in these considerations the subject thus formulated as operating consciousness [...] If it is true that there would unavoidably be a speaking subject since the signifying set exists, it is nonetheless evident that this subject, in order to tally with its heterogeneity, must be, let us say, a questionable *subject-in-process*. (pp. 128-35)

Petrarch's sequence charts the indeterminate progression of this '*subject-in-process*' who, divided by desire, by the gap between the signifier (Laura, who is also self) which is available to him and the signified (Laura's body, or other) which is not, repeatedly metamorphoses into the desired object and vice versa.

This interchangeable dependency is reinforced later on in the sequence when Laura metamorphoses into Mercury, who steals from Apollo, the role previously inhabited by the poet-lover in *Rs* 5; a transformation which enables the poet-lover to realize himself through the reflective re-membering of the beloved's anterior body-text (Daphne):

> Questa che col mirar gli animi fura
> m'aperse il petto el' cor prese con mano,
> dicendo a me: 'Di ciò non far parola.'
> Poi la rividi in altro abito sola,
> tal ch'i' non la connobi, o senso umano!
> anzi le dissi 'l ver pien di paura;
> ed ella ne l' usata sua figura
> tosto tornando fecemi, oimè lasso!
> d'un quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso.
>   Ella parlava sì turbata in vista
> che tremar mi fea dentro a quella petra,
> udendo: 'I' non son forse chi tu credi.'

(She, who with her glance steals souls, opened my breast and took my heart with her hand, saying to me: 'Make no word of this.' Later I saw her alone in another garment such that I did not know her, oh human sense! rather I told her the truth, full of fear, and she to her accustomed form quickly returning made me, alas, an almost living and terrified stone.

She spoke, so angry to see that she made me tremble within that stone, hearing: 'I am not perhaps who you think I am!') (*Rs* 23. 72-83)[19]

The poet-lover here sees a mirror image ('mirar') of himself in the other (Laura), whose words, 'Make no word of this' ('Di ciò non far parola') prevent him from configuring Vickers' self-annihilating totality. Instead, this reflected image grants the poet-lover identity; he turns to stone, 'petra', which is paronomastically becoming Petrarca.[20] This realization of self is based upon a fusion of corporeal and textual reflection. The 'I', here represented as Battus – who, in book II of the *Metamorphoses*, fails to maintain the secret that Mercury had been stealing from Apollo and is petrified as punishment – sees Laura in the guise of Apollo's thief, which in turn reminds him of her previous incarnation as Ovid's naked Daphne ('nudabant corpora venti'), whom Apollo attempted to steal away with, and this memory causes his body to 'tremar' and eventually stiffen with sexual excitement.[21] Stiffening is signified by 'petra', which recalls him to himself (Petrarca), and undermines Laura's objectifying gaze by reinstating the poet-lover as the voyeuristic

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[19] This *canzone*, like the majority of the metamorphic poems, was written early, at some point between Spring 1326 and December 1336-January 1337.

[20] In accordance with Lacan's 'mirror stage' process, whereby the subject is realized through the intervention of the other. See Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977; repr. 1995), pp. 1-8. Laura, whilst realizing the poet-lover by enabling him to pass from Lacan's imaginary (pre-linguistic) into the symbolic (the realm of language), also seeks to prevent him from entering the latter via her utterance, which would confine him to the former. The poet-lover, of course, has no choice but to transgress the imposed boundary.

[21] Freud refers to mythic 'stiffening' in his discussion of 'The Medusa's Head': 'The sight of the Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone. [...] For becoming stiff means an erection. Thus in the original situation it offers consolation to the spectator: he is still in possession of a penis, and the stiffening reassures him of this fact'. See *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey and others, 24 vols (London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1954-74), XVIII, 273-4 (p. 273). Although I refer in this chapter to ideas synonymous with psychoanalytic literary criticism and semiotics, my discussion of the Petrarchan Self-Other dyad is not exclusively psychoanalytic, for two reasons: (i) Enterline's reading, following Vickers, provides a convincing psychoanalytic examination of Petrarch's use of Ovidian myth. And (ii) polysemic *potentia*, as I have mentioned, is essential to Petrarch's lyric methodology, whilst the Freudian/psychoanalytic reading imposes a single universal understanding of the work as symptomatic of the poet's biography, which does not exist independently of the text. This method, in relation to Petrarch, produces a confinement akin to that which medieval exegesis had upon Ovid's text. See Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 110-5.

male who seeks and fails to possess the *verboten* signified body. The poetical form can only displace the corporeal form, it cannot re-member it.

However, the word-play of *Rs* 5 also reveals Petrarch's desire for Laura's signified body being almost displaced by a desire for her signifier, a 'desire for language' (Kristeva, p. ix), which is an ubiquitous possibility inherent within emblazoned re-memberment and the Ovidian 'connection between body, desire and language' (Enterline, p 121).[22] Yet Petrarch, unlike the French *blasonneurs* who imitated him in the sixteenth century, does not pursue proliferation for its own sake.[23] He is aiming at a totality he knows he cannot achieve, that is the replication of the corporeal *within* rather than displacement *by* the poetic form, but his devotion is such that he endeavours in spite of an awareness of futility. There may be not be a 'totalizing description' or a 'sequential, inclusive ordering' ('Body Re-membered', p. 103) of Laura's body parts in the *Rime sparse*, but this does not necessarily equate with an unwillingness on the poet-lover's behalf, despite the threat the gestalt would pose. Yet the movement away from the gestalt into pure signification is arrested by 'TA-lk no more!' ('TA-ci'), which stops the poet from indulging in 'the word itself' ('la voce stessa').

Whilst this call for silence attempts to arrest the poem, as it is the projected spatiotemporal limitation of the sonnet which demands it ('"TA-lk no more!" cries the ending', '"TA-ci," grida il fin'), it also directs us forward to the aphonic, corporeal self-realization engendered by the *paragone* in *Rs* 23 ('Di ciò non far parola'), as well

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[22] Victoria Kahn has noted a similar process in the *Secretum*: 'Not only do one's nonliterary passions obstruct the application of the text, the text itself can become an object of desire [...] The temptation is for Laura to de displaced by the desire for writing'. 'The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*', *PMLA*, 100 (1985), 154-66 (pp. 160-2).

[23] See Nancy J. Vickers, 'Members Only: Marot's Anatomical Blazons', in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 3-21.

as back to the eroticized body of the anterior text. This creates a complex confusion of text and subtext, self and other, body and poem. The poet-lover may only 'do her honor' ('farle onore') through poetry, yet he desires to pay her homage physically, which 'is a burden for other shoulders than yours' ('è d'altri omeri soma che da' tuoi'). This desire for physical worship is suggested not only by the use of the corporeal 'soma' as signifying the 'burden', but also through the future and anterior intertexts with which the sonnet is covalent. The Ovidian equivalent of the burdensome 'soma' is of course the metamorphic body of Daphne, of whom we are told that 'through her limbs | A dragging languor spread' ('torpor gravis occupat artus'). Yet the poet-lover of *Rs* 5 cannot tell of these limbs, as he is not only forbidden by 'TA-ci' but also by 'Di ciò non far parola'. And although 'this' ('ciò') here ostensibly refers to the removal of the poet-lover's heart, we must be aware that the heart in the *Rime sparse* is often a synecdoche for the entire body. The taking of the heart is not only an act of corporeal transgression, but the transgression is committed by Mercury against Apollo, who is also Petrarch, which renders the transgression textual.[24]

This reflective, metamorphic co-ownership of the *corpus* is consolidated in the final stanza of *Rs* 5: the 'sempre verdi rami' are revealed as belonging to Apollo ('his', 'suoi'), not to Daphne, who forfeits ownership of them by becoming the laurel, and yet who cannot be separated from them. The desired body both belongs and does not belong to both Petrarch and Laura. What unites the poet-lover and his beloved is the displacement of the body by the text: if the 'mortal tongue' ('lingua mor-TA-l') cannot speak of the 'sempre verdi rami', then all that remains is the 'voce stessa'.

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[24] Laura's utterance, as was mentioned earlier, and the cry of 'the ending' both forbid the poet-lover to cross the boundary from the imaginary into the symbolic; both warnings produce only a temporary adherence to their precepts. The removal of the heart is also reminiscent of Dante's dream in *VN*, III.

However, the potential indeterminacy of 'la voce stessa' is temporarily arrested by the 'lingua mor-TA-l' that blurs the boundaries of body and text, and the mortality of which tells of the sonnet's ambiguous ending upon things to come ('vegna'). Thus the sonnet form posits enclosure, but the body-signifier it contains inevitably points beyond itself, or 'transgresses its own boundaries'.[25]

Rs 5 sets in motion, through the inclusion of the Daphne-Apollo myth, a metamorphic instability which will continue throughout the sequence, since myth, being 'a privileged mode of signifying',[26] is as open to *différance* and recombination as the individual signifier. Furthermore, it is not only the individual transformation but the entire sequence of metamorphoses that is generated by this principle of horizontal evolution. If 'words become generative of all other words', and metamorphosis is 'a privileged mode of signifying', then metamorphic bodies must, by extension, become generative of all other bodies. The Petrarchan metamorphic narrative forces its process beyond the individual transformation in an attempt to counteract the fragmentary effect of a series of ostensibly discrete events. Such metamorphosis, by its very nature, cannot end, and so each transfiguration must give way to another. Thus the myth of Daphne and Apollo, according to Sara Sturm-Maddox, attracts 'a constellation of other mythological figures, whose role is also central to the telling of the poet's own story in the *Rime sparse*'.[27]

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[25] The phrase is that used by Bakhtin to describe what he terms the 'grotesque' body, which is 'not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits'. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 26. I will return to this theme subsequently. See also Elena Theodorakopoulos, 'Closure and Transformation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*', in *Ovidian Transformations*, pp. 142-61. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[26] Nancy J. Vickers, 'Diana Described: Scattered Women and Scattered Rhyme', in *Writing and Sexual Difference*, ed. by Elizabeth Abel (London: Harvester, 1982), pp. 95-110 (p. 97).

[27] Sara Sturm-Maddox, *Petrarch's Metamorphoses: Text and Subtext in the Rime Sparse* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), p. 21. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

It is of course the *'subject-in-process'*, the 'I' necessitated by this 'privileged' sign system who enables continuous, or rather cyclical, metamorphosis, as Enterline argues when she claims that Petrarch's lyrics are 'reminiscent of de Saussure's definition of the sign as a relational entity produced from a synchronic network of differences', in which 'any one element is meaningful only in relationship to what it is not' (p. 133). The metamorphic *'subject-in-process'*, like the lyrics themselves, is determined not only by what was but also by what will follow, forcing the reader into a cyclical hermeneutics underlined by the palinodic, proemical sonnet's simultaneous memory and prophesy of the sequence's transformations. This forces us to constantly re-read each metamorphosis in the light of every other as part of a process akin to that which Kristeva terms a 'future anterior'.[28] It is therefore possible to read *Rs* 5 with the memory of *Rs* 23, as 'each poem attempts to begin anew, to be an autonomous and self-enclosed totality' and yet 'inevitably ends up repeating what has already been tried before and leads to other contiguous poems' (Mazzotta, pp. 78-9).

II

The Ovidian metamorphosis that follows both thematically and cyclically on from (and precedes) that of Daphne is the myth of Actaeon, as the latter posits a role-reversal of the former which is congruent with the theme of subjective-objective interchangeability that runs throughout the *Rime sparse*. Both myths concern an encounter with a forbidden body which is conflated with and then displaced by the text relating the poet-lover's reaction to it. In this instance it is the male lover, not the female beloved, who takes flight and is subsequently metamorphosed. The sequence's

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[28] 'The poem's time frame is some "future anterior" that will never take place, never come about as such, but only as an upheaval of present place and meaning [...] Poetic discourse measures rhythm against the meaning of language structure and is thus always eluded by meaning in the present while continually postponing it to an impossible time-to-come.' (Kristeva, pp. 32-3).

cyclical nature ensures that Petrarch approaches the myth of Actaeon repeatedly, as he does with all of his myth appropriations, each time providing a different reading in order to disrupt his reader's *a priori* horizon of expectations. However, the most memorable recollections of Actaeon's dismemberment appear in the *canzone delle metamorfosi* (*Rs* 23), and the following in *Rs* 52:

> Non al suo amante più Diana piacque
> quando per tal ventura tutta ignuda
> la vide in mezzo de le gelide acque,
>
> ch'a me la pastorella alpestra et cruda
> posta a bagnar un leggiadretto velo
> ch'a l'aura il vago et biondo capel chiuda;
>
> tal che mi fece, or quand'egli arde 'l cielo,
> tutto tremar d'un amoroso gielo.

> (Not so much did Diana please her lover when, by a similar chance, he saw her all naked amid the icy waters, as did the cruel mountain shepherdess please me, set to wash a pretty veil that keeps her lovely blond head from the breeze; so that she made me, even now when the sky is burning, all tremble with a chill of love.)[29]

According to Ovid, Actaeon, whilst out hunting, chanced upon Diana, the hunter-goddess, bathing with her nymphs in a pool. Consequently, as a result of daring to look upon the naked deity, he was transformed into a stag and torn apart by his own hounds; the hunter become the hunted. The tale is related in book III of the *Metamorphoses*:

> circumfusaeque Dianam
> corporibus texere suis
> [...]
> quas habuit, sic hausit aquas vultumque virilem
> perfudit spargensque comas ultricibus undis
> addidit haec cladis praenuntia verba futurae:
> 'nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres,
> si poteris narrare, licet.'
> [...]
> dat spatium collo summasque cacuminat aures

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[29] Another early poem (*c.* 1326-1336). Wilkins relates an account of Petrarch in Cologne in 1333 which may have a bearing upon the poem's date and help to clarify the date of its composition: 'he witnessed on St John's Eve [17 May] a curious traditional ceremony: a throng of women, some of them carrying flowers, gathered on the shore of the Rhine and washed their hands and arms in the river, murmuring words that to Petrarch were unintelligible'. See E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 10.

cum pedibusque manus, cum longis bracchia mutat
cruribus et velat maculoso vellere corpus;
additus et pavor est.
[...]
ut vero vultus et cornua vidit in unda,
'me miserum!' dicturus erat: vox nulla secuta est;
ingemuit: vox illa fuit, lacrimaque per ora
non sua fluxerunt; mens tantum pristina mansit
[...]
undique circumstant mersisque in corpore rostris
dilacerant falsi dominum sub imagine cervi

(Her troop pressed close around her
[...]
                all she had, the water,
She seized and flung it in the young man's face,
And as the avenging downpour drenched his hair
She added words that warned of doom: 'Now tell
You saw me here naked without my clothes
If you can tell at all!'
[...]
[She] Lengthened his neck, pointed his ears, transformed
His hands to hooves, arms to long legs, and draped
His body with a dappled hide; and last
Set terror in his heart.
[...]
             when he saw
His head and antlers mirrored in a stream,
He tried to say 'Alas!' – but no words came;
He groaned – that was his voice; the tears rolled down
On cheeks not his – all changed except his mind
[...]
Now they [Actaeon's hounds] are all around him, tearing deep
Their master's flesh, the stag that is no stag.) (III. 180-203, 249-50)

Actaeon's story emphasizes metamorphic interrelation through its affinity with the myths of Daphne, Orpheus and Battus's petrifaction; what Solodow calls 'intra-mythological references'.[30] The paratactic description of Actaeon's transformation recalls that of Daphne, and as in the earlier myth it serves to convey a sense of presence, of metamorphosis in process. This may be said to pre-empt the problematic we encounter in Petrarch's appropriations of Ovidian myth, in that a tension is instituted between the fixity of the textual form which is used to effect the

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[30] See Joseph P. Solodow, *The Worlds of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988; repr. 2002), p. 101. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

metamorphic corporeal form's instability. As Kathleen Anne Perry implies, metamorphosis both challenges and reinforces the fact that poetry 'must accept its physical form, the rooting of its images in physical reality, the limitations of the written word', whilst at the same time there is a similarity between metamorphosis and art in that 'as nature can create new and bizarre forms through combination of old ones', so the poet 'creates new images through the joining of old images found in nature and the work of previous poets'.[31] Furthermore, both Actaeon and Daphne retain vestiges of their previous states, or rather they are 'clarified' to a singularity.[32] 'All changed except his mind' ('Mens tantum pristina mansit') recalls 'all that remained | Of Daphne was her shining loveliness' ('remanet nitor unus in illa') in accordance with the observation that 'continuity between the former and metamorphoses states' is an 'essential feature of Ovid's concept of metamorphosis' (Solodow, p. 175). This assertion further conflates the metamorphic form with its textual counterpoint, in that 'most Ovidian transformations are syntagmatic, or metonymic, figures in which two states of being coexist or are somehow contiguous' (Perry, p. 14).

Metonymic contiguity and 'intra-mythological references' allow Actaeon's dismemberment to rewrite that of Orpheus. Indeed, the agents of dissection in both myths converge upon metamorphosis as Actaeon's hounds are named and described individually, and thereby assume a semblance of humanity, whilst the Thracian women who tear Orpheus to pieces are denied such specificity, and effectively become an anonymous pack of feral animals. Not only are the maenads described as

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[31] Kathleen Anne Perry, *Another Reality: Metamorphosis and the Imagination in the Poetry of Ovid, Petrarch, and Ronsard* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 7-10. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[32] The term is that used by Solodow: 'What is metamorphosis? It is clarification. It is a process by which characteristics of a person, essential or incidental, are given physical embodiments and so are rendered visible and manifest. Metamorphosis makes plain a person's qualities' (p. 174).

'wearing skins of beasts' ('pectora velleribus tumuli de vertice cernunt', XI. 4) as they let out their 'Bacchic screaming' ('Bacchei ululatus', XI. 17), but also the metaphor which Ovid employs to describe the scene in book XI cannot but put one in mind of Actaeon's fate in book III: '[It was like when] in the amphitheatre | Upon the morning sand a pack of hounds | Round a doomed stag' ('structoque utrimque theatre | ceu matutina cervus periturus harena | praeda canum est', XI. 25-7).

The connection between Actaeon's fate and that of Battus, who was transformed into a stone for failing to keep a secret, depends upon our reading of Petrarch's reception of the tale in *Rs* 23. Although this is not to aver that there is no relation between the two tales as they appear in the *Metamorphoses*. Actaeon's fate is dependent upon a secret he can never tell – that of Diana's naked body – whilst Battus's fate is determined by a secret he can and does tell. However, Petrarch uses the latter myth as a means of further emphasizing the connection between Daphne and Actaeon, and in order to maintain the interchangeability of poet-lover and beloved. By figuring Laura as Daphne in *Rs* 5, the poet-lover becomes synonymous with the god of poetry, Apollo, who is the victim of Laura-Mercury's theft in *Rs* 23, wherein her words 'Di ciò non far parola' echo Diana's threat in Ovid's version of the Actaeon myth: 'Now tell | You saw me here naked without my clothes | If you can tell at all!' ('nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres, | si poteris narrare, licet', III. 192-3).

Yet as is often the case with Petrarchan metamorphoses, there remains a conspicuous absence at the heart of *Rs* 52; in this instance it is Actaeon himself, who appears only tacitly as Diana's 'lover' ('amante'). Also explicitly absent is the actual transformation, although as we discover in our reading the entire madrigal is

contained within the ecstatic median state of metamorphosis.[33] Whereas the myth of Daphne's reformation features as an allusion in *Rs 5*, here the metamorphosis is remembered by the poem itself.

The key to *Rs 52* is the progression from 'tutta', that is female totality, through the 'mezzo' state of metamorphosis, resulting in 'tutto', male totality; the lover gradually metamorphoses into the beloved via the appropriation or mirroring of her situation and her lexicon as the poem cyclically arrests itself. We thus begin with Laura-Diana totally naked ('tutta ignuda') in the middle of the freezing waters ('in mezzo de le gelide acque'); those waters in which, according to Ovid's account of events, Actaeon encountered the goddess by chance ('tal ventura'). We end with the subject trembling all over in a frost of love ('tutto tremar d'un amoroso gielo'), having assumed his object's role through a shared physical sensation – the madrigal does, after all, follow the sonnet in which Petrarch declares not only that 'I would have changed my every form' ('cangiato ogni mia forma avrei', 4) for Laura, but also admits that 'I cannot take on her form any more than I have already' ('io non posso transformarmi in lei | più ch'i mi sia', 5-6). The brevity of the form, unlike the sonnet, in which two interchangeable bodies may be figured, effectively necessitates a shared *corpus*, and in doing so provides the poem with its unity.

Yet the spatiotemporal self-containment of the form is once again at odds with the plurality of intertextual *corpora* inherent within the matter, as the final line's 'tutto

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[33] The madrigal is almost a *strambotto toscano*, rhyming as it does ABABCBCC, and as such is the only poem resembling a *strambotto* in the entire sequence of 366 poems. Its unique status perhaps reinforces the claim that Petrarch would have understood it as a *strambotto*, as he considered vernacular poetry to be infinitely inferior to Latin verse in terms of worth, and no doubt would have considered the favourite form of the *canterini* (street singers) to be even more so. Furthermore, the reference to 'la pastorella alpestra et cruda' ('the cruel mountain shepherdess') in line 5 corresponds with an unwritten understanding that *strambotti* ought to concern themselves with *cose rustiche* (rustic matters). However, Petrarch's inclusion of the extra 'c' rhyme, also in line 5, serves to provide the couplet with greater integration than it has in the *strambotto toscano*, and also divides the eight lines into two linked quatrains, creating a bipartite gestaltist structure not unlike that of the sonnet.

tremar d'un amoroso gielo' returns to the sexual petrifaction of Petrarch's Battus in *Rs* 23. Male totality ('tutto'), and by extension selfhood, is achieved only through the body of the other, through female totality ('tutta ignuda'), which arouses the poet-lover's distinguishing biological feature, the differential principle signified by his body's hardening, and thereby grants him existence. The Petrarchan process of pre-Cartesian subjectivity may be expressed in similar terms to that which followed three centuries later: *sentio ergo sum*, or "I feel, therefore I am".[34]

The absence of Actaeon's proper name, which suggests that he has been displaced by the poet-lover who has been realized through sentience, necessitates the absence of another central figure from our initial reading due to the principle of mirroring which underpins the sequence. As Diana is explicitly named that absence must be embodied by the beloved. Laura, throughout the *Rime sparse*, has remained *miei Donna* (my Lady) in accordance with Petrarch's stilnovistic inheritance. Here the object of desire is 'la pastorella alpestra et cruda', a description incongruent with Petrarch's customary portrayal of the haughty *donna*. Yet linguistic absence is central to the Actaeon-Diana myth, just as absence is central to language. Actaeon is transformed in order that he may not speak of what he has transgressively witnessed – aphonia in this instance is not simply a concomitant of metamorphosis but serves as its *telos*. The mythical figure is thus displaced by the poet-lover, tortured and torn apart by an image he cannot relate, which is the dilemma of the *paragone*. The corporeal totality

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[34] Petrarch, as Diane Marks argues, subjugates the body/mind, or body/spirit antithesis via the trope of the knot (*nodo*): 'Not only does the knot join these disparate elements [body and soul] but formed entirely of them, it creates a new entity. The bodily knot gives form, shape and dimension to the immaterial and provides animation and intelligence to the material – gives each what the other is not.' See 'The Veil and the Knot: Petrarch's Humanist Poetic', in *The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony – Essays in Honor of Robert O. Payne*, ed. by John M. Hill and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 241-57. (p. 247). Future citations will be included in the body of the text. This model effectively follows that provided by Aristotle in *De Anima*, which is also at the core of Jaeger's body-text contract. See Introduction, pp. 4-6.

of the beloved ('tutta') must remain constantly in view of the mind's eye but forever beyond description. This quandary is itself the source of the poet's unity, or 'tutto'; ever-present failure determines the poet-lover's identity, just as absence determines the beloved.

However Laura is not entirely *in absentia*, her linguistic presence is merely buried beneath the strata of signification. The beloved appears in the final line of the second tercet as the breeze, 'l'aura', the wind which threatens to scatter the disguise of the 'pastorella', who is in fact a 'cruda' inversion of Petrarch's *bella donna*. Laura is metaphorically locked ('chiuda') within layers of signification: she is the figure beneath the veil ('velo') of 'la pastorella', who is further obscured by the image of the divine huntress. Hence the poet-lover ends the poem 'tutto tremar' in a chill of sexual excitement, after having stripped away the consecutive veils that cover the image of the beloved, who is 'tutta ignuda'. Unfortunately the madrigal ends before he has time to relate the image of Laura's 'velo' – a term often used by Petrarch to refer to the body, which veils the soul – and so it remains suspended, as it was at the start of the poem, in the poet's mind.[35] Such an anticlimax, for the desirous poet-lover, would undoubtedly underline the weakness of the *strambotto* form in comparison with its longer relative, the fourteen lines of which would allow for extended erotic meditation upon the object of desire.[36]

And yet in spite of this frustrated attempt to disrobe the text, there remains the possibility that the poet, in stripping away the defensive linguistic disguises which

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[35] See for example *Rs* 313: 'Would that I, alas, freed from my mortal veil, which keeps me here by force' ('Così disciolto dal mortal mio velo, | ch'a forza mi tien qui', 12-3). See Marks for an informative discussion of Petrarch's use of 'velo' as a metaphor for both the body and the text.

[36] It may be argued that the longer *canzone* form, by contrast, goes too far in the opposite direction by allowing for too much narration, which covers the body in intertextual veils – as in the *canzone delle metamorfosi* – and thereby prevents erotic focus. In other words, the *strambotto* is too short, the *canzone* too long, the sonnet exactly right for such eroticized, climactic re-membering. This is most likely due to the sonnet's composition: symmetrical parts within a self-contained whole constituting, as Spiller argues, the ideal textual corollary of the body (see Introduction, p. 12).

cover the beloved's totality, is in danger of discovering only the absence at the heart of language, as Mazzotta illustrates when discussing Petrarch's reception of Augustinian semiotics:

> Language and desire are inextricably bound together [...] language engenders desire, and it originates in desire. [...] Yet desire, properly speaking, cannot be a foundation, for desire is a pure privation, a lack generated by man's fallen state. Words and signs are generated from this lack and are hollow dislocations of it: the poet persistently attempts to achieve a formal adequation to desire and persistently fails because desire, in its uninterrupted movement toward totality, exceeds any formal adequation. For Petrarch, language is the allegory of desire, a veil, not because it hides a moral meaning, but because it always says something else [...] We must not, however, minimize the fact that desire for Petrarch has a name, bears indeed the proper name of Laura. (Mazzotta, pp. 75-6)

If Petrarch views language as being 'the allegory of desire, a veil', then the 'velo' of *Rs* 52 by extension does not only point towards the body, the veil's usual referent in the *Rime sparse*, but also to the body-text; the linguistic construct that displaces the corporeal 'tutta' which inspires the poem and in doing so becomes the focal point of desire. That the poet-lover should harbour such a desire for language is unsurprising given the late-medieval conflation of body and rhetoric, which converge beneath the aegis of the 'velo', as

> the veil metaphor stresses the primacy of spirit and thought, as well as the superfluous and decorative qualities of flesh and language. [...] For the veil may conceal a multitude of sins and seduce us, or reveal a panoply of virtues and inspire us. [...] The versatile veil, either of flesh or of rhetoric, transmits ideas through the senses to affect the soul, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill. (Marks, pp. 249-50)

The veil which is stripped off and bathed ('bagnar') in *Rs* 52 can never ultimately reveal the body beneath, as the veil is the body, or rather bodies. Diana's status is downgraded to that of nymph, in that she becomes another naked body used to cloak the desired body of the beloved, as does 'la pastorella'. However, the naked beloved beneath these textual *corpora* has been displaced by the body-text that is both formed by and is the object of desire, and which veils only the absence where the actual *corpus* should be. Furthermore, this textual-corporeal striptease, revealing the body *in*

absentia, mirrors the void at the heart of the beloved's name. As Mazzotta posits, desire for Petrarch 'bears indeed the proper name of Laura'. 'Laura' does not signify the beloved but rather desire, which becomes the signified, whilst also maintaining its position at the core of the signifier. What the poet-lover desires is desire as it is embodied by language, the result of which is the production of the body-text's eroticized present absence.

Does this causal interrelation between language and desire, however, apply to metamorphic myth (if we are to read myth as a form of signification)? And does myth-language invariably conceal something else? Certainly medieval exegetes such as Pierre Bersuire, John of Garland and the anonymous author of the *Ovide moralisé* thought so, and were insistent on reading Ovid from a moralizing Christian perspective; a form of interpretation that had become the orthodoxy by Petrarch's time.[37] However, recent Ovid scholarship, although ostensibly far removed from late medieval methods of *interpretatio*, may actually be seen to correlate with the view expounded by Petrarch's contemporaries, in that both read the metamorphic process as being synonymous with revelation. Yet it needs must be stressed that there is a fundamental hermeneutic division over metamorphic teleology. Medieval exegesis placed the concept of allegory or *integumentum* (literally, veiling), at the heart of their readings, whereby the moral end of metamorphosis was revealed to be Christian divinity. Modern interpretations on the other hand see the revelation of the self to be at the *telos* of metamorphosis. However, both readings are based around a discernible process of veiling and revelation.

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[37] Bersuire was in fact a friend of Petrarch's. See *Sen.*, X.2; XVI. 7; XVII. 2.

III

Critics such as Caroline Walker Bynum and Joseph Solodow argue that Ovidian metamorphosis is 'clarification [...] essence, externalized and given physical form, becomes clearer' in a process that has been termed 'horizontal' or syntagmatic metamorphosis.[38] Certainly this applies to transformations such as that of Lycaon, the savage king whose metamorphosis into a wolf initiates Ovid's series. Even Actaeon, although a less convincing argument, may be seen to be 'clarified' through metamorphosis. But what of myths such as those of Narcissus or Medusa; can their fates be construed as examples of 'a change of form by which content becomes represented in form' (Solodow, p. 174)?

The prospect of metonymic metamorphosis certainly faces added difficulties when applied to Petrarch's re-membering of Ovidian myth, since, as we have witnessed in *Rs* 52, characters or actions central to the transformation are often intentionally absent. Consider *Rs* 45:

> Il mio adversario in cui veder solete
> gli occhi vostri ch' Amore e 'l Ciel onora
> colle non sue belleze v'innamora
> più che 'n guisa mortal soavi et liete.
>
> Per consiglio di lui, Donna, m'avete
> scacciato del mio dolce albergo fora:
> misero esilio! avegna ch'i' non fora
> d'abitar degno ove voi sola siete.
>
> Ma s'io v'era con saldi chiovi fisso,
> non dovea specchio farvi per mio danno
> a voi stessa piacendo aspra et superba.
>
> Certo, se vi rimembra di Narcisso,
> questo et quel corso ad un termino vanno –
> ben che di sì bel fior sia indegna l'erba.
>
> (My adversary in whom you are wont to see your eyes, which Love and Heaven
>   honor, enamours you with beauties not his but sweet and happy beyond mortal
>   guise.
> By his counsel, Lady, you have driven me out of my sweet dwelling: miserable

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[38] Solodow, pp. 174-5. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone, 2001).

exile! even though I may not be worthy to dwell where you alone are.
But if I had been nailed there firmly, a mirror should not have made you, because
you pleased yourself, harsh and proud to my harm.
Certainly, if you remember Narcissus, this and that course lead to one goal –
although the grass is unworthy of so lovely a flower.)[39]

The familiar image of Laura as the 'Donna' who is 'aspra et superba' is explicitly present here, unlike in *Rs* 52, but the sonnet's multiple reflections and refractions serve to make the reading of it akin to passing through a linguistic hall of mirrors. Indeed, 'mio adversario', although named at the opening of the sonnet, does not appear until after the *volta* (itself a distorting formal reflection), and is not in fact revealed to be a love rival or *losengier*, but Laura's mirror ('specchio'). Thus 'mio adversario' is and is not the beloved, is and is not the lover who becomes the mirror following the reflection of the *volta*. No doubt Petrarch is relying upon the literal meaning of 'adversario' here as it stems from the Latin *adversus* (opposite), which is of course what the 'specchio' provides. Yet we have seen how the poet-lover's existence is reliant upon the beloved's corporeal reflection of himself. The 'adversario' therefore represents the possibility of annihilation through Laura's self-realization in the 'specchio'.

This potential annihilation is reflected in the possibility of a figurative, semantic superabundance which threatens to swallow up the sonnet. Laura is already the poet-lover's 'specchio', in that he realizes himself through her form; if she in turn faces another mirror then an infinite series of reflections will be created which will render any resolution of the poem arbitrary, and thereby reduce the poet-lover's control over the creative process. The final tercet's reference to the myth of Narcissus is intended to staunch the potentially infinite flow of images that are refracting into one another throughout the sonnet, but it only succeeds in introducing further linguistic, visual

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[39] Another sonnet of the early period.

(via Narcissus) and aural/oral (via Echo) reflections. The poem effectively lapses into an autoreflexive meditation upon the possibility of poetic re-membering. Laura is made absent by the mirror whilst her image is made present, just as in language: the mirror becomes the signifier which signifies only the absence of the much-desired signified. However, Laura's absence in the sonnet's interior indicates her presence in the sequence's exterior, as the 'specchio' offers her the opportunity of self-realization through interaction with her own *corpus*. In his willingness to re-member the beloved, the poet-lover 'imagines the imagining woman' who 'competes in Petrarch's arena of expertise and appropriates for herself', and whose gaze is oblivion.[40]

Indeed, the metamorphosis of Narcissus emphasizes the threatening nature of speculation implied by the myth of Actaeon's dismemberment, as Mazzotta argues:

> The youth dies at the fountain when he has known himself, when he has seen, that is to say, his own image, and has discovered its emptiness [...] Laura will be displaced like Narcissus, but unlike him, she will belong literally nowhere: she will be a purely imaginary flower and will exist in the nonplace of the imagination [...] The dislocation is total: Narcissus is a flower, Laura is in the utopian domain of the imaginary, the poet is in his exile. (pp. 65-6)

The 'poet in his exile', however, serves as an anchor in that sea of reflections; 'esilio', no matter how 'misero', is in fact a source of identity and self-realization removed from the potential multiplicity of images created through the interaction of the eyes and the mirror. Exile also, from an Ovidian perspective, reinforces poet-status, as Ovid expresses his banishment as an analogue of Orpheus's fate in the *Tristia*: 'I was torn asunder, as if I were leaving my limbs behind – a very half seemed broken from the body to which it belonged' ('dividor haud aliter, quam si mea membra relinquam,

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[40] Estrin, pp. 10-13. Laura's possible self-realization is discussed by Estrin in her explanation of Laura-Mercury: 'Laura-Mercury undoes the appropriations that bolster the poet. Uncovering the woman's resistance, Petrarch releases the uncovering Laura who evades the forms that contain her even as she projects other locations for the imagination. Once the originating poet imagines the imagining woman, she (in turn) proceeds to probe in directions not yet revealed by – but nevertheless implicit in – the original representation' (p. 10).

| et pars abrumpi corpore visa suo est', I. 3. 73-4).[41] Exile both scatters and recalls as the poet-lover accepts disjection as the locus of identity.

Petrarch's evocation of the myth of Narcissus as a narrative warning to Laura, rather than as a subjective re-membering ('you remember', 'vi rimembra'), prevents her from taking possession of herself, as the *corpus* she views in her mirror translates into the evanescent body-text of Ovid's youth:

> sic attenuatus amore
> liquitur et tecto paulatim carpitur igni,
> et neque iam color est mixto candore rubori
> nec vigor et vires et quae modo visa placebant,
> nec corpus remanet, quondam quod amaverat Echo.
>
> (So, by love wasted, slowly he dissolves
> By hidden fire consumed. No colour now,
> Blending the white with red, nor strength remains
> Nor will, nor aught that lately seemed so fair,
> Nor longer lasts the body Echo loved.) (III. 489-93)

It is then Laura, and not the poet-lover who ceases to exist, displaced by the mirror-image of the body-text. She is not Narcissus, who continues to exist as a flower, but Echo, disembodied by words. By extension the poet-lover must become Narcissus transfixed by his own image, that is the image of the beloved body which is created by and therefore belongs to – indeed, is part of – him; it is not 'vi' who should 'rimembra di Narcisso', but 'io'. Petrarch is 'misero esilio!' because he is Narcissus; permanently exiled from himself, or rather his other self, and haunted by disembodied words. This movement is correlative with Ovid's own

> trajectory that moves from the image of the poem as a bookish body to that of the poem as disembodied song [...] [the *Metamorphoses*] represents itself first as a material correlative of the poet's own body, but moves towards the opposite conception of itself as outliving the poet's body not as a material or corporeal substitute, but in the immaterial form of disembodied voice. (Farrell, p. 128)

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[41] Ovid, *Tristia; Ex Ponto*, trans. by A. L. Wheeler, Ovid in Six Volumes, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), VI, 24-5.

How then do we interpret such a metamorphosis as horizontal, metonymic or syntagmatic? According to Ovid, Narcissus's body becomes 'a flower – behold | White petals clustered round a cup of gold' ('croceum pro corpore florem | inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis', III. 509-10). One would have to provide a fairly imaginative interpretation in order to aver that the flower is in some way redolent of the 'essence' of Narcissus, in other words, a reading that 'syntagmatic metamorphosis' would not allow. Petrarch's re-membering of the metamorphosis is more liberal in this sense as the beloved is clarified through metamorphosis into an image of herself: her body becomes body-text, and ultimately, through the inclusion of Narcissus, text alone, which constitutes a clear linear progression.

Both Narcissus and Actaeon see themselves in mirrors and are disjected, as Vickers illustrates, 'Narcissus fails to recognize and adores an image, Actaeon knows and despises an image' ('Body Re-membered', p. 107). In both cases the act of seeing ('veder') is viewed as the annihilating source of metamorphosis, and yet both wish to prolong that median state. *Rs* 52 and 45 are extended moments of transformation which often find the spatiotemporality of the poetic form at odds with the flux of the content. The alluring danger of sight is its ability to suspend both the seeing subject and the perceived object within the temporal *intermezzo* of metamorphosis.

It is exactly this specular threat, in particular from what Petrarch terms Laura's 'murderous mirrors' ('i micidali specchi', *Rs* 46. 7), that hangs over the *Rime sparse's* re-membering of Medusa in *Rs* 39:

Io temo sì de' begli occhi l'assalto
ne' quali Amore et la mia morte alberga,
ch'i' fuggo lor come fanciul la verga,
et gran tempo è ch'i' presi il primier salto.

Da ora inanzi faticoso od alto
loco non fia dove 'l voler non s'erga
per no scontrar chi miei sensi disperga
lassando, come suol, me freddo smalto.

Dunque s' a veder voi tardo mi volsi
per non ravvicinarmi a chi mi strugge,
fallir forse non fu di scusa indegno.

Più dico, che 'l tornar a quell ch'uom fugge
e'l cor che di paura tanta sciolsi
fur de la fede mia non leggier pegno.

(I so fear the assault of those lovely eyes where Love and my death dwell that I
flee them as a boy the rod; and it is a long time since I first leapt to flee.
From now on there is no place so laboriously high that my desire will not seek
to mount, in order to avoid one who disperses my every sense and leaves me
cold as stone as she does.
Therefore, if I have turned back late to see you, in order not to come near her
who destroys me, it is a failing perhaps not unworthy of pardon.
I say more: my returning to what one flees and my freeing my heart of so great
a fear were no small pledge of my faithfulness toward you.)[42]

The poet-lover, following the examples of Daphne and Actaeon, once more takes flight ('i'fuggo'), although whereas Actaeon fled following his glimpse of the verboten, Petrarch's 'Io' flees prior to it, or rather flees in order to escape 'the assault of those lovely eyes' ('de' begli occhi d'assalto') which seek to objectify and thereby render him creatively impotent.[43] Vision is again synonymous with dismemberment and scattering ('miei sensi disperga'), whilst paradoxically providing a source of unity. As in the metamorphosis of Battus in *Rs* 23 the poet-lover becomes petrified with lust ('Io temo [...] me freddo smalto'), and is rendered solid, tangible, real.

The sonnet is characteristically prey to various reflections and revolutions, turns and counter-turns as Laura's sublimation arouses both fascination and repulsion; the sublime being both attractive and terrifying. Her image is suspended between Bakhtin's 'grotesque' and 'classical' bodies, just as Medusa – in Ovid's account – became horrific because of her great beauty:

The grotesque body is 'unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits'; it is
'not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries'. The classical body is,
on the contrary, an image of 'finished, completed' man [...] But historically, as

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[42] This sonnet was written during Petrarch's first residence at Vaucluse, during June-July 1337 and February 1341.

[43] Petrarch did actually 'flee' from Avignon (where Laura lived) to Vaucluse.

Bakhtin notes, they were not fixed and immutable. They were indeed diacritical, each in turn formed by the redrawing of the boundaries of the other. [44]

Laura's body, by this definition, is certainly grotesque, as it is scattered throughout, indeed forms the landscape of, Petrarch's poetic interior; it 'transgresses its own limits' by being constantly metamorphosed into the internal exterior (such as the laurel, or the breeze), and by pointing beyond itself to other Ovidian body-texts. The poet-lover, by extension, comes to represent the completion of the classical body, as he becomes a statue ('me freddo smalto'), created by the petrifying gaze of the Laura-Medusa's 'begli occhi' in a reflection of the subject's own erotic speculation. When she is scattered, he is complete, but as we have seen, this also works in vice versa in order to render the artist, the sitter and the work indistinguishable from one another.

The turn at the *volta*, however, restores the artist's status by reinstating him as the viewer and Laura as the viewed: 'I have turned back late to see you' ('a veder voi tardo mi volsi'). We will recall that Perseus defeated Medusa by using his shield as a mirror in which he could look (in)directly at the gorgon; the reflection of the *volta* here serves as the mirror-shield of Petrarch's salvation, and so in the sestet he finds himself once again looking upon his beloved. Furthermore, the division of the object into 'you' ('voi') and 'her [who]' ('chi') suggests that Petrarch has in fact reversed Medusa's original metamorphosis and restored her to her former glory, thereby removing both her threat 'and freeing my heart of so great a fear' ('e 'l cor che di paura tanta sciolsi'). This regression is reinforced by the correlation between the recurrent eroticized descriptions of Laura's blonde tresses – such as the 'biondo capel' of *Rs* 52, which 'knotted naturally in curls or artificially in braids, binds the lover to her, both body and soul' (Marks, p. 243) – and Ovid's account of the gorgon's pre-

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[44] Peter Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed', in *Rewriting the Renaissance*, pp. 123-42 (p. 124). The quotes which Stallybrass includes are from *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 26-7, 320.

metamorphic beauty in book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, which brought her the unwanted attentions of Poseidon: 'Her beauty was far-famed, the jealous hope | Of many a suitor, and of all her charms | Her hair was the loveliest' ('clarissima forma | multorumque fuit spes invidiosa procorum | illa, neque in tota conspectior ulla capillis | pars fuit', IV. 794-7).

IV

The roles of artist and model have metamorphosed in accordance with the reflective relationship which exists between subject and object, despite the poet-lover's subjugation of Laura-Medusa via the mirror of the form. And it is this questioning of the status of artist and model that forms the basis of the final myth I will consider, one which aptly mirrors that of Medusa, and which concerns itself with the cyclical nature of aesthetic reconfiguration:

> Quando giunse a Simon l'alto concetto
> ch' a mio nome gli pose in man lo stile,
> s'avesse dato a l'opera gentile
> colla figura voce ed intelletto,
>
> di sospir molti mi sgombrava il petto
> che ciò ch' altri à più caro a me fan vile.
> Però che 'n vista ella si monstra umile,
> promettendomi pace ne l'aspetto,
>
> ma poi ch' i' vengo a ragionar con lei,
> benignamente assai par che m'ascolte:
> se risponder savesse a' detti miei!
>
> Pigmaliòn, quanto lodar ti dei
> de l'imagine tua, se mille volte
> n'avesti quel ch'i' sol una vorrei! (*Rs* 78)

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

times what I yearn to have just once!)[45]

The tale of Pygmalion, the artist whose adored sculpture is vivified by Venus, is sung

by Orpheus in book X of the *Metamorphoses*:

                           qua femina nasci
nulla potest, operisque sui concepit amorem.
[...]
ars adeo latet arte sua. miratur et haurit
pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes.
[...]
oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque
et credit tactis digitos insidere membris
et metuit
[...]
ut rediit, simulacra suae petit ille puellae
incumbensque toro dedit oscula: visa tepere est;
admovet os iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat:
temptatum mollescit ebur positoque rigore
subsidit digitis ceditque
[...]
dum stupet et medio gaudet fallique veretur,
rursus amans rursusque manu sua vota retractat;
corpus erat

([He] gave it perfect shape, more beautiful
Than ever woman born. His masterwork
Fired him with love.
[...]
Such art his art concealed. In admiration
His heart desired the body he had formed.
[...]
Kisses he gives and thinks they are returned;
He speaks to it, caresses it, believes
The firm new flesh beneath his fingers yields
[...]
And he went home [from Venus' festival], home to his heart's delight,
And kissed her as she lay, and she seemed warm;
Again he kissed her and with marvelling touch
Caressed her breast; beneath his touch the flesh
Grew soft, its ivory hardness vanishing
[...]
His heart was torn with wonder and misgiving,
Delight and terror that it was not true!
Again and yet again he tried his hopes –
She was alive!) (X. 248-289)

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[45] According to Wilkins 'the portrait of Laura painted for Petrarch by Simone Martini, must be subsequent to Simone's going to Avignon, for which 1335 is the earliest possible date [...] the Simone Martini sonnets, Nos. 77 and 78 – took place probably not later than [September 1336]' (*The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, pp. 89-91).

Petrarch's treatment of the Pygmalion myth encapsulates all of the *Rime sparse*'s thematic preoccupations: the impossibility of re-membering the beloved, and her displacement by the body-text; the tantalizing intangibility of the visual (in relation to the corporeal); the infinite concatenations of desire and the failure of language. Pygmalion, we will recall, decided to create the perfect woman in order to provide a 'classical' female counterpoint to the 'grotesque' moral turpitude of the Propoetides — the first prostitutes, who so disgusted him. Pygmalion's statue-made-flesh is literally the 'adversario', the inverted image of the Propoetides, whose carnal impropriety resulted in their being transformed 'to stones of flint' ('in rigidem parvo silicem', X. 242). Yet their degradation into prostitution was itself a punishment for daring to deny the divinity of Venus ('obscenae Venerum Propoetides ausae | esse negare deam', X. 238). The implication is that the Propetides' speech constitutes their transgression, and is in turn conflated with their decision 'to prostitute their bodies' charms' ('corpora cum forma primae vulgasse feruntur', X. 240). Indeed, the statue's inability to speak preserves her chastity as female aphonia, in the late-medieval and early-modern periods, came to be symbolic of moral (sexual) purity, in an apparent extension of the tropology which conjoins rhetoric with body:

> Silence, the closed mouth, is made a sign of chastity. And silence and chastity are, in turn, homologous to woman's enclosure within the house [...] The signs of the 'harlot' are her linguistic 'fullness' and her frequenting of public space. (Stallybrass, pp. 126-7)

Thus Petrarch wishes, like Pygmalion, to create the perfect, pure woman only in order to defile her, as he wishes for 'voice and intellect along with form' ('colla figura voce ed intelletto'). Yet he knows this is impossible, if the 'figura' did possess 'voce ed intelletto' no doubt she would then be no better than what the poet-lover considers to be 'most vile' ('fan vile'). The two paragons, of immorality (the Propoetides) and virtue (Galatea, as the statue came to be known), converge upon the eroticized body

by means of a chiasmic metamorphosis in which flesh and stone, representing the materials of nature and art respectively, exchange positions. The poet-lover's position, by extension, is unclear, as his desire, 'what I yearn to have just once!' ('quel ch'i' sol una vorrei!'), vacillates between the perfection of Galatea and the licentiousness of the Propoetides, between body-text and body.

Yet Pygmalion's statue is not only an alternative, 'classical' body to the 'grotesque' public *corpora* of the Propoetides, it also serves as a surrogate for Eurydice, as John Heath argues:

> In Orpheus' ideal world, art and passion combine so powerfully that they can bring the dead to life – Eurydice would be restored in the re-write. Nowhere is this more clear than in the famous tale of Pygmalion, where Orpheus carefully recreates his own story, but this time with a happy ending. [...] In Ovid's account of Orpheus, the loving poet (*amans*, 57) feared failure, grew anxious to see the fulfillment of his wishes, and was stupefied at his failure (*stupuit*). Orpheus, the magical quickener of stone, is symbolically turned to stone as his wife reverts from flesh to corpse. Pygmalion is symbolically turned to stone as he vitalizes the ivory statue of his wife-to-be. [...] We listen to a disenchanted and failed bard create a tale of an enchanted and triumphant artist. The sentiment is understandable, but the victory resides only in Orpheus' imagination.[46]

Petrarch understands all too well that 'the victory resides only in Orpheus' imagination', and that the absent beloved cannot be re-membered through art. The poet-lover's appropriation of Pygmalion's tale serves only to reinforce his alignment with Orpheus, who was petrified by the realization that Eurydice would forever be lost to him:

> non aliter stupuit gemina nece coniugis Orpheus,
> quam tria qui timidus, medio portante catenas,
> colla canis vidit; quem non pavor ante reliquit,
> quam natura prior, saxo per corpus oborto.
>
> (The double death of his Eurydice
> Stole Orpheus' wits away; (like him who saw
> In dread the three-necked hound of Hell with chains
> Fast round his middle neck, and never lost
> His terror till he lost his nature too

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[46] John Heath, 'The Stupor of Orpheus: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10.64-71', *The Classical Journal*, 91 (1996), 353-70 (pp. 368-70).

And turned to stone). (X. 64-7)

The poet-lover, as we witness repeatedly throughout the *Rime sparse*, realizes himself through petrifaction, 'per corpus oborto', and in doing so confirms not only his desire for the *verboten* body, but also its displacement by the body-text, which Orpheus configures through Galatea. However, in the tale told by Ovid's Orpheus, the statue does come to life, and as such provides catharsis. Petrarch's body-text, by comparison, does not come to life, and so rather than assuaging his desire becomes the focal point of his sexual-textual frustration. It is only from this frustrated intertextual perspective that we can begin to read, or re-read, *Rs* 78.

The sonnet itself is concerned with Simone Martini's famous portrait of Laura, now aptly lost; another absent image. Laura is disembodied by 'the high idea' ('l' alto concetto') at the outset, and usurped by 'the noble work' ('l' opera gentile') in the third line, as part of an ongoing process of erasure: the sonnet effectively traces the beloved's transposition into that 'nonplace of the imagination' of which Mazzotta spoke. Nobility is concomitant of the work's lack of 'voce ed intelletto', just as aphonia is often the product of metamorphosis, yet in the poem, 'l' opera' is in fact a reflection of language – the body-text. Martini's image, like the signifier, is another present absence, the tantalizing quality of which arises from the fact that it is a visual absence, which evolves into a tangible absence through the introduction of the Pygmalion myth.

The sonnet's central metamorphosis, however, is not the transformation of the opera-signifier into the model-signified, but the transformation of the poet-lover into Pygmalion; although the sonnet carefully sets in place a number of caveats which guarantee the failure of the metamorphosis. Firstly, as we have seen in the opening stanza, the 'figura' does not come to life, as Galatea did; but perhaps more

importantly, Pygmalion had no sitter. The model is absolutely crucial to Petrarch's appropriation of the myth, as the poem signifies yet another failed re-membering of Laura. Pygmalion's figure was an imagined ideal: whereas Petrarch repeatedly figures a present absence, Pygmalion successfully created a presence out of absence, *creatio ex nihilo*. The poet-lover attempts to re-member Laura's body by textualizing it, and simultaneously re-member the already textualized body of Ovid's Galatea. Moreover, Petrarch unites the two versions of the Pygmalion myth: in one Pygmalion is simply a man, a king in fact, who falls in love with a statue which Venus brings to life, in another he is the sculptor of that statue.[47] Petrarch's metamorphosis fails because he cannot decide which Pygmalion he is to become. The focus upon Simone de Martini's portrait would suggest the former myth of the man in love with the artwork he did not create, although the very act of sonnet composition suggests the latter. This failure to be either is confirmed by the inclusion of the sculptor's name in the final tercet; if the signifier (Pygmalion's name) is present, then the signified (the successful metamorphosis into Pygmalion) must be absent.

However, this does not prevent Petrarch from attempting to vivify the work. The second quatrain opens with 'sospir molti', which suggest the breath of life; in Ovid's myth Galatea comes to life as Pygmalion is kissing her, symbolically imbuing her with his *pneuma* in an act of metensomatosis.[48] Petrarch, like Pygmalion, half-believes that the work has become animated; 'she seems humble' ('si monstra umile'), 'she seems to listen' ('assai par che m'ascolte'). But unlike Pygmalion the poet-lover does not have his wish granted, 'if only she could reply to my words!' ('se

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[47] As Heath posits, 'It has long been noted that Orpheus (or Ovid) apparently deserves credit for transforming the tale from a king's perverse and consummated lust for a statue to an exemplar of the power of an artist' (p. 369).
[48] Farrell refers to the classical trope of the textual *corpus* being brought to life by literary metensomatosis: 'the literary corpus is likened to a dead body from which spirit is released either to live in performance or, perhaps, to animate new poetic *corpora* through intertextual means' (p. 132).

risponder savesse a' detti miei!') Again the 'risponder' to 'detti miei' would also signify the promise ('promettendomi') of sexual release, the end of fore-pleasure and the beginning of end-pleasure, as chastity and silence are synonymous. Petrarch thus wishes for and fails to achieve the suspended erotic moment of Galatea's *incarno*. The final stanza presents, therefore, another bitter anti-climax, tinged with bathos, which reveals Petrarch's all too human aspirations: 'you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once!' ('se mille volte | n'avesti quell ch'i' col una vorrei!') The portrait has been a great success, a tortuous fixed reminder of Petrarch's sexual-textual failure.

V

This recurrent pattern of frustrated desire exposits the ability to re-member and the failure to realize the Ovidian *corpora* as being characteristic of the *Rime sparse*. Each metamorphosis excludes either the poet-lover, the beloved, or both, and in doing so negates its purpose in the process; each transformation is intended as the creation of an internalized landscape in which lover and beloved, subject and object, signifier and signified are reconciled and united, and yet the flux of metamorphosis ensures that this will remain forever unachieved. For Petrarch, metamorphosis is not a fixed state (as Solodow posits), nor is it reversible (as Perry argues), but rather it is a linear process which finds itself travelling along the line of a circle. As such each metamorphosis must necessarily metamorphose into another until it returns to the point at which it began: from Daphne through Actaeon, Narcissus, Medusa and Pygmalion, before returning to Daphne, but with the acquired knowledge of those contiguous transformations. The cycle always begins again but always from an altered perspective. There is thus a reasoning behind the numerical structure of the *Rime*

sparse: the world takes 365 days to complete a full revolution and return to its *terminus a quo*; Petrarch's sequence contains 366 *rime* – ergo we have already began the first day of the following year by the time we reach the end, and so have no option but to begin again. To read Petrarch's *Rime* is to involve oneself in a world of endless flux, a world that keeps on turning.

And yet this will not suffice for the poet-lover, whose 'double consciousness', as Charles Trinkaus terms it, cannot allow desire to dilapidate into an autoreflexive linguistic concupiscence.[49] Christian penitence and redemption, which serve as the contrapuntal metanarrative to Ovidian eroticism in the *Rime sparse*, demands that the poet-lover's desire must move beyond its immediate object (Laura), or rather that the desired earthly object must serve as a median point between the human and the divine; in other words Laura must apotheosize into Beatrice. Yet this is not as straightforward a process for Petrarch as it was for Dante in *La Vita Nuova* and the *Commedia*. The poet-lover is reluctant to convert his desire for the creature (*cupiditas*) into love for the Creator (*caritas*), but rather seeks to combine the two. This problem, but also its possible resolution, is implied in the myth of Pygmalion. Pygmalion's 'simulacra' is an idol to Orpheus's dead wife, who is revived when the statue comes to life, as Ovid informs us that the 'goddess graced the union she had made' ('coniugo, quod fecit, adest dea', X. 295). For Petrarch, writing in the exegetical *aetas Ovidiana*, the marriage of Pygmalion and Galatea may have symbolized the sanctification of desire, represented by Venus's presence at the 'coniugo', through the sacrament of marriage. However, Pygmalion's marriage to Galatea exists only in the realm of the poetic interior created by Orpheus; in the

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[49] Charles Trinkaus, *The Poet as Philosopher: Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 27.

internal exterior of Ovid's text Orpheus remains bereft. Petrarch's poet-lover must then attempt to succeed where Orpheus failed, and where he himself failed in *Rs* 78. Rather than attempt to re-member the beloved's corporeal form via the body-text, which can only embody displacement, the poet-lover must arrange a symbolic marriage between himself and his beloved within the textual sphere, whereby the two bodies will be united within one poetic form. This still entails a re-membering, but one that is aware of the pitfalls of the metamorphic Ovidian (pagan) subtext – in which linguistic flux undermines form – and which is validated by the Christian metanarrative – in which all signs and forms find their end in the divine Logos. The fate of Orpheus's wife, who was bitten by a serpent and descended into the underworld, must metamorphose into the fate of Adam's wife, who was tempted by a serpent and fell from grace.

Chapter 2
Petrarch and Laura: *Duo in Carne Una?*

Et ait: Faciamus Hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostrum [...] Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam: ad imaginem Dei creavit illum: masculum et feminam creavit eos [...] Quamobrem relinquet homo patrem suum, et matrem, et adhaerebit uxori suae: et erunt duo in carne una.

(Genesis 1. 26-7; 2.24)[1]

Et dixit: Propter hoc dimittet homo patrem et matrem et adhaerebit uxori suae, et erunt duo in carne una. Itaque jam non sunt duo, sed una caro. Quod ergo Deus conjunxit, homo non separet.

(Matthew 19. 5-6)[2]

In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum [...] Et verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis.

(John 1.1; 1. 14)[3]

I

The metamorphic multiformity of the poet-lover's sexual-textual desires, discussed in the previous chapter, is underpinned by a transgression born of the *Rime*'s contrapuntal Christian discourse: namely idolatry. It is the poet-lover's continuous attempts to reconcile his desire for 'my idol carved in living laurel' ('l'idolo mio scolpito in vivo lauro', *Rs* 30. 27) with his belief in and desire for salvation that constitute what Sara Sturm-Maddox has termed the sequence's redemptive and confessional subtexts, and which provide an alternative metanarrative of the body-text.[4] This chapter will then trace Petrarch's unsuccessful endeavour to endow the

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[1] 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness [...] So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them [...] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.'
[2] 'And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.'
[3] 'In the beginning there was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us'.
[4] See chapters 4 and 5 of *Petrarch's Metamorphoses: Text and Subtext in the Rime sparse* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985), pp. 65-126. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

body, and the body-text which displaces it in the *Rime sparse*, with a form of sanctity that will validate his carnal, paganistic desires.

Such corporeal beatification can only be legitimated through a form of synthesis or "marriage", which is a development of Ovidian subject-object interchangeability. What is intended by "marriage" is the poet-lover's projected union with the beloved, in which she is the animating principle to his poetic and corporeal matter. The *corpora* of the poet-lover and the beloved, the subject and object of desire, are conflated, becoming 'one flesh' ('duo in carne una'), the concept of which is underpinned by the Aristotelian notion of the "whole man".[5] The immediate literary model for such a symbolic union is that of Dante and Beatrice:

> In the *Vita Nuova*, the opposition or conflict between passion and reason disappears in favor of a synthesis upon which is founded the entire premise of the work, literary as well as ideological; with the affirmation of reason's role and the young poet's renunciation of his dependence on the response of his lady, Dante assigns to Love a new role of guide and counsellor, one that anticipates the alignment of his love for Beatrice with divine love in the *Commedia*. (Sturm-Maddox, p. 81)

Petrarch is unsuccessful precisely because he does not fully subscribe to stilnovistic salvation through the synthesis of 'passion and reason', but remains fundamentally Augustinian. Laura is loved for her corporeal beauty, not for her soul or for God's sake, as is evidenced by the repeatedly frustrated attempts to re-member her body as text. The poet-lover's desire is based upon earthly *cupiditas*, not heavenly *caritas*, it is directed towards the creature and not the Creator, and the union it seeks is essentially

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[5] It must be stressed that Petrarch admired the Stagirite, and frequently cites a number of his works, although he distrusted the reduction of knowledge to syllogism, which he saw the scholastics as propounding under the banner of Aristotelianism. See *On his own ignorance and that of many others* (in *Invectives*, pp. 222-363): 'Aristotle, a sweet and pleasant writer to whom they have given a scaly hide' (I. 11). Petrarch would have known Aquinas's commentary on *De Anima*, and could not have failed to be influenced by the fusion of Aristotelianism and Christianity that was a mainstay of late-medieval thought (although obviously he was not influenced to the same extent as Dante). And despite Petrarch's references to the Platonic concept of the soul's imprisonment in the body as set out in the *Phaedo* (of which Petrarch possessed a Latin translation) – see for example *Rs* 264. 7-8, *Fam.*, II. 5 or *Sen.*, XII. 2, in which he refers to 'the body, that great enemy and prison of the soul' – he also tends frequently towards the fusion of the body-soul knot (*nodo*), especially in his discussion of Laura. See Diane Marks, 'The Veil and the Knot: Petrarch's Humanist Poetic', in *The Rhetorical Poetics of the Middle Ages: Reconstructive Polyphony: Essays in Honor of Robert O. Payne*, ed. by John M. Hill and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 241-57.

copulative in the corporeal sense.[6] We may thus consider Petrarch's projected union with Laura in the terms which Virgil applies to the "marriage" of Dido and Aeneas: 'She called it a marriage; she used this word to screen her sin' ('coniugum vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam', *Aeneid*, IV. 172).[7]

Nevertheless, these self-delusional attempts at union provide a further intertextual dimension to Petrarch's figurative strategies and his conceptualization of the body-text function, as the indeterminate semantic cycle of Ovidian body-signifiers are sublated by a semiotics which locates its endpoint in the Divine *Logos* and its inspiration in the Word made flesh ('verbum caro factum'). The impious pleasure which the poet-lover takes in Laura's body-text is both antonymic to and intertwined with his need to validate that pleasure. The result is that there are not only two metanarratives overshadowing the *Rime sparse* – the Ovidian and the Judaeo-Christian – but also two sign systems, which stand in opposition to, and may only exist through, one another: these may be termed the semiotics of *cupiditas* and the semiotics of *caritas*. The semiotics of *cupiditas* have their basis in idolatry, whereby the signifiers used by the poet-lover to configure the body-text are directed towards the textualized beloved who can only produce what Kristeva terms 'an objectification of the pure signifier, more and more emptied of meaning' (p. 140). Laura signifies desire, which is the birthplace of signification. She signifies the signifier and as such embodies Petrarch's 'desire for language' (Kristeva, p. ix); body-text replaces the body as both aetiology and teleology of lust. However, such an objectification necessitates 'dodging the paternal, sacrificial function' (Kristeva, p. 140) of language, in that the beloved displaces the Divine Word as the terminus of signification. Indeed, the semiotics of *cupiditas* demands the impossibility of such a terminus, preferring

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[6] The two terms appear in book II of Augustine's *Confessions*.
[7] See Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by W. F. Jackson Knight (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), p. 102; Virgil, *The Aeneid*, ed. by J. W. Mackail (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 138.

instead a cyclical, lingering pleasure being taken in the body-text's continual disjection and re-membering.

Desire for Laura is spiritual death, as Augustinus says to Franciscus in the *Secretum*, Petrarch's fictional Platonic dialogue between the Saint and himself, 'familiarity with Venus precludes the contemplation of God' (*Sec.*, p. 43). For the poet-lover desire is text, and as he cannot stop himself from producing the text of his *cupiditas*, he must seek a median solution to this *'banishment-love'*:

> This then will be the only love – one that is possible, one that is true: neither satyric, nor Platonic, nor intellectual. But *banishment-love* [...] Banishment: above/beyond a life of love. A life always off to one side, at an impassable distance, mourning a love. A fragile uncertain life [...] It is a life apart from the paternal country where nonetheless lies the obsessed self's unshakeable quiet, frozen forever, bored but solid [...] Against the modifying whole of the father's Death, one chooses banishment toward the part constituting a fallen object or an object *of* love [...] How trivial, this object of love – transposition of love for the Other [...] the Other [...] is Death; it always was [...] A missing (grammatical or discursive) object implies an impossible subject: not I [...] the act of writing, without me or you, is in fact an obstinate refusal to let go of the third person: the element beyond discourse, the third, the 'it exists', the anonymous and unnameable 'God', the 'Other'. (Kristeva, pp. 148-53)

Kristeva effectively encapsulates here the primary elements of Petrarch's dilemma, and its possible resolution. Love of Laura constitutes *'banishment-love'*; Petrarch's 'miserable exile' ('misero esilio', *Rs* 45. 7) is always 'at an impassable distance' from the beloved, who will not reciprocate a desire which exiles the subject from God's 'paternal country'. As we see in the Ovidian sonnets, desire fragments, but the realization of frustrated desire solidifies by locating the self not only *in* but also *as* exile, away from requited passion, 'frozen forever, bored but solid'. The *Rime*'s Christian subtext configures Laura as the exemplary 'fallen [...] object of love', Eve, who causes Petrarch-Adam's fall *through* love, or rather through concupiscent corporeal desire, in accordance with medieval exegesis of the Fall narrative. The 'father's Death' is synonymous with the purpose of the Incarnation – by which Christ's crucifixion redeemed the Fall – as the Father and the Son are one with the Holy Spirit in Catholic doctrine. This death must be chosen over the *'banishment-*

love' that constitutes 'transposition of love for the Other'. By choosing the 'father's Death' over the spiritual death of concupiscence the poet-lover may be entitled to the consequent Resurrection.

Yet the abandonment of *cupiditas* and its accompanying semiology is not as straightforward for Petrarch as it was for Dante. Petrarch's attempts at synthesis, the textual marriage of poet-lover and beloved, although ostensibly following the stilnovistic model, remains focused on the corporeal rather than the spiritual. The union attempted by the poet-lover aims to do away with the 'object' and the 'subject', replacing the discrete body-texts of "you" and "I" with "we" and in doing so re-establishing links with 'the third person: the element beyond discourse', God Himself. As marriage validates the copulation of 'duo in carne una', so the poet-lover endeavours to create a symbolic textual union between him and Laura which will be justified by Christian doctrine.

However, this is a case of having one's cake and eating it. Marriage legitimates spiritual copulation, which entails the union of *corpora* as 'one flesh', but doctrine does not allow for *cupiditas* within that union.[8] The bodies must be joined in an act of *caritas*, for the love of God. As Augustinus avers in the *Secretum*, 'While [men] thought that they could keep one foot on earth and one in heaven, they found they could neither stay down here nor rise up there' (p. 87). The choice must be made: *cupiditas* or *caritas*, which brings us to the semiotics of the latter.

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[8] Medieval preachers averred that 'there are four kinds of marriage, namely: carnal, sacramental, spiritual, and eternal' ('quod sunt 4 genera nuptiarum, scilicet nuptie carnales, sacramentales, spirituales, eternales'), and that 'The first marriage is culpable and detestable [...] the consummation is hateful and full of pain' ('Prima nuptie sunt culpabiles et detestabiles [...] consummation exosa et penosa'). See D. L. d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage Sermons: Mass Communication in a Culture without Print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 248-9. The warning against uxoriousness or its converse, indeed any concupiscence within matrimony, stems from Augustine's proclamation in *De bono coniugali* that 'it is disgraceful to make use of a husband for purposes of lust'. See *The Good of Marriage* (*De bono coniugali*) in Saint Augustine, *Treatises on Marriage and other Subjects*, trans. by Charles T. Wilcox (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1955; repr. 1969), pp. 9-51 (p. 16).

John Freccero has discussed Petrarch's relationship with Augustinian semiotics in an article which argues for the concupiscent idolatry of the poet-lover's autoreflexive poetics as an alternative linguistic methodology:

> For Saint Augustine, consciousness begins in desire. To discover the self is to discover it as in some sense lacking, absent to itself, and desire is the soul's reaching out to fill the void. This reaching out toward an as yet unspecified object is at the same time the birth of language, or at least of the paralanguage of gesticulation, literally a reaching out toward signification. [...] The ultimate end of Desire is God, in Whom the soul finds its satisfaction. The ultimate end of signification is a principle of intelligibility whereby all things may be understood. God the Word is at once the end of all desire and the interpretant of all discourse. [...] As all desire is ultimately a desire for God, so all signs point ultimately to the Word. In a world without ultimate significance, there is no escape from the infinite referentiality of Signs. [...] Short of the Word made flesh, there can be no bridge between words and things.[9]

Freccero juxtaposes Augustine's fig tree – under which the Saint's conversion took place in book VIII of the *Confessions*, one of Petrarch's favourite texts and a major influence upon the *Rime sparse* – with Petrarch's laurel tree. The former, Freccero posits, represents 'the tradition of textual anteriority that extends backwards in time to the Logos and forward to the same Logos at time's end' (p. 37), whilst Petrarch's laurel (Laura) is autoreflexive, oriented towards the poetry that produces it, and is thereby idolatrous. The laurel signifies the desire which produces the signifier, which denies God as the 'ultimate end of signification', in that it 'stands at once for a unique love and for the poet who creates it, its circular referentiality, like that of the Trinity [...] cannot be transcended at a higher order' (p. 38). And although the poet-lover realizes that he must make a choice between the idolatrous semiotics of *cupiditas* which indulges in 'the word itself' ('la voce stessa', *Rs* 5. 10) and the semiotics of *caritas* which posit God the Word as the *telos* of signification, he nevertheless perseveres with his self-delusion that an *intermezzo* may be achieved. However, it may be argued that the delusion of sexual-textual copulation or symbolic marriage between poet-lover and beloved is a necessary part of the conversion process, the

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[9] John Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics', *Diacritics*, 5 (1975), 34-40 (p. 35). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

poet-lover's appropriation of Augustine's famous plea in book VIII of the *Confessions*, that God 'Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet' (VIII, 7. (17)), which realizes itself in the opening sonnet's retrospection of 'my first youthful error' ('mio primo giovenile errore', 3).[10]

II

Yet there remains the need to clarify the relationship between Petrarch's concept of matrimonial symbolism, the configuration of the body-text in the *Rime sparse*'s 'redemptive subtext', and the sonnet form itself. Why is marriage important to Petrarch (in the *Rime sparse* at least)? And why use the sonnet form as a means of illustrating that importance? It is important because of its centrality to Petrarch's view of the relationship between Man and God. Petrarch had no desire to objectify theology as the scholastics had done – God cannot be thought of as separate from man, and vice versa. Mankind is created in God's image, but, crucially, Genesis informs us that 'in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them' ('ad imaginem Dei creavit illum: masculum et feminam creavit eos'). Man and woman *together* constitute the divine likeness: 'him' ('illum') in this instance refers to humanity as a whole, 'male and female' ('masculum et feminam') is added as a rejoinder in order to prevent man from supposing that it is only he, and not woman, who holds the privileged position of being created in God's image.[11] This is reinforced by the emphasis placed upon male and female union in Genesis 2. 24; the conjunction of father and mother, man and wife in perfect concord. This alone achieves an emulation

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[10] See Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 145. For the original Latin see Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. by James J. O'Donnell, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), I, 96. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[11] As many medieval clerics claimed. Others, such as Robert de Sorbon, did not. See Erik Kooper, 'Loving the Unequal Equal: Medieval Theologians and Marital Affection', in *The Olde Daunce: Love, Friendship, Sex and Marriage in the Medieval World*, ed. by Robert R. Edwards and Stephen Spector (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 44-56. See also 1 Corinthians 11.

of the Creator's indivisible unity, 'wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh' ('Itaque iam non sunt duo, sed una caro'), as Christ posits in Matthew 19.6.

Moreover, the poet, being the creator of images and likenesses, aspires to Godhead, or at least a greater knowledge of the divine – consciously or unconsciously – in accordance with poetry's etymology (from *poiein*, to create). Petrarch emphasizes this view in the *Invective contra medicum*:

> Among the pagan nations, the first theologians were poets. This is attested by the greatest philosophers, confirmed by the authority of saints, and indicated by the very name of poet, if you don't know. [...] 'But they did not attain the goal they sought,' someone will object. I admit it. For the perfect knowledge of the true God is not the result of human study, but of heavenly grace. Still, we must praise the spirit of these zealous people. For they clearly yearned to attain the coveted heights of truth by the paths available to them. (III. 137)[12]

However, if the mortal artist is to emulate the Divine Author, then they must also emulate the fusion of male and female as 'duo in carne una'; the male poet cannot succeed alone, hence the necessity of poetic marriage. In other words, the poet must balance male and female elements within his (or her) creation in order to imitate the union of male and female within His creation. This concept of poetic union, in addition to denying male creative supremacy, also counters the opposing argument that 'in the Petrarchan vision, poetizing is a surrogate form of female creativity, a virtual theft of a distinctively female mode of creation'.[13] Yet it is important to stress the textuality of the union; this is a desired conjunction *within the sequence*, and as such an attempt to apply a virtuous *ratio* to a base physical impulse which has been

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[12] By 'the greatest philosophers' Petrarch primarily means Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I. 3; the 'authority of saints' refers to Augustine, who in *De doctrina Christiana*, I. 6-7, argues that, 'For God, although nothing worthy may be spoken of Him, has accepted the tribute of the human voice and wished us to take joy in praising Him with our words [...] All men struggle emulously for the excellence of God'. See Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, trans. by D. W. Robertson Jr (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. 121. For the original Latin see William M. Green, ed., *De doctrina Christiana*, Sancti Aureli Augustini: Opera, VI. 6 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963), p. 121. Future citations will be included in the body of the text. The etymology of 'the very name of poet' is a reference to Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, VIII. 7. 1-3 (see Introduction, p. 5).

[13] Margaret Brose, 'Petrarch's Beloved Body: "Italia Mia"', in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 1-20 (p. 14).

subsumed by language, as *verba et res* repeatedly interchange for Petrarch.[14] Outside

of the sequence, bearing in mind this complex interfusion of textual and actual,

Petrarch could not have married Laura – not only was she already married, but in

1330, three years after his *innamoramento*, 'deciding that he must after all do

something for a living, Petrarch took minor orders in the Church (thus renouncing

matrimony)'.[15] Legally, Petrarch could not have married Laura, yet this does not deny

the essential union which he perceives – or rather desires – between them.[16] Petrarch

depends on Laura as a means of reaching the divine just as Dante found *Paradiso*

through his love for Beatrice. The beloved is the first rung, as it were, on the

Neoplatonic ladder to heaven, at least in theory. And although Petrarch had not read

the *Symposium*, he was familiar with the concept of the Platonic ladder through the

Neoplatonism of Cicero and Augustine and the osmotically inherited Platonism of the

troubadours, who received Platonic ideas from Arabic scholars in Muslim Spain. The

ladder simile is related by Diotima to Socrates, who in turn relates it to the

symposium:

> 'Like someone using a staircase, he should go from one to two and from two to all
> beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from practices
> to beautiful forms of learning. From forms of learning, he should end up at that form
> of learning which is of nothing other than *that* beauty itself, so that he can complete
> the process of learning what beauty really is. [...] So what should we imagine it
> would be like', she said, 'if someone could see beauty itself, absolute, pure, unmixed,
> not cluttered up with human flesh and colours and a great mass of mortal rubbish, but
> if he could catch sight of divine beauty itself, in its single form?'[17]

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[14] The idea that 'concupsicence may be brought under a lawful bond' by marriage may be found in Augustine's *De bono coniugali*, VI (Wilcox, p. 16).

[15] Kenelm Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 4. The fact that Petrarch had debarred himself from marriage perhaps explains some of his later, sporadic anti-matrimonial sentiments (which are characteristically balanced by pro-matrimonial sentiments); the decision may also have been influenced by a young man's falling in love with a woman who could never return his feelings, although both of these factors can only be conjectural.

[16] Petrarch's concept of his union with Laura is in many ways dependent upon his reading of Cicero's *De Amicitia*. See Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Essays on Old Age and Friendship*, trans. by William Melmoth (London: Richardson, 1807), pp. 215-308 (pp. 240-1). See also *Sen.*, I. 3; I. 6; III.1; V. 2, as examples of this work's influence.

[17] See *Symposium*, 211c-e, trans. by Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 49. This is essentially a variation upon the famous Theory of Forms, which first appeared in the *Phaedo*, which Petrarch did read, along with the *Timaeus*, and which was further expounded by the *Republic*. See also

Each act of poetic creation thus becomes a voyage of discovery made through an emulated act of creation; man can only discover that which has already been created by the Divine Author. As such 'the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and Godhead' ('Invisibilia enim ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur: sempiterna quoque eius virtus et divinitas', 1 Romans 20).[18] All poetry, if we are to follow Petrarch's Augustinian account of its genesis, thus becomes an attempt to reach or emulate the Creator, and in the process regain some of the ground lost through the Fall, which the poet-lover re-enacts in his narrative. As Charles Trinkaus has argued in relation to the humanism which developed out of what he terms Petrarch's 'theologia poetica':

> the capacity and drive of man to command and shape his world was regarded as an emulation of divinity, since it was in this respect that man was created in the image and likeness of God [...] more important than man's experience of a *liberum arbitrium* was the energy of his will and mind itself with which he was divinely endowed in the image of his Maker [...] God's great act of creation of this universe left man in command of the earthly portion of it, and it was through man's actions as a god on earth that the creative work of history and civilization was to be accomplished.[19]

Poetry is the act of creating, or rediscovering, words, or The Word, and to know words is to understand the nature of the body, as 'the Word was made flesh' ('verbum caro factum est').

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[18] *Rs* 360's discussion of 'mortal things, which are a ladder to the Creator' ('le cose mortali | che son scala al Fattor', 138-9).

[19] Augustine posits a direct correlation between Paul's statement and Platonic thought in *City of God*, VIII, 6. See Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 308. For the original Latin see *De Civitate Dei*, ed. by B. Dombart, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1877-92), I, 329-31 (p. 331).

Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), pp. xx-xxii. See chapter XV. 2 ('*Theologia Poetica* and the *Prisci Poetae* in Petrarch and Boccaccio'), pp. 689-97, for an account of Petrarchan *theologia poetica*. See also chapter 4 of Trinkaus' *The Poet as Philosopher: Petrarch and the Formation of Renaissance Consciousness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), entitled, '*Theologia Poetica* and *Theologia Rhetorica* in Petrarch's *Invectives*', pp. 90-113.

However, as Freccero points out, 'Short of the Word made flesh, there can be no bridge between words and things'; although that does not curtail the attempt.[20] Furthermore, the body is the instrument humans are condemned to use in the attempt to build this unachievable bridge, as Augustine describes his infancy in the opening book of the *Confessions*:

> I threw my limbs about and uttered sounds, signs resembling my wishes, the small number of signs of which I was capable but such signs as lay in my power to use: for there was no real resemblance. (I. 5 (8))

Petrarch also uses 'the paralanguage of gesticulation', his 'limbs' and his 'sounds', both of which are linked by the physical and textual connotations of *membra*, in order to emulate that which is inimitable.[21] Yet the corporealization of text also entails its eroticization, and the body-text which ideally ought to pay homage to the Divine Author is repeatedly tainted by the idolatry of *cupiditas*.

But how and why does the sonnet form express this link between the body, marriage and the divine? As Christopher Kleinhenz has argued, of the 366 poems in the sequence, it is the '317 sonnets that provide the form and essence of the poetic *corpus* of the *Canzoniere*', as through the form's 'graceful symmetry'

> Petrarch was able to capture the lyrical quality of his desires and aspirations, to express his internal conflict between love and reason and his simultaneous quest for earthly glory and spiritual salvation, and to compress the rhetorical intensity of moral and political invective. [...] the sonnet presents all that is earthly and ephemeral [...] the canzone all that is divine and changeless [...] This paradoxical interchange of poetic modes is striking, for in it we may understand Petrarch's real intention: to 'eternalize' the earthly by means of a fixed form and to 'humanize' the eternal by means of a variable form.[22]

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[20] Freccero is drawing upon Saussure's famous dichotomy between signifier (word) and signified (thing): '*the linguistic sign is arbitrary* [...] the signal is *unmotivated*: that is to say arbitrary in relation to its signification, with which it has no natural connexion in reality'. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. by Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983; repr. 2005), pp. 67-9.
[21] The original Latin of Augustine's statement makes the link much more obvious through its juxtaposition of 'membra et uoces, signa similia voluntatibus meis' (see O'Donnell's edition, p. 5).
[22] See 'Petrarch and the Art of the Sonnet', in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*, ed. by Aldo Scaglione (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1975), pp. 177-91 (pp. 177-90). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

The sonnet form, like its corporeal counterpoint, compresses, contains and shapes the human experience. And it is not only that the sonnet is a 'skeletal model', as Paula Johnson termed it, formulated upon 'a design so perfectly adapted to the human frame that it has never been fundamentally changed since its invention', but also that the sonnet is perfectly adapted to the notion of Divinity as emulated by the marriage of male and female.[23] The sonnet form represents a perfect bipartisan unity constituted by two halves – unequal, but halves nevertheless – and, as such, offers the ideal poetic analogue of the marriage sacrament as Petrarch envisaged it.[24] The octave may be read as signifying the male, the sestet the female (or vice versa), just as the paradigmatic dimension of the sonnet is metrically masculine (exactly 14 lines) compared to the syntagmatic femininity of the hendecasyllables; all of which conjoin to form the whole that is symbolic of the perfect unity of the Divine. As Kleinhenz argues, 'the sonnet more than any other had the intimations of an eternal form: rigid in structure, stable in rhythm, sublime in musicality, and adaptable in content' (p. 190).

Dante had offered a similarly symbolic model in the form of the *terza rima*, itself redolent of the indivisible Trinity and the cosmos divided into *Inferno, Purgatorio*

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[23] The quotations are from Paula Johnson, *Form and Transformation in Music and Poetry of the English Renaissance* (London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 64, and Michael Spiller, *EMS*, p. 7, respectively (see Introduction, pp. 12, 17). Petrarch, unlike Dante, never discusses the sonnet form from a critical perspective, but rather allows the sonnets to speak for themselves.

[24] See for example, *Fam.*, XXII. 1, in which Petrarch emphasizes to Pandolfo Malatesta the Younger – who has asked Petrarch's advice on whether he should marry – the 'unum' formed through the reciprocal adoption of each other's image and likeness. However, Petrarch highlights in this epistle the fact that he himself never married (although that didn't stop him from fathering two children). It must also be stressed that Petrarch's opinion of matrimony varied throughout his life, despite his asseveration in *Sen.*, XV. 3 that '[I have been] always single-minded on this point', referring to a lengthy misogynist attack upon marriage. This letter is duly followed by one celebrating the news of a Neapolitan couple being 'united in splendid wedlock' (*Sen.*, XV. 4). The fact that Petrarch meticulously purged and edited his collections suggests that he intended the juxtaposition of these antithetical positions, reinforcing his concept of internal division as the locus of selfhood. In any case, Petrarch viewed his union as being both beneficial and detrimental; initially a source of redemption, finally an error or delusion which necessitates penitence – the *Rime sparse* thus enact the varying approach to matrimony which we find in the Latin works and the epistles.

and *Paradiso*.[25] Considering the dependence upon marriage symbolism in the *Rime sparse*, no other poetic form could have sufficed. For example, had Petrarch not been writing from a humanist perspective, but from its scholastic counterpoint, he would perhaps have employed the tripartite strophic Ode form (with strophe signifying thesis, antistrophe as antithesis, and epode as synthesis). However, had Petrarch been writing from a scholastic viewpoint the choice of form would have been irrelevant; it is his humanist credentials which allow us to place such importance on his chosen poetic medium. The traditional critique of humanism, that it places too much emphasis on form at the expense of content, has been successfully refuted by Trinkaus:

> The point the humanists made about the form of scholastic thought was that it made the content incomprehensible and therefore incommunicable and useless – not that form alone mattered [...] It needs to be added that, however much individual humanists were committed to the vacuities of contentless form of which they have been accused, their principles were derived from those of ancient rhetoric, especially Cicero's. Resting their case on these, they insisted on the inseparability of rhetoric and philosophy, of form and content, and argued that form without content was nonsense and not even form. (*In Our Image and Likeness*, p. 24)[26]

The sonnet by its very nature serves as a testament to the indissoluble union of form and content, the two cannot be put asunder without being detrimental to both. Indeed, the inherent symbolism of the form ensures that it is not only necessary to content, but actually constitutes it. In the sonnet, form not only guarantees that content cannot become 'incommunicable and useless', but rather it *is* content, the medium embodies the message it conveys. The sonnet thus becomes the 'perfect artistic creation, as an end in itself, a life force which, reflecting yet remaining separate from its maker, would continue to exist through time' (Kleinhenz, p. 191).

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[25] See John Freccero, 'The Significance of Terza Rima' in *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento, In Honor of Charles S. Singleton*, ed. by Aldo S. Bernardo and Anthony L. Pellegrini, (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), pp. 3-17.

[26] See *On his own ignorance* for Petrarch's defence of rhetorical form against charges made by Scholastics: 'They [Aristotelians] deviate and depart so far from their leader that they think eloquence an impediment and a disgrace to philosophy. But in fact Aristotle considered it a great ornament and strove to unite eloquence and philosophy, incited, we are told, by the glory of the orator Isocrates' (II. 11).

And yet, despite Petrarch's distaste for Peripateticism, the relation between form and content in the sonnet also bears an affinity with the Aristotelian concept of "the whole man"; *id est* the combination of form and matter as set out in *De Anima*. The sonnet form, like the Aristotelian form, is the principle of motility, that which gives life to matter (content), or as in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the soul which animates the body. *Rs* 15, for example, offers one of the *Rime sparse*'s earliest discussions of the marriage of form and matter, body and soul, through the relation of subject to object and in doing so illustrates the sequence's reconciliatory thematic.[27] The physical distance between poet-lover and beloved, although stressed by the content, is contracted by the parameters of the form:

Io mi rivolgo indietro a ciascun passo
col corpo stanco ch' a gran pena porto,
et prendo allor del vostr'aere conforto
che 'l fa gir oltra, dicendo: 'Oimè, lasso.'

Poi ripensando al dolce ben ch'io lasso,
al camin lungo, et al mio viver corto,
fermo le piante sbigottito et smorto,
et gli occhi in terra lagrimando abbasso.

Talor m'assale in mezzo a' tristi pianti
un dubbio: come posson queste membra
da lo spirito lor viver lontane?

Ma rispondemi Amor: 'Non ti rimembra
che questo è privilegio degli amanti,
sciolti da tutte qualitati umane?'

(I turn back at each step with my weary body which with great effort I carry forward,
and I take then some comfort from your sky, which enables my body to go onward,
saying: 'Alas, woe's me!'
Then, thinking back on the sweet good I leave behind, on the length of the road and
the shortness of my life, I stand in my tracks dismayed and pale and lower my eyes
weeping to the ground.
At times in the midst of my sad laments a doubt assails me: How can these members
live far from their spirit?
But Love replies to me: 'Do you not remember that this is a privilege of lovers,
released from all human qualities?')

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[27] The order of the *Rime sparse*, far from being 'scattered', was constantly revised up until Petrarch's death in 1374. However, *Rs* 15, according to E. H. Wilkins, was written in Petrarch's early period (between Spring 1326-December 1336/January 1337). See 'A Chronological Conspectus', in Wilkins' *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951), pp. 347-59. I adhere to Wilkins' dates throughout.

Rs 15 is reminiscent of the sequence's proemical sonnet in its oscillation, and in this sense is truly peripatetic. Indeed, the back and forth motion of the sonnet is augmented by the inverted metrical foot which opens it, 'Io mi'; and so from the outset we have a sense of moving backwards in order to proceed. Also, by opening with 'Io' the poem declares itself to be a meditation upon the nature of self, an investigation into what constitutes 'I'. The findings of this investigation depend on the union of body and soul, or matter and form; divinity and humanity; male and female; the 'Io' formed through interaction with the other, as in the metamorphic poems.

The primary constituent of the 'Io' is poetry, signified by 'each step' ('ciascun passo'), as with every metrical foot the poet-lover writes in the name of *cupiditas* he steps further into error and further away from his inherent divinity, recrossing that ground which Man has put between himself and the Fall. Poetry, here signified by the retrograde steps which in fact carry both the poetical and the corporeal forms forward, is then itself symbolic of the erring spirit, in that the desire expressed by its signifiers is born of *cupiditas*, rather than *caritas*. The autoreflexive concatenations of an eroticized poetics, synonymous with the sonnet form, do not lead as in the Augustinian model to *Logos*, but rather descend into an indeterminate 'rivolgo indietro', which is equivalent to 'the voice itself' ('la voce stessa') of *Rs* 5, as discussed in the previous chapter. Petrarch himself testifies to this indeterminate 'concatenation of loops' in the *Triumphus Cupidinis* when he declares that the poet-lover 'leads his harsh and bitter life beneath a thousand chains and a thousand keys' ('mena sua vita aspra ed acerba | sotto mille catene e mille chiavi', I. 86-7); as soon as one chain or *catena* is unlocked another is added.[28]

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[28] Francesco Petrarca, *Triumphus Cupidinis*, in *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. by Ferdinando Neri and others (Milan: Ricciardi, 1951), pp. 481-508 (p. 484). The translation is my own.

The secondary constituent, inextricable from the first, is 'my weary body' ('corpo stanco'). However, the body here is ostensibly separated from the speaking 'Io' to the extent that it becomes a burdensome possession or punishment of the self rather than a continuation of the animating principle. The 'corpo' is something that has to be borne by the 'Io' as penance for lust ('ch' a gran pena porto').[29] And yet if we are to maintain that 'ciascun passo' is to be taken as referring also to metrical feet, then the 'corpo' which is carried forward by them becomes the sonnet itself, which cannot be entirely extricated from the 'Io' who is incorporated by it, and yet inhabits a separate space. Thus there is the principle of motility that exists behind the 'Io', which may be considered to be the form – in both the Aristotelian and the poetic sense – and the body that is animated by it, which is also the sonnet's spatiotemporal existence outside of the psyche.

Yet there is a third element that appears, aptly, in the third line, which is necessary to catalyse the union of body (matter) and soul (form), and constitute the emulative poetic trinity: 'vostr' aere'. Durling translates this as 'your sky', although Petrarch more frequently opts for *cielo* when referring to the skies or the heavens. If we are to read it as 'your air', however, there is less incongruity between this and what has gone before. There is no question that the addressee signified by 'your' ('vostr'') is the beloved, but what does her 'aere' signify? 'Your air' may be read as "your song" or *aria*, that is the sonnet's 'corpo stanco', which, as we have seen, exists both within and apart from the narrative 'Io'. In this sense the act of poetic composition provides catharsis, a source of 'conforto' found in the realignment of 'aere' and 'corpo'. However this poses problems for the following line; how can the sonnet signified by 'vostr' aere' enable the sonnet previously signified by 'corpo stanco' 'to go onward'

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[29] This is essentially the view expounded by Plato in the *Phaedo*.

("l fa gir oltra')? Through the union of the two as 'duo in carne una'.[30] This union is achieved through our further understanding of 'aere' as being an oblique reference to the breath of life, akin to the *pneuma* which animated Galatea. In this instance the beloved breathes life into the poet-lover's weary body just as God breathed life into Adam, allowing it to 'fa gir oltra'.[31] Laura-Eve is thereby elevated to divine status, woman partakes of man's "likeness" of the Creator in that she becomes the female spirit-form to the male body-matter.[32] This also holds true with the autoreflexive interpretation of the sonnet: Laura is the animating principle of the shared body-text as she is its inspiration, in both senses. Thus in the opening quatrain Petrarch sets in place the emulation of the divine via the shared 'carne' (synecdochal "being") of the lover and the beloved, who are thereby conjugated as husband and wife. Yet this elevation in fact goes against the poet's faith, returning as it does to the blasphemy and idolatry of the Ovidian subtext – although the marriage of lover and beloved is an attempt to spiritually circumscribe the relationship – hence the quatrain's plaintive closing, '"Oimè, lasso"', which returns us to the 'Io' following the implicit union.

The second quatrain, however, reverses the direction of the poem once again, this time mentally, in a reflection of the physical (formal) turn which opened the sonnet. The poet-lover does not 'turn back' ('rivolgo indietro'), but is 'thinking back' ('ripensando') to 'the sweet good I leave behind' ('al dolce ben ch'io lasso'), namely God – although 'dolce ben' may be misread as referring to Laura. Retrospect again results in forward motion, as he considers 'the length of the road and the shortness of

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[30] Petrarch, like Augustine, would have understood 'carne' ('flesh'), in the Scriptural sense, as being metonymic of the whole 'man'. See Augustine's reading of Galatians 5. 16-21 in *City of God*, XIV. 2: 'There are, in fact, many other ways in which [Scripture] uses the noun [...] among these different uses is its employment to denote man himself, that is, the essential nature of man, an example of the figure of speech known as "part for whole" [...] It is on these lines that we interpret this passage, "And the Word became flesh." that is, "became man"'. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[31] Genesis 2. 7. See also the previous chapter's discussion of the Pygmalion myth (pp. 67-73).
[32] Thereby reversing the concept of 'dator formarum [...] the masculine principle that imposes shape on the shapeless feminine matter' (Spearing, p. 96).

my life' ('al camin lungo, et al mio viver corto'), which lie before him. As we witnessed in the opening quatrain, each step the poet-lover takes toward his earthly beloved takes him further from his heavenly beloved, hence the necessity of marriage as a means of achieving both. Yet the question of intention troubles the poet-lover's conscience, he is placing *cupiditas* over *caritas* and disguising it to himself as a symbolic spiritual union. The realization of such self-deceit shocks him to a standstill: 'I stand in my tracks dismayed and lower my eyes weeping to the ground' ('fermo le piante sbigottito et smorto | et gli occhi in terra lagrimando abbasso'). This admission that he desires a corporeal rather than a spiritual union is expounded by Augustinius's criticism of Franciscus in the *Secretum*:

> Franciscus: [...] Don't you realise that you are talking of a woman who, untouched by worldly preoccupations, burns with the desire for heavenly things; in whose appearance, if truth is anywhere to be found, there shines the pattern of divine beauty; whose ways form a perfect model of honour? [...] as I've already said – I have not loved her body more than her soul [...] If I had loved her body more, then my affections would have altered a long time ago.
> Augustinus: Are you serious? You mean that if that same mind had been in an ugly gnarled body, you would have loved it just as much?
> Franciscus: I wouldn't go so far as to say that. The soul is not visible, and a body like that wouldn't have given promise of such a soul. But if the soul were visible, then I certainly would love a beautiful soul in an ugly body.
> Augustinus: You're playing with words. If you can only love what you see, then you have loved her body. (*Sec.*, pp. 58-64)

The sonnet form is itself a means of 'playing with words' which, via the body-text, reproduces 'the pattern of divine beauty' and the 'perfect model of honour'; Petrarch takes wordplay very seriously. Hence the emphasis on the earthly ('in terra') and self-abasement ('abbasso'), which both draws the eyes down from heaven and the octave to a halt, presaged by 'fermo' in its penultimate line.

The *volta* turns the poet away from his delusion, resulting in the 'doubt' ('dubbio') which assails him at the beginning of the sestet, or the middle of the poem ('Talor m' assale in mezzo'). This doubt concerns the core of the union – how can lover and beloved be united yet apart: 'How can these members live far from their

spirit?' ('come posson queste membra | da lo spirito lor viver lontane?') Yet in addition to the question of how the matter of the body-text may exist when separated from its animating principle or form, there lies the question of which direction the narrator is to take having reached this spiritual bifurcation: does the 'spirito' reside with the Creator or with the beloved, with *caritas* or *cupiditas*? Also, to which *corpus* is the narrator referring? The answers to both of these questions lie in our reading of 'these members'. 'Queste membra' are those which constitute the body-text, 'membra' being the plural of the Latin syntactical term *membrum* discussed by Augustine in the final book of *De Doctrina Christiana*: the word is truly made flesh.[33] The opening tercet of the sestet thus becomes a solidifying reflection of the ideas expressed in the octave; the beloved is the 'spirito', form or animating principle of the narrator's 'corpo stanco', of 'queste membra', and both elements taken together form the sonnet's body-text.

The reply to the question, which arrives in the sonnet's closing tercet, is unsatisfactory; although the answer is, to an extent, irrelevant. Rather the import lies in the identity of the respondent: 'Ma rispondemi Amor'. It is the personified pagan Love of classical mythology who replies: the specific name is absent, it is not Eros or Cupid, but 'Amor'. Again the relevance lies in what is implied, the possibility that the poet-lover has made his decision – *cupiditas* over *caritas*, Laura over God. The sonnet may end with an answer but leaves us with a number of questions. The idea of the union of poet-lover and beloved, for example, is unresolved: can heaven be reached through love, can the beloved serve as a true means of both emulating and glorifying the Divine Author? Does the response that lovers are 'released from all human

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[33] See D. W. Robertson's introduction to *On Christian Doctrine*: 'St. Augustine refuses to supply his readers with a set of rhetorical rules, but he does call attention to certain ornaments of speech which are found in the Bible as well as in the works of pagan authors. In particular, he shows the effective use of *caesa*, *membra*, and the *circuitus* in scriptural texts. [...] A *membrum* contains a complete meaning and a complete rhythm, but the meaning is not complete in relation to the sentence as a whole [*circuitus*]' (p. xix).

qualities' ('sciolti da tutte qualitati umane'), bring them closer to or further away from divinity? These answers are left to the wider sphere of the sequence. A crucial notion, however, has been metamorphosed from the Ovidian subtext into its 'redemptive' counterpoint: Petrarch's view of the relation between *verba et res*, or rather *verba et corpora*.

III

It is through the *in morte* sonnets that Petrarch fully develops the concept of his symbolic conjugation with Laura. Not only does Laura's death harmonize the relationship by limiting it to one soul and one body, but also any memories of her indifference to the poet-lover can be revised and idealized, each remembered encounter edited to the extent that Laura's life – as related by the sequence – becomes an act of deliberate misprision.[34] Indeed, the death of the beloved serves almost to consummate the union, as 'ceremonies and rituals of death are now seen to be similar in many respects to ceremonies and rituals of marriage'.[35] Jerome Mazzaro has illustrated a similar process in the works of Dante:

> it is clear that, if the events of the *Commedia* are meant to be autobiographical, Dante sees his own spiritual development in terms of a constant bond with the memory of Beatrice which, however initially close to violating the sixth and ninth commandments, comes to resemble a 'mystical marriage'. Rather than God, memory

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[34] Although Laura's death in April 1348 may be conversely seen to rupture, if not dissolve, the union; see *Rs* 48: 'my one soul in two bodies depends' ('un' alma in due corpi s'appoggia', 6).

[35] See Trevor Dean and Kate Lowe's introduction to *Marriage in Italy, 1300-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 'Recent work has suggested that the rituals were similar because they were both part of the same cycle that started with women as brides and ended with them in their widows' weeds. However some brides failed to live long enough to complete the second part of the equation as widows, and were participants in the twin rites of passage as bride and corpse' (p. 21). This of course has implications for the coincidence of Laura's death upon the anniversary of her "marriage" to Petrarch (Good Friday 1327/1348). Dean and Lowe's text contributes to a major re-examination of medieval marriage rites and customs which has emerged in recent years. See also Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997); Conor McCarthy, ed., *Love, Sex and Marriage in the Middle Ages: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2004).

of her provides an almost continual presence, transforms his higher faculties in respect to their mode of operation, and supplies the habitual image of virtue.[36]

However, it soon becomes clear that Dante's union with Beatrice represents an untenable counterpoint to Petrarch's re-membering of his relationship with Laura. The poet-lover of the *Rime sparse* cannot seem to convert his *cupiditas* into *caritas* as Dante did in his progression from the *Vita Nuova* to the *Paradiso*. Yet it is precisely this struggle, this failure to emulate the Dantean or stilnovistic ideal, which sets the *Rime sparse* apart. The reader is fascinated by the poet-lover's attempts to justify his concupiscence within the larger context of a spiritual obligation, and how it drives him onwards, often towards delusion, as Sturm-Maddox has noted:

> it is evident in the *Rime* not only that the poet's early love for Laura is characterized by desire but also that the desire that continues unabated despite her negative response or her lack of response is not ended even by her death. As when first confronted with the fact of Laura's inaccessibility, so after her death he continues to pursue a fixed, detached image, resisting her definitive absence as he had attempted to transcend temporary separation. And now he goes further: he attempts to create a personal Laura, fantasizing a love relationship and addressing his poems to the absent beloved. Now the fantasy intensifies: beyond lamenting that death has denied him the opportunity to reveal his love in old age to a sympathetic Laura, he further imagines that she had loved him secretly during her life and that now she eagerly awaits him in heaven. (pp. 59-60)

The key to Petrarch's *theologia poetica* is the necessity, authenticity and paradoxical universality of the subjective experience, as determined by an Augustinian *theologia rhetorica* which decrees that 'If those who hear are to be moved rather than taught, so that they may not be sluggish in putting what they know into practice and so that they may fully accept those things which they acknowledge to be true, there is need for greater powers of speaking' (*De doctrina Christiana*, IV. 4). Yet the narrator of the *Rime sparse* attempts to rewrite his experience following the death of the beloved, which threatens the validity of his overarching philosophy. The indefinite absence of

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[36] Jerome Mazzaro, 'From Fin Amour to Friendship: Dante's Transformation', in *The Olde Daunce*, pp. 121-37 (p. 124).

the beloved creates unlimited possibility, and effectively removes the only obstacle that stood in the way of their "marriage": Laura's consent.

The images of union thus intensify in the *in morte poems*, as we see in *Rs* 275:

Occhi miei, oscurato è 'l nostro sole,
anzi è salito al Cielo et ivi splende,
ivi il vedremo, ancora ivi n'attende
et di nostro tardar forse li dole.

Orecchie mie, l'angeliche parole
sonano in parte ove è chi meglio intende.
Pie' miei, vostra ragion là non si stende
ov' è colei ch' esercitar vi sole.

Dunque perché mi date questa guerra?
Già di perder a voi cagion non fui
vederla, udirla et ritrovarla in terra.

Morte biasmate; anzi laudate Lui
che lega et scioglie, e 'n un punto apre et serra,
et dopo 'l pianto sa far lieto altrui.

(My eyes, darkened is our sun, rather it has risen to Heaven and there shines, there we
shall see it again, there it awaits us and perhaps is pained by our delay.
My ears, the angelic words are sounding in a place where there is someone who
understands better. My feet, your province does not extend to where she is who used
to make you work.
Therefore why do you fight against me? I was not the reason that you can no longer
see her, hear her, and find her on earth.
Blame Death; rather, praise Him who binds and looses, and in an instant opens and
closes up, and after weeping can make one glad.)[37]

The emphasis here is on Petrarch's subscription to the Pauline notion of corporeal interdependence as expressed in I Corinthians 7. 4, and the dilemma faced by the union following the death of a partner: if 'the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife' ('vir sui corporis potestatem non habet, sed mulier'), and vice versa, where does this leave the poet-lover and the body-text?[38] This dilemma may explain Petrarch's continuing fixation with Laura's physical perfection, as the absence

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[37] Wilkins files this sonnet under those which 'do not seem to be assignable with any considerable degree of probability to any particular period' ('A Chronological Conspectus', p. 358).
[38] Petrarch's conception of 'duo in carne una' would also have been influenced by Paul's assertion in Ephesians 5. 25-8 that husbands should love their wives 'even as Christ also loved the Church [...] as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.' ('sicut et Christus dilexit Ecclesiam [...] diligere uxores suas et corpora sua. Qui suam uxorem diligit, seipsum diliget'). Petrarch was a devotee of St Paul, declaring him at one point to be 'the greatest [thinker] of them all' (*On his own ignorance*, V. 134).

of the beloved *corpus* negates the union, putting asunder as it does the 'carne una'. The poet-lover must re-member the image of the *belle membra* in order to maintain not only the marriage, but also his own existence as the 'redemptive subtext' re-enacts the threat of annihilation posed by the narcissistic Ovidian 'specchio' of *Rs* 45.

Rs 275 thus opens with 'My eyes' ('Occhi miei'), which initially symbolize realization, as in the proemical sonnet ('Ma ben veggio', *Rs* 1. 9), yet this is nullified following the caesura, 'darkened is our sun' ('oscurato è 'l nostro sole'). The sonnet is an address by the 'Io' to the body, an apology for the beloved's absence which effects a contrapuntal structure of call and response. The image of the eclipse inherent in 'oscurato', which I prefer to read as 'obscured' rather than 'darkened' considering the lines that follow, provides a potent elegiac image; the 'sole' is dead, and as such no sublunary life may survive. That is, the poet-lover, who has so often signified "earthly" desires, cannot survive without the nurturing illumination of his 'sun', which draws him out of the earth and towards Heaven. Yet there is optimism in the following line as the moon passes and the 'sun' rises again into a higher 'Cielo', where it resumes its vivifying emanation. The symbolic death ('oscurato') and rebirth ('anzi è salito al Cielo et ivi splende') of the sun clearly represents the beloved's progress from the darkness of mortal existence to the splendour of life everlasting; *id est* the body's rebirth in everlasting glory, which on earth is dimly reflected by the sonnet's monument.[39]

However, the concluding lines of the opening quatrain emphasize that the bond between the two remains intact: 'there we shall see it again, there it awaits us and perhaps is pained by our delay' ('ivi il vedremo, ancora ivi n'attende | et di nostro tardar forse il dole'). The pain suffered by the lover's body (matter) here on earth is

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[39] See *Triumphus Eternitatis* for a further meditation on Laura's resurrection; see also Foster, pp. 42-3.

mirrored by the 'dole' felt by the beloved's spirit (form) in Heaven, suggesting an adherence to the Pauline concept of union.

Yet despite the fact that the poet-lover's animating principle is already in Heaven, the emphasis on sensual aesthetics continues in the second quatrain, as the narrator addresses his ears ('Orecchie mie') and his feet ('Pie' miei'). The sonnet thus reveals itself to be an evolution of the *effictio* tradition,[40] but rather than provide an eroticized catalogue of the beloved body-text, the poet-lover lists his own senses, which would be affected by the beloved, and which are striving to recall her through corporeal memory. Thus after each sense there comes a recalled stimulus: sun ('sole') follows eyes ('Occhi'); 'angelic words' ('l' angeliche parole') follow ears ('Orecchie'). The senses themselves are remembering, and mourning, hence the stimuli following the receptors, not the reverse.[41] Yet to what extent can feet ('Pie'') be considered sensory? As with 'each step' ('ciascun passo') in *Rs* 15, 'my feet' ('Pie' miei') here may be read as referring also to the metrical feet which constitute the rebellious *corpus* (the word *piedi* was used to refer to poetic feet in fourteenth-century Italy, particularly in relation to the stichs or distichs which constitute the sonnet's octave). This is borne out by the conclusion of the quatrain: 'your province does not extend to where she is who used to make you work' ('vostra ragion là non si stende | ov' è colei esercitar vi sole'). Again we are presented with the idea of the marriage of beloved and lover – signifying form and matter – within the poetic receptacle. Laura's position as the animating principle of the body-text is reasserted, as she moved 'Pie' miei' both physically and metrically, being the source of inspiration. 'Pie'' thus symbolize

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[40] 'those formal, part-by-part descriptions of a beautiful lady recommended by the medieval *artes poeticae*: but attributed as it is to the poem's first-person narrator, it conveys an especially strong impression of eroticism, with the sense of sight invoking fantasies of the other senses [...] the detailed, point-by-point, largely pictorial description'. A. C. Spearing, 'The Medieval Poet as Voyeur', in *The Olde Daunce*, pp. 57-86 (pp. 78-80). I will return to the *effictio* in chapter 4.

[41] Petrarch refers to adolescence's response to 'the stimuli of lust' in *Sen.*, XII. 1.

both corporeal and psychic motility, they are the body and the mind: that which relies upon the senses and that which attempts to override them.[42]

We are thus prepared for the explicit reference to the *psychomachia* that opens the sestet, as the body wages war on the narrative 'Io'.[43] Here we are faced with the quandary of what constitutes 'mi' following the departure of the animating principle. Despite the octave's protest to the subjective body that 'she [...] who used to make you work' ('colei ch' esercitar vi sole') has departed, there remains an 'Io' who is narrating the poem. The solution lies in the concept of the beloved as constituting the form of the union, as opposed to the matter signified by 'terra', who still shines ('splende'), that is animates, from Heaven ('Cielo'), as we saw in the opening quatrain.[44] Yet the senses mourn the aesthetic stimulus of the beloved body; their complaint is that they can 'no longer see her, hear her, and find her *on earth*' ('non fui vederla, udirla et ritroverla *in terra*' [my italics]).

However, the narrative 'Io' assuages the body in the closing tercet by referring it to that which it fears ('Death' 'Morte') and that which it loves, ('Him', 'Lui', the Creator). As in *Rs* 15, the final response seems anticlimactic, but is in this instance at least beyond dispute. There is the suggestion of the union's dissolution via the inclusion of 'binds and looses' ('lega et scioglie'), which echoes Christ's position in

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[42] See chapter 3 of John Freccero's *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 29-54, entitled 'The Firm Foot on a Journey Without a Guide', in which he discusses the evidence of a similar theme in the *Inferno*: 'the body must be coaxed along to follow the movement of the mind [...] the spirit is willing but the flesh is fatally weak [...] the association of the feet of the body with the wings of the soul was a commonplace [...] the movement of the soul is exactly analogous to the movement of the body [...] The figure of a man in the act of walking was quite literally the incarnation of the act of choice' (pp. 33-42).

[43] The Petrarchan *psychomachia* is best described by Petrarch himself: 'It is well known that my adolescence and youth were saddened and laden with cares, for parts of my soul were at odds with each other and in continual discord; and in a state of civil war, so to speak, they would upset my life and my peace.' (*Sen.*, VIII. 2). It was Prudentius who coined the term in his work of the same name: see Prudenzio, *Psychomachia*, trans. by Emanuele Rapisarda (Catania: University of Catania, 1962); Macklin Smith, *Prudentius' Psychomachia: A Reexamination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[44] The wording here is akin to Petrarch's conception of divinity glimpsed *in terra*, as expressed in *Sen.*, XVI. 9: 'if I glimpse anywhere in such great darkness even a thin spark of the truth, I feel I have glimpsed new splendor of the sun, and I eagerly hasten there, praising not so much the light itself, but the Author of the light.'

Matthew 19. 6 that 'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder' ('Quod ergo Deus conjunxit, homo non separet'). As Petrarch wrote of Laura's death in his Virgil codex, 'the strongest tie is broken'.[45] Death certainly constitutes 'no man', despite the anthropomorphic personification suggested by the use of the capital, although 'Morte' does follow a full stop, so this remains ambiguous; medieval art did, after all, create the image of the grim reaper.[46] Nevertheless, the finitude of union correlates with the findings of Dean and Lowe, who claim that:

> One of the most interesting aspects of [medieval Italian] marriage is that all marriages come to an end. Marriage is a finite state. [...] Ideally, the end should occur upon the death of either the husband or the wife. (*Marriage in Italy*, pp. 20-1)

However, as the poet-lover avers, the senses should not 'blame Death' ('Morte biasmate'), but 'praise Him' ('laudate Lui'); as it is only He who may join together, so it is only He who may put the union asunder.[47] The sonnet ostensibly ends on an optimistic ('lieto') note, but we know that Petrarch is not yet ready to relinquish the image of Laura, the body-text that he has committed both to personal memory and public posterity.

And so again there is a sense of progression in *Rs* 275, in that the poet-lover is gradually being extricated from a detrimental, because delusional, union which is founded upon *cupiditas*, rather than *caritas* as he would like to believe. Concurrent with this annulment is the institution of a new union, as semiological *cupiditas* becomes intertwined with, and will in the final poem of the sequence – *Rs* 366, the

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[45] See E. H. Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 77, for the entire inscription. See also Marks's discussion of the body-knot: 'The knot represents the body as the quintessentially human union of flesh and spirit which produces animate intelligent beings capable of judgment and action. This knot is composed of two distinct, discrete, and complementary strands, intertwined during life and separated only at death. [...] This knot not only unites Laura's fleshly beauty and spiritual valor, it binds the lover to her as well' (pp. 246-7). Marks's knot is clearly based upon the Aristotelian model of the "whole man" as discussed in *De Anima*.

[46] Death may also be 'no man' in another sense; see *Sen.*, XIII. 9: 'I fight with Death every day; whether she will speedily strike me down, as she has already threatened four times in the space of a year, or hold off for a little while, she will not hold off for long.' This idea of Death as female is perhaps linked to Eve's (and Laura's) conflation with the serpent, which I will discuss subsequently.

[47] God overrides (and determines) Death. Consider the progression of the *Trionfi*: Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and finally Eternity (Divinity).

canzone to the Virgin Mary – concede to the discourse of a poeticized *caritas*. But the sonnet is ultimately inconclusive, as the poet-lover is unwilling to relinquish in spite of Divine Providence. This is indicative of Petrarch's overarching *theologia poetica*: he unites in his thought a faith in Boethian fortune and Divine Providence – which to an extent are independent of one another – but he also asserts the primacy of the will, which responds to, and occasionally rails against, the inevitable. Petrarch implies as much in his invective *Against a Man of High Rank with No Knowledge or Virtue* (*Invecta contra quondam magni status hominem sed nullius scientie aut virtutis*):

> O Fortune, who are omnipotent if such men [Virgil and Cicero] speak the truth, what are you doing? Does the power of your realm extend even here? It is too much. There is nothing omnipotence cannot accomplish, but God forbid that Fortune should be omnipotent. For there is only one who is omnipotent. Indeed, as soon as Fortune sees virtue approach, she surrenders, impotent and infirm [...] So let her [Fortune] transfer to you the honors and wealth that were due to good men. But our intelligence is a gift from God [...] Fortune cannot grant good character, intelligence, virtue, or eloquence. (III. 18-20)[48]

The progression which we witness in the *in morte* sonnets is not only the fantastic consummation of the marriage through the death of the beloved, but also the gradual dissolution of the union, and the struggle of the will to accept it. Divine Providence, unfurling as human Fortune, ensured that Petrarch saw Laura on that fateful day in 1327 – if we are to follow the internal biography of the sequence – and that same Providence grants the poet-lover the intelligence and the will to respond to the encounter.[49] This struggle to comprehend a Providence which ostensibly creates oppositional drives between body and soul, will and reason, fate and individual agency, constitutes the locus of Petrarchan selfhood, as Trinkaus argues:

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[48] See *Invectives*, pp. 180-221 (pp. 194-7).
[49] 'Laura, illustrious through her own virtues, and long famed through my verses, first appeared to my eyes in my youth, in the year of our Lord 1327, on the sixth day of April, in the Church of St. Clare in Avignon, at matins; and in the same city, also on the sixth day of April, at the same first hour, but in the year 1348, the light of her life was withdrawn from the light of day' (*Life of Petrarch*, p. 77). For the significance of the *feria sexta aprilis* in Petrarchan mythopoeia – the day upon which Christ died and upon which the Fall was reported to have taken place – see Bortolo Martinelli, 'Feria sexta aprilis: La data sacra del canzoniere del Petrarca', *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 8 (1972), 449-84.

Central to all of Petrarch's thought is his conception of the situation of man in a universe that was beyond man's understanding. Part of this universe was under the control of fortune; the whole universe was in the hands of Divine Providence; nevertheless fortune, at least as far as man initially experienced it and was able to comprehend it, seemed to operate independently of God. Somewhere caught between his divine destiny and his fortune was the individual man. [...] The physical universe in its operations was in part an instrument of fortune and totally a creation of God, so that ultimately it too involved man in his perennial relationship with his Creator and with fortune. (*In Our Image and Likeness*, pp. 4-5)[50]

This determination to accept his fate can only begin when the poet-lover has understood the nature of the bond from which he is to extricate himself. The self realized through symbolic union, that is "the whole man" composed of matter and form, must be prepared to shake 'the hands of Divine providence'. As Augustinus argues in the *Secretum*, 'It has been shown, not only in relation to the body but in relation to the mind also, that no remedy works if the patient is not already well-disposed' (*Sec.*, p. 71). Furthermore, just as the union was conducted through and validated by the sonnet form, so must it be disentangled via that same poetic medium.

And so in *Rs* 318 we see the poet-lover's first sustained attempt to comprehend the nature of his physical, spiritual and poetical relationships with Laura *in morte*, and thereby instigate the process of extrication:

Al cader d'una pianta che si svelse
come quella che ferro o vento sterpe,
spargendo a terra le sue spoglie eccelse,
mostrando al sol la sua squalida sterpe,

vidi un'altra, ch'Amor obietto scelse,
subietto in me Calliope et Euterpe,
che 'l cor m'avinse et proprio albergo felse,
qual per trunco o per muro edera serpe.

Quel vivo lauro, ove solean far nido
li alti penseri e i miei sospiri ardenti
che de' bei rami mai non mossen fronda,

al Ciel translato, in quel suo albergo fido
lasciò radici onde con gravi accenti
è ancor chi chiami, et non è chi responda.

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[50] Although this is not to say that Petrarch – and by extension mankind – did not attempt to understand the universe and his relationship with the Creator, or that he is incapable of comprehending at least part of Creation (such as the multiformity of the 'Io'). But as Trinkaus posits, the 'blows and gifts of fortune he cared most about were social and psychological' (*In Our Image and Likeness*, p. 5).

(At the fall of a tree that was uprooted as if by steel or wind, scattering on the
ground its rich leaves, showing its pale root to the sun,
I saw another tree, which Love chose as his object in me, which Calliope and
Euterpe chose as their subject in me; it bound my heart and made it its own
dwelling, as ivy snakes along a trunk or a wall.
That living laurel, where my high thoughts used to make their nest and my
burning sighs that never moved a leaf of the lovely branches,
Translated to Heaven, left in that faithful dwelling its roots, whence there is one
who calls out with heavy accents, but there is no one to answer.)[51]

Opening with 'the fall' ('cader') and ending in 'Heaven' ('Ciel'), this remains one of Petrarch's most complex discussions of the nature of body and soul, subject and object, sin and salvation. The opening 'cader' not only refers to the Fall of Mankind and the poet-lover's falling in love, but also focuses on the death of Laura's body; that which he has been so loath to relinquish. The beloved, as the cause of the concupiscent 'cader', signifies Eve – and by extension the serpent[52] – and is thereby synonymous with both the laurel ('Quel vivo lauro') and the tree of knowledge, to the extent that Laura-Eve also becomes the 'tree that was uprooted as if by steel or wind' ('pianta che si svelse | come quella che ferro o vento'). As in the proemical sonnet towards which the sequence is progressing, Laura *is* knowledge.

Conversely, there is the suggestion that the beloved's fate rests *either* with Love *or* with the Creator; the familiar bifurcation (the meaning of the reference essentially pivots upon 'o' in line 2). Yet in this opening quatrain the emphasis remains upon the physical body, and the carnal desire it engenders, with the 'rich leaves' ('spoglie eccelse') that are 'scattered on the ground' ('spargendo a terra') denoting Laura's fine apparel, which is referred to throughout the sequence.[53] The 'pale root' ('squalida sterpe'), by extension signifies the beloved's naked body that lies in the sun

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[51] As with *Rs* 275, no specific date is available for this sonnet.
[52] In Masolino's (1383?-1447?) famous painting of the *Temptation* [of Adam and Eve] (1423-1430), the serpent has a woman's head. See John Hale, *Italian Renaissance Painting: from Massacio to Titian* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), plate 19.
[53] See for example *Rs* 12, 29, 126, 185, 199 and 201. Yet this is also ambiguous, as the beloved's body itself has been referred to as 'the lovely garment of her earthly members' ('la bella vesta | prese de le terrene membra pria', *Rs* 8. 1-2).

('mostrando al sol'), as yet unburied; although we know through previous references, in particular *Rs* 300, that Laura had been interred by this point. The use of the present participle ('mostrando') must then indicate either a revived memory or a fictitious projection of Laura's corpse.[54] Yet despite the potential voyeurism of 'mostrando' ('showing'), the image of Laura's dead naked body is no longer eroticized, as in *Rs* 300 ('How I envy you, greedy earth that embrace her', 'Quanta invidia io ti porto, avara terra | ch' abbracci quella',1-2). The unflattering adjective that the body receives, 'squalida', reinforces the realization inherent in 'cader' – redolent as it is of *cadaver* – that the beloved is gone, and only a corpse remains. As Augustine points out in *The City of God*: 'For, they say, only what can fall can rise again; now bodies fall when they die, in fact corpses are called *cadavera* from the fact that they fall (*cadendo*)' (XX. 10). Laura's body does indeed rise again in glory in the second quatrain, in accordance with the central tenet of Christian doctrine: 'I saw another tree, which love chose as his object in me' ('vidi un' altra, ch' Amor obietto scelse'). Durling's translation elaborates here for the reader's benefit, but perhaps to the detriment of the poem's meaning. The word 'tree' is understandably added as a reminder, stemming from the paronamastic 'pianta' that fell like the poet's tears – as a play on *pianto*, weeping – in the opening quatrain. However, the addition of 'in me' in anticipation of the following line is somewhat superfluous: the line would perhaps be coherently translated as 'I saw another, which Love chose as his object', leading to its

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[54] In his *Life of Petrarch*, Wilkins conjectures as to whether the inscription in the Virgil codex concerning Laura's death in 1348 was made either 'immediately' or 'perhaps somewhat later' (pp. 76-8). I would opt for the latter due to the Babylon reference ('It is time [...] to flee from Babylon'), which Petrarch reserved for Avignon, where he returned to in the autumn of 1351, which is when I would suggest the inscription was made. See also *Rs* 136-138 for Petrarch's virulent attacks on the papal court at Avignon, and the *Invective against a detractor of Italy* (*Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italie*), in *Invectives* (pp. 364-475).

successor, 'which Calliope and Euterpe chose as their subject in me' ('subietto in me Calliope et Euterpe').[55]

The problem of subject-object interchangeability is at issue here: is it the beloved who is both object and subject, or is it the poet-lover? Or is the beloved object, and poet-lover subject? The answer perhaps lies 'in me', in the sixth line. Durling's inclusion of 'in me' in line 5 suggests that he believes both lover and beloved are simultaneously object and subject, as both 'obietto' and 'subietto' refer back to 'un' altra' (the second tree), and yet are also subservient to 'in me'.[56] The key question is whether Petrarch meant 'in me' to pertain not only to 'subietto' but also to 'obietto' in the previous line. This remains ambiguous, with the grammatical entanglement perhaps reflecting the continuance of the union — it may be argued that we are not supposed to separate or distinguish between 'obietto' and 'subietto' at all. Indeed, the notion of the inextricable union extends into the closing lines of the octave. The poet speaks of his heart being bound ('avinse', suggesting both marriage and slavery) in a continuation of the theme of bondage that began in the *in vita* poems, effecting a return to the imagery of the Fall upon which the sonnet opened: 'as ivy snakes along a trunk or a wall' ('qual per trunco o per muro edera serpe').[57] The image — that of the serpent wrapped around the tree of knowledge — is a familiar one in the art of the period, and unlike the 'squalida sterpe' of the opening quatrain, it is eroticized.[58] Once again, the word tree itself (*albero*) is conspicuously absent, and the suggestive 'trunco', which may also be read as the human torso, or synechdochically as the body as a whole, stands in its place. However, the faintly erotic tone is fundamentally

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[55] See for example J. G. Nichols' translation, 'I saw another which Love chose for me, | which all the Muses gave me as a theme', in *Canzoniere* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000; repr. 2002), although this is an equally liberal interpretation. Calliope ("Lovely Voice") and Euterpe ("Gladness") are the muses of epic poetry and lyric poetry/flautism [signifying music] respectively.

[56] Although, grammatically, both are objects in terms of their clausal position in the translation (that is they both follow the copula 'chose').

[57] For examples of the bondage theme see *Rs* 3, 8, 76, 90, 181, 196, 197, 198, 199, 253.

[58] See for example the painting by Masolino mentioned above.

negated by the line's comparison of the laurel tree with the serpentine ivy, a comparison which equates Laura-Eve with the serpent, and thus moves towards the more traditional misogynistic interpretation of the Fall.

Yet, as the sestet's opening tercet shows, in spite of his efforts to associate the dead beloved with 'high thoughts' ('alti pensieri'), the poet-lover cannot fail to affiliate her with idolatry and concupiscence. The memory of 'That living laurel' ('Quel vivo lauro'), not only recalls 'mio idolo scolpito in vivo lauro' (*Rs* 30. 27), but also reminds him that his 'burning sighs' ('sospiri ardenti'), 'never moved a leaf of the lovely branches' ('de' bei rami mai non mossen fronda') – the same leaves that were scattered by the octave. However, in accordance with the sonnet's continual oscillation between heaven and earth, *caritas* and *cupiditas*, the final tercet fixes its sights upon 'Ciel'; whereto the beloved has been 'translato'. The flesh has become Word once again, the body translated back into spirit, into a language which, as the closing lines testify, the narrator does not speak: 'there is one who calls out with heavy accents, but there is no one to answer' ('con gravi accenti | è ancor chi chiami, et non è chi responda').

The sequence is moving ever closer to an acceptance of annulment, the realization that there is and will be no response negates those poems in which Petrarch puts words into Laura's mouth as part of his self-delusion, although this realization simultaneously struggles against the tercet's emphasis upon similitude between poet-lover and beloved.[59] The former becomes 'that faithful dwelling' ('quel suo albergo fido') in emulation of the uprooted tree, with 'albergo' providing a deliberate echo of the *albero* (tree) that has been missing throughout. As such his body-text takes root ('radici') in the hole left by her physical absence, or uprooting ('svelse'). The interchangeability between 'subietto' and 'obietto' thus becomes a necessary part of

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[59] See *Rs* 279, 302, 330, 359.

the extrication process, just as it helped to form the union, as it allows the lover to accept division whilst incorporating the absent other. The poet-lover effectively subsumes the beloved, and thus regains control of his body-text without refuting the Pauline notion of corporeal interdependence.[60]

IV

We have approached the resolution of selfhood and otherness that is so central to the sequence's concatenated unity. The symbolism of 'mystical marriage' not only allows the poet-lover to come to terms with the beloved's death, but also with her life. Furthermore, the process of union, dissolution and incorporation – all conducted through the sonnet form – has brought the poet-lover nearer to a comprehension of divinity through the reconciliation of will to Providence. Yet the development of Petrarch's *theologia poetica*, based as it is upon the universality of subjective experience, has not been free of regret, as we see in *Rs* 354:

> Deh, porgi mano a l'affannato ingegno,
> Amor, et a lo stile stanco et frale
> per dir di quella ch' è fatta immortale
> et cittadina del celeste regno;
>
> dammi, Signor, che 'l mio dir giunga al segno
> de le sue lode, ove per sé non sale,
> se vertù, se beltà non ebbe eguale
> il mondo che d'aver lei non fu degno.
>
> Responde: 'Quanto 'l Ciel et io possiamo,
> e i buon consigli e 'l converser onesto,
> tutto fu in lei di che noi Morte à privi;
>
> forma par non fu mai dal dì ch'Adamo
> aperse li occhi in prima; et basti or questo,
> piangendo il dico, et tu piangendo scrivi.'

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[60] See *Rs* 51 (mentioned in the previous chapter, p. 55) for a precursor of this emulative incorporation: 'I cannot take on her form any more than I have already' ('io non posso transformarmi in lei | più ch' i' mi sia', 5-6). See also *Secretum*: 'She drew my youthful mind away from everything sordid, and called me, as they say, to higher things. How could I have failed to transform myself into some semblance of her whom I loved?' (p. 62).

(Ah, reach your hand to my weary mind, Love, and to my tired frail style, to speak of
her who has become immortal and a citizen of the heavenly kingdom;
grant, Lord, that my speech may hit the target of her praises, where by itself it cannot
rise, since virtue and beauty equal to hers were never in the world, which was not
worthy to have her.
He replies: 'All that Heaven and I can do, and good counsel and virtuous life, all was
in her whom Death has taken from us;
'there has never been a form equal to hers, not since the day when Adam first opened
his eyes; and let this now suffice: weeping I say it, and do you weeping write.')[61]

The tone here is one of melancholy fatigue, sounded by the opening stress upon
weariness and frailty ('stanco et frale'). The hitherto semi-independent entities, the
body, the mind and the sonnet, which together constituted and separately signified the
self, appear to have fused in resignation. The sonnet, indicated by 'stile' (as style
adapts itself to form), has wearied symbiotically with the body and mind, which have
become almost indistinguishable from one another. The unifying phrase in the
opening line, 'l' affannato ingegno', which Durling translates as 'weary mind'
(despite 'weary' appearing as 'stanco' in line 2), perhaps incorporates more
effectively as 'breathless genius', as this correlates with the apostrophic expiratory
'Ah' ('Deh'), upon which the sonnet sighfully opens.[62] The poet-lover's genius – the
tutelary spirit allotted to someone at birth in order to guide them to the next life, or a
presiding topological spirit (genius loci), with the locus in this sense being not only
the exterior landscape formed by the dispersal of the beloved, but also the interior
spatiotemporality of the sonnet – that genius is Laura, who is literally 'affannato'.

However, the opening lines' contrapuntal image is one of union, or rather reunion.
The poet-lover requests Love's hand ('porgi mano'), but despite the matrimonial
symbolism this is a proposal of truce: he asks for his enemy's hand as a sign of peace,
which has an inherent religious symbolism all of its own (pax vobiscum). But how

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[61] Another undated poem, although certain comments made in the Seniles may give an indication of its
general chronological provenance. See for example the letter sent to Phillipe de Cabassoles on October
8 1369 informing him that 'I could not go to the church next door to my house except on the arms of
friends or servants, unless I were to fly. That is why out of urgent necessity I have done what I had
never before done with you: I am writing by another's hand, although to confess the truth, it is the hand
of such a friend as to be my own' (Sen., XI. 15).
[62] Expiratory in the respiratory rather than the grammatical sense.

does one offer one's hand to another's style without corrupting it? Is the narrator asking for assistance in completing the sequence, or even the sonnet? 'Stile' extends to incorporate *stilo*, meaning stylus or pen (as in *Rs* 78), which serves as an extension of both the poet's hand and his mind.[63] 'Amor' in this sense is physically aiding the narrator in his composition, as the poetic spirit is willing, but the flesh is 'stanco et frale'. This interpretation of 'stile' as stylus is validated by the request's object, which appears in line 3: 'to speak of her who has become immortal' ('per dir di quella ch' è fatta immortale'). The poet's style, his poetic idiosyncrasy, can speak only of the poet, or of itself, whilst the stylus may 'dir di quella'. Both are media of expression, but the more corporeal stylus, which is part of the 'mano' that preceded it, points away from, rather than towards itself.

It is then the 'mano' and the 'stile' of the mortal author that immortalizes the beloved through poetry, but the providential hand of the Divine Author that translates her into 'a citizen of the heavenly kingdom' ('cittidina del celeste regno'). The allusion to Augustine's concept of the *City of God* is unavoidable:

> men who are in the sphere of God's grace, who are fellow citizens of the holy angels who live in continual bliss, will be equipped with spiritual bodies in such a way that they will sin no more, nor will they die. [...] There is, in fact, one city of men who choose to live by the standard of the flesh, another who choose to live by the standard of the spirit. (XIII. 24-XIV. 1)

The 'celeste regno' spans both heaven and earth, as does God, of whom it is an emanation. It is therefore possible to become a citizen of the city of God whilst still on earth, if one lives 'by the standard of the spirit' (*secundum spiritum*). The implication however is that the narrator still lives 'by the standard of the flesh' (*secundum carnem*), as the prepositional 'del' posits a certain distance between the

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[63] Durling is presumably using the word 'style' in both its older sense of stylus, and its now more familiar meaning of characteristic. Crucially, style may also denote 'a written work' (*OED*).

self and the 'celeste regno', although he is attempting to reach it, as we witness in the second quatrain.[64]

The opening of the second quatrain impinges upon our reading of the first, as it implies the question: who is 'Love'? The dubiety is inherent within the capitalized 'Signor', as this is directed towards the same addressee as 'Amor'. The narrator's 'Signor' is the Lord, Christ-as-God; ergo God is Love.[65] Whilst he was living 'by the standard of the flesh' the poet-lover waged a war against 'Amor' (Eros-Cupid), but following the truce he achieves a peace with his 'Signor', signifying the Christian God. The armistice implied in the opening quatrain's request for assistance indicates the progression from *cupiditas* to *caritas*, the relinquishment of love for the creature and the acceptance of love for, and union with, the Creator. There can be no concupiscence in the 'celeste regno', therefore 'Amor' (as Eros-Cupid) cannot deliver 'mio dir' to the beloved. Only the 'Signor' can serve as intermediary between heaven and earth, just as Christ became the Mediator via the Incarnation: 'grant, Lord, that my speech may hit the target of its praise, where by itself it cannot rise' ('dammi, Signor, che 'l mio dir giunga al segno | de le sue lode, ove per sé non sale'). The move away from *cupiditas* towards *caritas* is aided by the positioning of 'vertù' before 'beltà' in the octave's penultimate line; virtue outranks beauty for those who wish to live *secundum spiritum*, and not *secundum carnem*.

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[64] See *On his own ignorance*, V. 125: 'my incorruptible treasure and the highest part of my heart are with Christ. But because of the infirmities and burdens of our mortal life – which are difficult not only to bear, but even to number – I confess that I am unable to lift up the lower parts of my soul, which are still bound to the earth by their passions and fleshly appetites. How often and how mightily I have tried again and again to tear them away! How sad and indignant I feel, and how I suffer because I fail! *Christ alone knows, whom I invoke and call to witness!* [my italics]'). This personal relation to Christ is central to the sestet of *Rs* 354, in which the narrator literally invokes his 'Signor'.

[65] See the capitalized 'Signor' of *Rs* 62, 128, 345 and 362, in comparison with the lower-case 'signor crudele et scarso' ('cruel and niggardly lord', *Rs* 320. 12), of *Rs* 121, 179, 320 and 337. Petrarch appears careful to distinguish, although often in medieval literature the classical deities of Love are conflated with the Christian God. An obvious example would be Troiolo's paean to Venus in *Filostrato* III. 74-89, translated by Chaucer as the proem to book III of *TC* (both of which draw on Boethian precedent [*De consolatione philosophiae*, II. *metrum* 8]).

However, it is in the sestet's response to the octave that Petrarch confirms the identity of the narrator's 'Signor'. Charitable Love now replies when once its concupiscent classical counterpoint did (as we saw in *Rs* 15), and Christian divinity interposes between lover and beloved as opposed to being emulously constituted by them. Whereas previously the desired synthesis of subject and object within the sonnet form sought to offer a symbolic reflection of divine unity, here the poet-lover speaks directly to his 'Signor' in the octave, and is replied ('Responde') in the sestet. Furthermore, the spirit of the beloved remains infused throughout via the mirroring descriptions of her beauty and virtue that appear either side of the *volta* – the intangible presence of which between the mortal octave and the divine sestet simulates the gulf that simultaneously links and separates creature and Creator. Thus the trinity of man, woman and God remains intact, but the nature of the correspondence has altered; the sonnet form no longer marries the body-texts of poet-lover and beloved as a means of approaching divinity, but unites poet-lover and divinity as a means of approaching the beloved. Consequent to this alteration, He responds as lamentably as the poet-lover to Laura's death, although this is partially dependent upon our reading of the opening tercet's final line. Can Death deprive ('Morte a privi') divinity of Laura's presence? The final tercet of *Rs* 337 suggests not:

Pieno era il mondo de' suoi onor perfetti,
allor che Dio per adornarne il Cielo
la si ritolse, et cosa da lui.

(The world was full of its perfect honors when God, to adorn Heaven with her,
took her back to Himself, and she was a thing fit for Him.) (12-14)[66]

We thus face a dilemma, or rather a number of possibilities, in our interpretation. One may be to return to the reading of Love as Eros-Cupid, yet this remains controvert, not only as a result of the capitalized 'Signor', but also because it would

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[66] As I mentioned earlier, in the order of the *Trionfi* we witness Divinity's triumph over Death, which is also Petrarch's stock response to news of his friends' deaths in his letters.

suggest that the beloved was the co-creation of the anthropomorphic Love and God ('Ciel et io'), and therefore not the Creator's *magnum opus*, as the poet-lover posited earlier.[67] 'Ciel et io' ought rather to be read as referring to the coexistent continuity and separation of Heaven and Creator: God both is Heaven, and (figurally) resides there; the latter is an extension of the divine Self yet distinct from the figure of the Heavenly Father. The Christian God triumphs over Death in accordance with the Incarnation, as we saw in *Rs* 275 ('Blame death; rather, praise Him', 'Morte biasmate; anzi laudate Lui'), and so cannot be deprived of Laura.

However, whilst Petrarch's Creator acknowledges the necessity of the body's death and the spirit's consequent ascension into heaven, He cannot help but mourn the division of His most accomplished creation.[68] The reference to 'her whom Death has taken from us' ('lei di che noi Morte a privi') thus becomes a reference to 'lei' who was the ideal union of body and soul here on earth, a different 'lei' from the spiritual Laura who has returned to 'Ciel'. Death becomes an iconoclast who has broken a divine work of art in two, by separating that union of 'vertù' (signifying the soul) and 'beltà' (signifying the body) referred to in the penultimate line of the octave. As Diane Marks argues:

> the beloved is a knot, an image of human integrity, that mixture of flesh and spirit which is uniquely human. [...] However, what applies to the beloved applies to poetry as well. [...] The image of the knot reevaluates the contributions of flesh and rhetoric. They are not to be despised or discarded. The body is not just flesh, nor is poetry just rhetoric. Flesh provides the material for the spirit to inhabit in that crowning achievement of God's creation, the human body. So does rhetoric provide the medium for the expression of truth in man's greatest creation – poetry. (pp. 254-5)

Petrarch's understanding of the body-text equivalency forces us to bear in mind the complex autoreflexivity of this sonnet, and the manner in which it implicitly draws

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[67] A view that Petrarch disallows in *On his own ignorance*, IV. 111: 'we shall love and worship God in Himself with all our heart and being, and we shall love virtue for God's sake [a definition of *caritas*]. For God is the sole creator of our life, and virtue its principal ornament'.

[68] See *Rs* 305 for example: 'Beautiful soul, freed from that knot more beautiful than any Nature ever made' ('Anima bella, da quel nodo sciolta | che più bel mai non seppe ordir Natura', 1-2); the knot ('nodo') being a familiar Petrarchan metaphor for the union of body and soul. See Marks.

attention to its own artistry via the allusion to that of the Creator. The voice which we hear in the sestet is obviously not that of 'the Creator of all ages and times who set me right' (*Sen.*, XVIII. 1) but that of His mortal imitator (the poet), who echoes the creative action of the Deity. This is, after all, another of Petrarch's dialogic sonnets. Yet whereas previously he provided the voices for both himself and the absent beloved – just as he did for Franciscus and Augustinus in the *Secretum* – now he speaks on behalf of God Himself. The sonnet thus embodies a somewhat extreme example of humanist *theologia poetica*, in which poetry replaces Scripture and the poet becomes prophet; as Petrarch claims in the *Invectiva contra medicum*, 'the first theologians were poets'. The initial (mis)reading of 'Signor' as the classical Love is therefore essential and deliberate, in order to avoid any charges of blasphemy; the integrity of Petrarch's faith itself is never in any doubt, it is his ability to adhere to the tenets of that faith which causes the dilemma. Rather Petrarch is asserting the ascendancy of poetry, its theological foundation and its importance as a means of reaching divinity – he is effectively illustrating that poetic theosophy which we find in the Latin works, and imbuing the traditional love lyric with a much greater religious significance in the process, perhaps even more so than Dante did in the *Vita Nuova*.[69]

The final tercet supports this reading in its reiteration of the relation between body, soul and poetry, all of which are contained within the notion of the 'forma par non'. 'Forma' here not only refers to the Aristotelian form (the principle of motility, the *anima*), but also to Laura's physical form, and the sonnet form in which the

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[69] For a discussion of Petrarch's theological poetics and his formation of a Christian-vatic fusion see Marjorie O'Rourke-Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius: Pentimento and Prophecy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). Whilst I disagree with O'Rourke-Boyle's misreading of Laura, she provides an informative, if dogmatic, account of theological argument in Petrarch's work. See Kevin Brownlee, 'Power Plays: Petrarch's Genealogical Stategies', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 467-88, for a discussion of Petrarch's treatment of Dante in the *Triumphus Cupidinis*: 'By pairing Dante with Beatrice in the ranks of those who were victims of erotic love, Petrarch implicitly questions (even denies) the unique religious status assigned to Dante's beloved both in the *Vita Nuova* and in the *Commedia*; that is, the entire transcendent dimension that Dante claims for his love of his *donna*' (p. 476).

narrator has attempted to convey 'her' in; thereby recalling the dissolution of that perfect creation lamented by God via the poet-prophet. The beloved resumes her position as a second Eve by becoming a living soul – anticipating *Rs* 366, in which Laura is displaced by, or apotheosizes into, the Virgin, who is Eve's successor as the mother of mankind – a metamorphosis enabled by the reference to 'Adamo'. This in turn consolidates the idea that it is the Creator's voice we hear, as the only other presence upon the 'day when Adam first opened his eyes' ('dì ch'Adamo | aperse li occhi in prima') was the Lord Himself.[70] He alone may legitimately draw the comparison between Laura and Eve, ergo it must be He who speaks through the poet's transcription: 'and let this now suffice: weeping I say it, and do you weeping write' ('et basti or questo, | piangendo il dico, et tu piangendo scrivi').

However, the emphasis upon weeping ('piangendo') in the closing lines of the poem suggests the beloved's resurrection, and thereby annuls the idea of the 'Signor' being deprived of her. There is a single memorable instance of the Lord (as Christ) weeping, in John 11.35: 'Jesus wept' ('Et lacrymatus est Jesus'). The 'piangendo' of the 'Signor' in the poem's conclusion thus has a precedent, but it is the context of the precedent that is most crucial – 'Jesus wept' over Lazarus's death, immediately before reviving him. Furthermore, the implicit reference to Christ's humanity contributes to the sense of proximity between man and God made explicit by the shared, or reflected, act of mourning, and signified by His displacement of the beloved as the *genius loci* of the sestet, and the animating 'ingegno' of the sonnet's body-text.

It is this formal displacement of the beloved, and by extension of the concupiscence engendered by her body-text, that constitutes the narrator's resolution of will to providence, and signals the long-sought after union with the divine. The

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[70] See also *Rs* 188: 'she flourishes, without an equal since Adam first saw his and our lovely bane' ('verdeggia et senza par poi che l'adorno | suo male et nostro vide in prima Adamo').

marriage of Petrarch and Laura has not been 'put asunder' so much as it has been transubstantiated by the replacement of physical desire with spiritual acceptance, albeit an acceptance tinged with regret. As we have seen, the trinity (of "husband", "wife" and reflected divinity) is sustained within the form of the sonnet, but its interactive motion has been rerouted in order to achieve a greater harmony.

V

The final sonnet of the sequence reinforces this realization that *caritas* – love of another for God's sake – is the primary element of matrimonial teleology. But it also stresses the importance of experience in discovering so, and the necessity of the *psychomachia* as a means of knowing the self, and ultimately the divine, through the other:

> I' vo piangendo i miei passati tempi
> i quai posi in amar cosa mortale
> senza levarmi a volo, abbiendi' io l'ale
> per dar forse di me non bassi esempi.
>
> Tu che vedi i miei mali indegni et empi,
> Re del Cielo, invisibile, immortale:
> soccorri a l'alma disviata et frale
> e 'l suo defetto di tua grazia adempi,
>
> sì che, s' io vissi in guerra et in tempesta,
> mora in pace et in porto; et se la stanza
> fu vana, almen sia la partita onesta.
>
> A quel poco di viver che m'avanza
> et al morir degni esser tua man presta:
> tu sai ben che 'n altrui non ò speranza.

(I go weeping for my past time, which I spent in loving a mortal thing without lifting
myself in flight, though I had wings to make of myself perhaps not a base example.
You who see all my unworthy and wicked sufferings, invisible, immortal King of
Heaven: help my strayed frail soul and fill out with your grace all that she lacks,
so that, though I have lived in war and in storm, I may die in peace and in port, and if
my sojourn has been vain, my departure at least may be virtuous.
To what little life remains to me and to my dying deign to be present: You know well

that I have no hope in anyone else.)[71]

The language of *Rs* 365 creates a continuum between itself and *Rs* 354 (*née* 364), opening as it does where the previous sonnet concluded, 'I go weeping' ('I'vo piangendo'). However the tears are not born of the beloved's corporeal absence, but out of regret of loving her above the divine, and as such anticipate the nature of the 'piango' in the next sonnet in the sequence (*Rs* 1). Yet *Rs* 365 also reveals itself to be a lament for wasted poetic potential, indicated by the inherent vanity of 'posi' (I put/posed), which paronomastically suggests *poesia*. With misplaced love comes misplaced verse, in which the poet has measured out his life. This is 'my past time' ('miei passati tempi') of the opening line; time, metre, which may have been put to better use, as Petrarch admits in a 1372 letter to Pandolfo Malatesta:

> Let the rambling madness of lovers, which is the subject right at the outset, above all excuse the variety of the work; and let my age excuse the crudeness of the style, for I was a boy when I wrote [...] At this age, I confess, I observe with reluctance the youthful trifles that I would like to be unknown to all, including me, if it were possible. For while the talent of that age may emerge in any style whatsoever, still the subject matter does not become the gravity of old age. But what can I do? Now they have all circulated among the multitude, and are being read more willingly than what I later wrote seriously for sounder minds. (*Sen.*, XIII. 11)[72]

This theme continues throughout the opening quatrain, in particular through the oscillation between high style, suggested by the Icarus metaphor inherent in 'volo' and 'ale', and the vulgar tongue, indicated by the 'bassi esempi', to which the quatrain falls. Yet there remains the potential for poetic self-fashioning in the phrase 'make of myself' ('dar forse di me'). Petrarch does not deny the "dignity of man" (*hominis*

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[71] Another undated poem, and although it is the final sonnet, it is not the final poem (which is the *canzone* to the Virgin). Interestingly, *Rs* 354 was originally *Rs* 364, but it would not have preceded *Rs* 365 as this was previously *Rs* 361; see Durling's annotation to the poems in question, and Wilkins' 'Chronological Conspectus'. It may be worthwhile considering the comments made in a letter of May 8 1370 in relation to the closing remark in order to gauge a general compositional period: '[my] enthusiasm [to comply with Urban V's wishes and go to Rome] was only of the spirit, for the body was still weak and frail, and I had no confidence at all in my strength; all my hope was in divine assistance' (*Sen.*, XI. 17). The paraphrase of Mark 14. 38 ('The spirit truly *is* ready, but the flesh *is* weak', 'Spiritus quidem promptus est, caro vero infirma') echoes *Rs* 354's 'stanco et frale'. See *Rs* 208. 12.
[72] The loss felt here may also stem from his feelings over the epic *Africa*, based on the life of Scipio, which remained incomplete at the time of Petrarch's death.

dignitatis) that would become one of the central tenets of the Renaissance. Indeed, he implies that man-as-poet may forge himself in accordance with the principle of *poiein*, as an act of homage to the Divine author.[73]

The 'King of Heaven' ('Re del Cielo') Himself appears in the second quatrain as a possible counterpoint to 'You who hear' ('Voi ch'ascoltate', *Rs* 1. 1), who are both anticipated and recalled by 'You who see' ('Tu che vedi'). A union is thus forged, not only between the opening and closing sonnets of the sequence, but also between man and God. The 'Voi' who hear in *Rs* 1 and the 'Tu' who sees in *Rs* 365 become interchangeable, or rather 'you' in both poems now refers simultaneously to the poet-lover's public relationship with the *Rime*'s audience and his intimate relationship with the Creator, as a means of emphasizing the consummation of the union between mortality and divinity towards which the sequence has striven. This notion of the sonnet sequence's *circuitus* being completed is further suggested by the adjectives the narrator accords to the divine: 'invisibile, immortale'. Petrarch's audience is also invisible, of course, not being physically present at the time of composition. Nevertheless, they are, like the Creator, witnesses to the poet's most private, introspective moments, 'my unworthy and wicked sufferings' ('miei mali indegni et empi'). The inclusion of 'immortale', however, whilst ostensibly displaying humility in the awareness of God's aeviternity, also signifies a certain amount of self-confidence: if the poet's audience is 'immortale', by extension, so must his verses

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[73] Petrarch would have encountered the theme of mankind's dignity and potential – which he inherits both from being formed in God's image and the Incarnation – in the extended encomium to humanity that appears towards the close of Augustine's *City of God*. This paean to human enterprise also includes a discussion of corporeal aesthetics: 'the whole body, within and without, is arranged as a system of mutual adaptation. The Greeks call this adaptation "harmony" [...] there is no visible part of the body which is merely adapted to its function without being also of aesthetic value [...] in the design of the human body dignity was a more important consideration than utility' (XXII. 24). See also Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, chapter II.

be.[74] Yet this confidence is immediately undermined by the request for assistance that constitutes the remainder of the quatrain, and which echoes that made to 'Amor' in *Rs* 354. There is, however, a progression from the 'stile stanco et frale' of *Rs* 354, which symbolized the physical and the poetical *corpora*, to 'l' alma disviata et frale'; it is now the soul that is 'straying and frail'. Both the flesh and the spirit have deteriorated as the poet not only lacks the power to transcribe his thoughts, but is also in want of inspiration, the principle of motility, hence 'fill out with your grace all that she lacks' ("l suo defetto di tua grazia adempi').[75]

Yet this remains an accomplished sonnet; in what sense therefore may the poetic spirit be 'frale'? It is vital to bear in mind that the latent, autoreflexive or symbolic interpretation of the sonnet does not negate the immediate, ostensible reading: the narrator is still referring to 'l'alma' in the spiritual, Christian sense.[76] The body-text's 'alma', on the other hand, that which catalyzes and sustains it (its form), is far from frail, and serves the same function as 'rime sparse' in the proemical sonnet – false modesty, counterbalancing the potential vanity of 'immortale'. However, the reference to the soul's femininity reminds us that the beloved, or rather desire for the beloved, was once the moving, shaping principle. The union with or assumption by divinity does not necessarily alter this instigative role, as Laura remains the aetiological core of both sonnet and sequence. The narrator no longer writes out of

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[74] There is a noticeable level of vanity evident throughout the *Rime*, the letters and the Latin works, as Petrarch was very much aware of his fame; although this may also have been a classical trope (taken from Ovid) to be used as a counterpoint to the medieval text's reliance upon false modesty.

[75] The soul is traditionally thought of as female – as Psyche was – although the pronoun 'suo' is masculine, which creates some confusion (as 'suo' is subordinate to 'alma', and therefore should become the feminine 'sua').

[76] From the Latin *almus*, meaning nourishment. Petrarch varies between four terms that indicate the soul throughout the sequence: primarily he employs *alma* and *anima*, but he also uses *spirito* and *forma*, although to a lesser degree. *Alma* and *anima* are interchangeable, often appearing in the same poem – although *alma* is occasionally linked with the soul as it resides within the heart, as in *Rs* 86 and 135. *Spirito* suggests an energy that can be separated from the body (Laura is often referred to as a spirit), whilst *forma* suggests both the Aristotelian definition and *figura*.

love for her, but out of regret for 'passati tempi', which nevertheless posits her as its cause.

The caesura that closes the octave severs the knot between the spiritual form (beloved) and the physical matter (poet-lover) by extending the self into the sestet, signifying the pilgrim's progress from fleshly concerns to the city of God. And although the poet's 'passati tempi' are revived by the familiar tropes of 'guerra' and 'tempesta', which would come to dominate Petrarchan poetry for centuries to come, this is effectively a valediction to the love sonnet, as the truce is achieved and the storm-tossed ship come to port: 'I may die in peace and in port' ('mora in pace et in porto'). The poem's autoreflexivity finds further expression in the closing lines of the opening tercet, as 'stanza' may be read both as 'sojourn' and in its poetic sense. Similarly, the 'honest [virtuous] departure' ('partita onesta', "clean break" as it were), not only refers to the poet-lover's textual finitude – to the effect that the sonnet serves almost as a deathbed confession for the narrator of the sequence – but also to the separation of the closing tercet from the rest of the poem, which disrupts the contrapuntal (dis)unity of the octave-sestet dichotomy. The closing lines thus constitute an admission of the subjective body-text's mortality as a reflection of the physical *corpus*'s deterioration. The tercet is the voice of the sonnet itself, in so far as it constitutes the remainder of the poem, 'what little life remains to me' ('quel poco di viver che m'avanza').[77] In this 'little life' the weary and frail narrator makes his final

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[77] It is interesting to consider this Prosperian act of poetic retirement in the light of a letter written to Boccaccio by Petrarch a year before his death, in which he complains of intercepted correspondence: 'Of course, to this annoyance is added my age and weariness with almost everything, and I have not only had my fill of writing, I am sick of it. All this together leads me to say to you, dear friend, and to all to whom I used to write – insofar as it concerns my epistolary pen – a last farewell, in order that my flimsier scribblings may not to the end hinder me, as they have long done, from more worthwhile study, and that my writings not fall into the idiotic hands of these rascals [...] I recall that in a certain letter of this series that I had promised from now on to be briefer in my letter writing, prompted by the lack of time, which was running out' (*Sen.*, XVII. 4). Wilkins points out that 'these may be the last words that Petrarch ever wrote' (*Life of Petrarch*, p. 251), as *Sen.*, XVIII.1 (the *Letter to Posterity*), which follows and concludes the collection, was written much earlier, *circa* 1347-51.

plea for God's assistance, asking Him to offer His hand ('tua man presta') in a further reflection of *Rs* 354, before avowing his ultimate rejection of the beloved in favour of divine love: 'You know well that I have no hope in anyone else' ('tu sai ben che 'n altrui non ò speranza').

The sequence ambiguously "finishes" with the famous *canzone* 366, in which the narrator begs for the intercession of the 'Vergine bella', who replaces Laura both as a legitimate female object of devotion, and as an intermediary between the narrator and his God. The ambiguity stems not only from the fact that the cyclical nature of the *Rime sparse* renders the sequence indeterminate, but also from the possibility that the closing poem symbolizes retrogression. The poet had removed the need for a mediator by employing the sonnet form as a means of conversing directly with the divine, as indicated by 'tu' in the final line of *Rs* 365. This regress perhaps reinforces the importance of the sonnet form, in that it is the most effective poetical means of divine worship; the *canzone* requires an intermediary, as indicated by the sequence's closing lines:

> raccomandami al tuo Figliuol, verace
> omo et verace Dio,
> ch' accolga 'l mio   spirto ultimo in pace.
>
> (commend me to your Son, true man and true God, that He may receive my last
> breath in peace.) (*Rs* 366. 135-7)[78]

The use of 'raccomandami' reinstates the gulf between man and God that had been bridged by the sequence's struggle to abandon concupiscence – although the reference to the Nicene Creed inherent in 'verace | omo et verace Dio' bridges it by stressing the link between creature and Creator.[79] Mankind, as created in God's image and likeness

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[78] Again the date is unknown. The lacuna between *mio* and *spirto* is intentional.

[79] 'Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum uerum de Deo uero, natum, non factum unius substantiae cum Patre [...] qui propter nostram salutem discendit incarnatus est et homo factus est' ('God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father [...] Who for our salvation descended into the flesh and was made man'). See A. E. Burn, *Facsimiles of the Creeds from Early Manuscripts*, Henry Bradshaw Society, 36 (London: Harrison, 1909), pp. 13-14. The paraphrase is my own based on the current wording of the *credo*.

communicates with the divine through the *corpus*; *id est* via the purgation of the fleshly body and its replacement by the perfected spiritual body. As Augustine posits, it is man's rational soul as it exists within the body that is formed in God's likeness,[80] although the *corpus* not only dimly reflects 'the better form' ('la forma miglior', *Rs* 319.9) – to use a Platonic analogy, the body is Becoming to the soul's Being – but is also man's central point of reference and self-realization:

> Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the 'invisible things' of God 'being understood by the things that are made' may be seen, that is, by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and the spiritual [...] if they [men] seek to go beyond the world, they imagine something luminous or infinite, or with a vain notion shape it in the form of the human body if they place that above others. If they do not think of a god of gods but rather of innumerable gods of equal rank, they shape them in their minds according to that bodily shape which they think excellent. (*De doctrina Christiana*, I. 4-7)

Augustine may speak against the comprehension of God Himself in bodily terms, but he also emphasizes both the human mind's inability to think, or create, outside of the *corpus*, and the almost Hermetic or Platonic concept of reaching divinity 'by means of corporal and temporal things'; a method also espoused by St Paul. Indeed, Augustine declares in the *City of God* that

> God himself, the blessed God who is the giver of blessedness, became partaker of our human nature and thus offered us a short cut to participation in his own divine nature. (IX. 15)

The body-text in the *Rime sparse* becomes the poetical equivalent of this 'direct means' of comprehending divinity. In recreating the body and the experience of the corporeal through the sonnet form the poet is not merely emulating God intransitively (as noted in *De doctrina Christiana*, 'All men struggle emulously for the excellence of God'), but with the intention of understanding Him in order to love Him as best he can. Petrarch rejected both the idea and the possibility of comprehending divinity in a strictly epistemological sense, as this is not pragmatic:

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[80] See *City of God*, XII. 23, although this remains unclear; it appears to be the fusion of body and soul that constitutes 'likeness'.

As wise men tell us, the object of the will is goodness, while the object of the intellect is truth. But it is better to will what is good than to know what is true. [...] [people] make the greatest mistake of all by seeking to know God rather than loving him. For God can never be fully known in this life, but he can be devoutly and ardently loved. (*On his own ignorance*, IV. 111)

Crucially, Petrarch does not reject the endeavour to understand God, but rather the concept that He can be '*fully* known [my italics]'. The reader is not presented with a choice between truth or goodness, love or knowledge, will or reason, as in each case the constituents are not antithetical, but rather complementary, and as such appeal to Petrarch's syncretism. The reduction of understanding to a series of antonyms is – at least in Petrarch's eyes – the methodology of scholasticism; he instead opts for union, as represented by the sonnet form.[81] The Petrarchan sonnet's marriage of lover and beloved, male and female, body and soul thus signifies the attempt to know and love God as 'fully' as one can through poetry, as the first theologians did, by recalling that central element of the Creation so often overlooked or purposely ignored – by medieval churchmen in particular – that 'male and female created he *them*'. The symbolic union of Laura and Petrarch helps to validate the narrator's *cupiditas* by reforming it as *caritas*; fleshly desire by becoming 'carne una' may begin to develop towards spiritual love of the divine. And so Petrarch, unlike Dante, does not replace one form of love with another in an exchange born of near-epiphanic realization, but

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[81] Petrarch's famous use of paradox and to a lesser extent chiasmus – in which opposites are reconciled and interchangeable – is also indicative of his unifying process, although this was quickly reduced to an ornamental trope by his imitators. Chaucer's translation of *Rs* 132 perhaps displays a more developed understanding of Petrarch's wider thinking than we had previously imagined. See *Fam.*, I. 9 for an indication of Petrarch's synthetic paradoxical thought outside of the *Rime*: 'The care of the mind calls for a philosopher, while the proper use of language requires an orator. We must neglect neither one [...] Our speech is not a small indicator of our mind, nor is our mind a small controller of our speech. Each depends upon the other, but while one remains in one's breast, the other emerges into the open. The one ornaments it as it is about to emerge and shapes it as it wants to; the other announces how it is as it emerges. People obey the judgement of one, and believe the opinion of the other. Therefore both must be consulted so that one will be reasonably strict with the other, and the other will be truthfully magnificent towards the first.'

attempts to fuse the two.[82] Furthermore, the narrator's success is not anticipated, least of all by himself. If the attempt at unification is seen to succeed at all, it remains a Pyrrhic victory, tainted by regret, but also more cherished because of the authenticity of the struggle:

> Great things are not achieved at little price. Whoever is attracted by the appearance of virtue and wishes its companionship must know that he desires the greatest of all things, not procurable at low cost but demanding one's entire self in payment. (*Fam.*, XIII. 4)

However, it would be erroneous to consider the poet-lover's redemption in the *Rime sparse* as being either ultimately successful on the one hand or a complete failure on the other. Such judgements necessitate the sequence's semantic and structural completion, and it achieves neither. The sequence remained unfinished at the time of Petrarch's death in 1374, and the ending he provides is expedient at best.[83] Yet it is debatable as to whether it ever could have been completed, as both the semiologies of *cupiditas* and *caritas* are indeterminate. The 'infinite concatenation of loops' which characterizes the *cupiditas* of the Ovidian sonnets cannot reach an end, and although the *caritas* model finds its ultimate end in the Divine Logos, 'God can never be fully known in this life', as Freccero posits:

> Whether we accept Augustine's theology in some form or translate it into what might be called a semiology of desire, we remain within a verbal universe, reaching out for a silent terminal point that lies outside the system.
> The Word, the silence that subtends the system, grounds both desire and language. In its absence, however, both threaten to become an infinite regression, approaching ultimate satisfaction and ultimate significance as an unreachable limit. [...] Like the intentionality of a sentence that preexists its utterance and emerges concretely, in retrospect, from that utterance, the uncreated Word produces its

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[82] As has been said, Dante's relationship with Beatrice appears as the ideal counterpoint to Petrarch and Laura. See Mark Musa's introduction to his translation of the *VN*: '[Dante] accepts the death of his gracious lady without astonishment [...] it is precisely by means of this looking back, "and remembering her [Beatrice] in the sequence of past times" – a very specialized and important way of looking back – that the poet is able to liberate himself from self-pity and from that lady who was herself Pity incarnate', pp. vii-xxi (pp. xiv-xvii).
[83] Foster argues that the the hymn to to the Virgin which closes the sequence is in fact redressed by the close of the last work Petrarch ever wrote, in 'a sort of Christian palinode of the equally Christian but anti-Laura *Vergine bella* [...] The *Tr. Eternitatis* ends with the poet rejoicing in the thought of Laura's physical beauty, both in that which she possessed on earth, in time, and in that which she will possess, after the Resurrection of the Flesh' (p. 42).

signifier and is in turn made manifest by it. Like language itself, the redemptive process is tautology, ending it where it began. (p. 35)

So must it be for the 'redemptive subtext' of the *Rime sparse*, it must end tautologically 'where it began' at the *intermezzo* of the opening sonnet which both 'preexists' the sequence and yet 'emerges concretely, in retrospect' from it. The eroticism of the body-text is not shed by the movement towards divinity, but rather is informed by it; the semiotics of *caritas* defines that of *cupiditas* and vice versa as part of a binary opposition which cannot be fully deconstructed, or disjected, or put asunder, as neither system achieves completion. This indeterminacy works to Petrarch's advantage, however, as his sequence, his gestaltist sonnet *corpus*, like Bakhtin's 'grotesque' body, always continues beyond itself, or 'transgresses its own limits'.[84] The body-text of the Petrarchan sonnet form would metamorphose into, and be incorporated by, the English literary tradition, amongst myriad others.

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[84] See previous chapter, pp. 65-6.

Chapter 3
Chaucer's Sonnet *Corpus*

I will yow telle a tale which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
As preved by his wordes and his werk.
He is now deed and nayled in his cheste [...]
Frauncys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
Highte this clerk, whos rhetorike sweete
Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie.

<div align="right">(CProl., IV E 26-33)</div>

Chaucer the translator. The translator always does some violence to the body of the original. The translator is always at some risk of becoming a rapist. *Tradittore tradutorre*, as Italian has it. The translator betrays the body of the original by effacing it, substituting his own body for the original's – he puts his in (the place of) the other.

<div align="right">(R. Allen Shoaf, Chaucer's Body, p. 116)[1]</div>

I

As the 'Clerk of Oxenford' (*CProl.*, IV E 1) proves by his words in the prologue to his tale, 'Frauncys Petrak, the lauriat poete',[2] although dead (*d.*1374), was undergoing the process of immortalization by the time that Chaucer wrote both *The Clerk's Tale*, at some point between 1392 and 1395, and the *Canticus Troili* (*c.*1382-86). What remains of Petrarch is his body-text, his *corpus*, 'his wordes and his werk'. The Italian laureate would subsequently be 'nayled in his cheste' by those sonnets which together constitute the *Rime sparse*,[3] boxed in by the vernacular lyrics which he himself considered inferior to his Latin works. Yet for Chaucer and his contemporaries Petrarch's reputation was not so confined.[4] Far from being associated with a single

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[1] R. Allen Shoaf, *Chaucer's Body: The Anxiety of Circulation in the "Canterbury Tales"* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 116. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[2] Chaucer's phrasing here provides a possible indication as to the form in which he may have encountered Petrarch's *Rs* 132, as a number of Petrarch MSS bear the title inscription *Francisci Petrarche laureati poete*, or variants upon this. See E. H. Wilkins, *The Making of the "Canzoniere" and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951), p. 70.

[3] And by the European cult of Petrarch that was propounded initially by Petrarch himself during his own lifetime, but also by Boccaccio, Pietro Bembo (1470-1547) and his followers.

[4] The Renaissance tended to enclose contemporary culture as well as embrace it, perhaps due to its centrist political systems. The isolated but correspondent European courts all tended towards this tenet of centralization. See David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

form, Petrarch was regarded as the foremost *litterateur* of his age, the 'Father of Humanism', fluent in all forms of 'rhetorike sweete'.[5] Aptly enough, the Clerk's tale of Walter and Griselda is not only a translation of a work by Petrarch, but a translation of a translation, and a testament to the linguistic internationalism of the late middle ages. It is based upon Petrarch's *De obedienta ac fide uxoria mythologia* (*Sen.*, XVII. 3), which is itself a Latin reworking of the concluding *novella* of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (*c.* 1349-51).[6] Shoaf's understanding of translation as a potential form of rape, in particular as it applies to the tale of Walter and Griselda – which he describes as 'a parable of this [translative] violence' (p. 116) – gains credibility from Petrarch's own views on the subject, which are related to Boccaccio in the epistle accompanying the redaction: 'I suddenly sent everything flying, and, snatching up my pen, I attacked this story of yours'.[7] Petrarch's poetic ego, in this instance at least, demands dominance in translation, whereas Chaucer's process, as we shall see, appears more matrimonial. Whilst Petrarch expects servitude from his material (like Walter), Chaucer asks for its cooperation.

Petrarch's violent translative methodology appears slightly ill at ease with the multiform images of symbolic union which occur throughout the *Rime sparse*. However, it is worthwhile considering Bernardo's translation, in which Petrarch's aggression is directed towards himself, rather than towards the source text:

> And so, on a certain day, when my mind was being torn as usual between various thoughts, angry at them and at myself, so to speak, I said goodbye to all of them for a time, and, seizing my pen, set out to write that story of yours, hoping that you would surely be delighted that I would, of my own accord, be a translator of your works,

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[5] As J. H. Robinson terms him in chapter 3 of his *Petrarch: The First Modern Scholar and Man of Letters* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), pp. 225-93. Future citations will be included in the body of text.

[6] See J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerkes Tale* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), for an exhaustive account of the Latin and French texts which Chaucer worked from.

[7] *Epistolae Seniles*, XVII. 3, cited in J. H. Robinson, pp. 191-6, 53-5 (p. 193). I have used this translation for the purpose of this chapter, as it is the edition used by Shoaf. The original Latin may be found in Severs, pp. 254-292 (p. 291).

something I would not readily have undertaken for anyone else. *I was drawn by love for you and for the story.* (*Sen.*, XVII. 3 [my italics])[8]

Also, Petrarch's technique here pertains to the specific work he is adapting. The translator is the active agent, and therefore male – in accordance with the classical principle of *dator formarum* – whereas that which is traduced (the original text) is by extension the passive, malleable, feminine matter, as Shoaf posits in his description of the potential 'rapist'.[9] Ergo Petrarch cannot help but align himself with Walter/Valterius, who is also a translator of sorts: 'it is for you [Boccaccio] to judge whether I have, by this change of dress, injured or embellished the original' (Robinson, p. 193). Petrarch's metaphor here is a knowing reference to Walter's stripping away and translation of Griselda from 'la pastorella alpestra e cruda' (*Rs* 52. 4) to stilnovistic *donna angelicata*, and as such it creates thematic contiguity between the redaction and its epistolary framework, or the 'cheste' in which it is 'nayled'.[10] Had Petrarch been translating, for example, book IV of *Il Filocolo* (*c.*1336-1339), upon which it is claimed Chaucer drew for the "clandestine marriage" scene in book III of *Troilus and Criseyde*, then perhaps the metaphor for the translation process would have been more akin to that which Shoaf applies to Chaucer; namely, translation as marriage.[11] In other words, Petrarchan translative methodology,

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[8] Petrarch's original Latin follows in order that the reader may make their own decision: 'iratus, vale omnibus ad tempus dicto, calamum arripiens, ystoriam ipsam tuam scribere sum aggressus' (Severs, p. 191). The alternative translations echo the differing interpretations of the Griselda tale related by Petrarch in *Sen.*, XVII. 4, and reinforce the tale's polysemia.
[9] See Spearing's 'dator formarum [...] the masculine principle that imposes shape on the shapeless feminine matter' (p. 97), and Carolyn Dinshaw's introduction to *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 3-27 (p. 9).
[10] Petrarch's 'pastorella alpestra e cruda' ('cruel mountain shepherdess') is matched by Dioneo's dscription of Griselda as being 'una povera giovinetta' ('a poor young girl') and a 'guardiana di pecore' ('a shepherdess') in *Decameron*, X. 10. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1985), pp. 892-904 (pp. 893-6).
[11] The claim for clandestine marriage in *Troilus and Criseyde* has been made by a number of critics. See in particular, Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's "Troilus"', *Viator*, 4 (1973), 435-57; John B. Maguire, 'The Clandestine Marriage of Troilus and Criseyde', *ChR*, 8 (1974), 262-78; Karl P. Wentersdorf, 'Some Observations on the Concept of Clandestine Marriage in *Troilus and Criseyde*', *ChR*, 15 (1980), 101-26; W. T. Rossiter, 'Casting Light on Clandestine Marriage in *Il Filostrato*', *Marginalia*, 3 (2006) <http://www.marginalia.co.uk/journal/06illumination/rossiter.php> [accessed 1st June 2006].

although it may adhere to certain *principia*, is not entirely circumscribed, but rather

adapts itself in relation to the material, which is apposite for a textual persona that

locates itself in mutability and reflective self-identification.

Moreover, this adaptation of method to matter appears to be aligned with the

wider issue of paraphrasis and metaphrasis, which Petrarch discusses in an earlier

letter to Boccaccio:

> An imitator must take care to write something similar yet not identical to the original, and that similarity must not be like the image to its original in painting where the greater the similarity the greater the praise for the artist, but rather like that of a son to his father. While often very different in their individual features, they have a certain something our painters call an 'air', especially noticeable about the face and eyes, that produces a resemblance; seeing the son's face, we are reminded of the father's, although if it came to measurement, the features would be all different, but there is something subtle that creates this effect. We must thus see to it that if there is something similar, there is also a great deal that is dissimilar, and that the similar be elusive and unable to be extricated except in silent meditation, for the resemblance is to be felt rather than expressed. Thus we may appropriate another's ideas as well as his coloring but we must abstain from his actual words; for, with the former, resemblance remains hidden, and with the latter it is glaring, the former creates poets, the second apes [...] We must write as the bees make honey, not gathering flowers but turning them into honeycombs, thereby blending them into a oneness that is unlike them all. (*Fam.*, XXIII. 19)

Whilst Petrarch favours metaphrase in the mimesis of the visual arts, literary

translation must be paraphrastic if it is to have any worth. This distinction is crucial,

as it informs Petrarch's inability to provide an *effictio* of Laura in the *Rime sparse*.

The attempted configurations of the beloved are repeatedly refracted through an

intertextual prism, whether it be classical (Laura as Daphne), or scriptural (Laura as

Eve). The body-text cannot duplicate the beloved, but only displace her; the linguistic

act thereby prolonging desire through a paraphrasis necessary to the translative

process. The attempt to translate Laura into the linguistic sphere is doomed to failure

from the start, as the 'resemblance should not be that of the portrait to the sitter'. This

perhaps explains why Petrarch had Simone Martini paint Laura, as the artist's medium

allows for metaphrasis, whereas any *descriptio* of an object before the poet's eyes

must be *translatio*, and therefore paraphrastic, and so unable to reproduce that object.[12]

However, paraphrasis of the object creates the subject as the translator must superimpose the latter over the former, 'thereby blending them into a oneness that is unlike them all'. As Greene argues in his discussion of Petrarchan translation, imitation 'at its most powerful pitch required a profound act of self-knowledge and then a creative act of self-definition' whilst 'the definition or creation of literary voices, literary styles, required the progressive apprehension of voices and styles from outside the self'.[13] Furthermore, this 'process of dynamic self-discovery' (Greene, p. 97) through translation is akin to that which Shoaf describes in relation to Chaucer:

> [*The Clerk's Tale*] is the autobiography of Chaucer the translator, how he became a writer other than and better than Walter (in part, by coming to terms with the Walter in him).
> *The Clerk's Tale* narrates the story of translation as the marriage of the original with the translator. The translator takes the original as his mate. He may treat the original like wax [...] Or he may treat the original like an independent, individual body with its own agency. But in the event he will never be sure of what he has done, what he has acquired, and what his meaning is; the substance will be between him and his original. (p. 116)[14]

Just as Chaucer comes to terms with his inner-Walter through the translation of Petrarch's text, so does Petrarch express *his* own inner-Walter via the translation (and the framing epistle) of Boccaccio's text. Both Chaucer and Petrarch rely to some extent upon an apian metaphor – the wax of the *Merchant's Tale* and the honeycomb of the epistle, respectively – which suggests malleability, but both also acknowledge the original text's status as 'an independent, individual body with its own agency'. For Chaucer, in *The Clerk's Tale* and in the *Canticus*, this acknowledgement allows for communion with the antecedent body-text. For Petrarch in the *Rime sparse*, the

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[12] Martini's famous lost portrait of Laura is discussed in *Rs* 77-8. See chapter 1, p. 71.

[13] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 97. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[14] Shoaf draws the wax simile from *The Merchant's Tale*, 'in which January literally refers to young women like May as wax' (p. 116). For a detailed, informative account of medieval *translatio* see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

frustrated *translatio* of Laura's body as text is a source of solitary anguish; whilst in his Griselda story the acknowledgement of agency impels the desire for domination. Yet whereas Petrarch expounds his views on *translatio* independently of praxis, Chaucer does not. The *principia* of the 'Grant translateur' are rather to be found in the performative action, in the translations themselves.[15]

The *Canticus Troili* is akin to *The Clerk's Tale* not only in its Petrarchan source, but in that it too enacts the autoreflexive, dynamic 'becoming' of the writer through translation. Chaucer's paraphrastic redaction of Petrarch's *Rs* 132 ('S' amor non è') serves as a verse précis of Chaucer's approach to translation, a methodology based upon a simultaneous respect for and removal from the *prima materia*, effecting a convergence of *imitatio* and independence:

> S' amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
> Ma s'egli è amor, perdio, che cosa e quale?
> Se bona, onde l'effetto aspro mortale?
> Se ria, onde si dolce ogni tormento? (*Rs* 132. 1-4)

> If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
> And if love is, what thing and which is he?
> If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
> If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
> When every torment and adversite
> That cometh of hym may to me savory thinke,
> For ay thurst I, the more that ich it drynke. (*TC*, I. 400-406)

When reading Chaucer's poem in conjunction with Petrarch's sonnet we are faced initially with three obvious and contiguous factors: the extent to which Chaucer remains faithful to Petrarch's text; how (and why) he extends Petrarch's complaint; and how he creates a legitimate ratio between the two verse forms (sonnet and rhyme royal). In relation to the primary factor, Chaucer's language traces Petrarch's, to a large degree, almost verbatim, as we witness in the first stanza: 'S' amor non è' corresponds with 'If no love is'; 'Se bona [...] Se ria', are echoed by 'If love be good

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[15] The title was conferred upon Chaucer by the French poet Eustace Deschamps. See Introduction, p. 24.

[...] If it be wikke', in the correctly equivalent lines. So far so good, but in the final line of the Petrarchan quatrain there is a fourth question mark, whereas in Chaucer the line continues despite the efforts of the caesura to retain Petrarch's structure, and so 'tormento' does not find its translation until the fifth line (as 'torment and adversite'), with 'dolci' bordering on its own antithesis in the 'savory' of the sixth.[16] This bifurcation leads us to the second factor inherent in any interlingual comparison: how and why does Chaucer stray from his original source? *How* is, from a formal perspective, somewhat easier to explain than *why*; Petrarch's hendecasyllabic quatrain is transposed on to Chaucer's decasyllabic rhyme royal stanza (seven lines rhyming ABABBCC). The rhythm however withstands the transition from Italian to Middle English, Chaucer thus becoming the first English poet to translate Petrarch into iambic pentameter. This would in turn become the normative metre for subsequent English sonnets; despite the various formal alterations instigated by Wyatt, Surrey and Spenser, none stray from the rhythm that Chaucer decided on.[17]

The question of *why* Chaucer translated Petrarch into rhyme royal is a complex one, one that segues into the third factor (that of ratio), and which elicits numerous possible answers. It has been suggested that Chaucer simply did not recognize the form, but given his previous experience of translation, metre and Italian poetry, this seems unlikely.[18] Alternatively, Chaucer may have found the restrictions imposed by the established form to be unpalatable to English (aureate) poetic sensibility; he did not want to be 'nayled in his chest' by the sonnet as Petrarch would be in the cinquecento. A third, much more pragmatic possibility, is that a sonnet suddenly

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[16] However the meaning remains the same: pleasant. See the entry for *dolce* in *Cassell's Italian-English English-Italian Dictionary*, compiled by Piero Rebora (Cassell: London, 1958). See also *savouri* in the *MED*.

[17] For an account of Chaucer's pentameter see Martin J. Duffell, "'The craft so long to lerne": Chaucer's Invention of the Iambic Pentameter', *ChR*, 34 (2000), 269-88.

[18] See Spiller, *DoS*, pp. 64-65. Chaucer, had he not read Petrarch's sonnets, would have still perhaps been familiar with Dante's *Vita Nuova*, although this is also questionable due to the very few manuscripts that are accounted for.

appearing *in medias res* in a poem composed entirely out of rhyme royal stanzas would be incongruous. This possibility in turn relates to Chaucer's creation of rhyme royal itself. I would argue that Chaucer understood and admired certain potentialities presented by the sonnet form but chose instead to *redire ad fons* in order to create his own form – that is, he returned to the *strambotto*.

The *strambotto* was a popular eight-line Italian verse form rhyming either ABABABAB (*strambotto siciliano*) or ABABABCC (*strambotto toscano*), and which is now considered to be the most likely source of the sonnet.[19] As becomes obvious from the most cursory glance, the rhyme royal shares a number of similarities with the *strambotto*, in particular with the *toscano* variation, which includes the rhyming couplet that would later find its way into the English (and the French) sonnet. The similarities between the two forms may in fact be coincidental, but this is unlikely, as Chaucer did not invent, or at least he did not employ, the rhyme royal until after his return from Italy. Yet there is another Italian form that may prove to be the progenitor of the Chaucerian stanza: Boccaccio's *ottava rima*. The ottava rima, or "eighth line", was pioneered by Boccaccio in works such as the *Filostrato* (*c.* 1339) and the *Teseida* (*c.* 1341), which, incidentally, were the primary sources of Chaucer's *Troilus* and *The Knight's Tale*. The original Italian (or Sicilian) form is comprised of eight hendecasyllabic lines rhyming ABABABCC, and, like the sonnet, probably finds its origin in the *strambotto* – the difference being that the *strambotto* is a self-contained, single stanza, and as such possesses a level of independence akin to that of the sonnet, whereas the *ottava rima* is used to construct a continuing narrative (akin to the sonnet sequence). It could therefore be argued that Chaucer's rhyme royal sprang from the same source as the sonnet; they are of the same poetic gene pool so to speak. It is also interesting to note that Chaucer, providing it was the Italian version of the sonnet he

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[19] See Introduction, pp. 18-9.

read and not Salutati's Latin translation, would have encountered it as two adjacent seven-line blocks. It would not have been, therefore, too great a leap of the formal imagination to divide Petrarch's sonnet into rhyme royal.[20]

Yet, as I mentioned earlier in relation to the incongruity of a *quatorzain* amongst rhyme royal, Chaucer's reasons for "ignoring" the sonnet in favour of its likely source may be entirely practical. The Italian lexicon tends towards multiple meanings, ambiguity and paronomasia, more so than English, thus 'dolci' can be both sweet and 'savory', whilst 'tormento' translates as both 'torment and adversite'. Furthermore, the Italian language boasts a greater wealth of inherent rhymes than medieval English, words that almost call out to one another. As a result any English poet-translator will find themselves occasionally forced to dissect single terms into their synonyms in order to create a rhyme – 'tormento' becomes 'torment and adversite' in order to correlate with 'he' (402) and 'me' (404). Likewise 'lamento' in the second quatrain is extended to 'my waillynge and my pleynte' (408) for the sake of 'feynte' (410) and 'queynte'(411). Thus Chaucer organizes a mutually beneficial cooperation between form and content within his translation – four lines become seven for the sake of the rhyme – espousing a policy of marriage rather than molestation; like Troilus himself Chaucer must 'consente' in order to succeed.

This in turn poses a further question concerning both the translative ratio(nale) and the underlying method behind Chaucer's alteration of Petrarch's *rime*: does the translation create the form, or does the form enable the translation? Again the answer lies in consent and cooperation; indeed, should we even be questioning Chaucer's translation in terms of cause and effect – is it not rather that the form necessitates the

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[20] As Wilkins points out: 'One other theoretically possible source remains: Coluccio Salutati made a Latin verse translation of this sonnet, beginning *Si fors non sit amor*. But this translation was made from the early text of the sonnet, and Chaucer agrees with the final Italian text rather than with Salutati at the points at which the Italian and the Latin versions differ' (*The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, p. 307). Again, see the Introduction (*passim*) for a more detailed discussion of formal interrelation.

content, and therefore the consent, and vice versa in a continuously reciprocal cycle? This may appear somewhat like avoidance of the question, but the question itself is perhaps irrelevant considering Chaucer's flexible approach to metrical constrictions. *Consento* for Petrarch is a matter of yielding to another ('E s'io 'l consento'), for Chaucer it signifies concord; although yielding can also produce concord but only if it is a mutual submission. Thus the antitheses which in Petrarch's *rime* threaten to tear the poet-speaker apart become a means of balanced consideration in the Chaucerian stanza. Petrarch's speaker wants to know if he is in fact experiencing love ('S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?'), whereas Troilus prefers to question its very existence ('If no love is'), and in doing so shifts the focus from the individual to the universal.[21] This transformation of perspective both stems from and enables the formal metamorphosis, as Spiller hints:

> It is worth recalling that *Troilus and Criseyde*, for all its sensitivity to the lovers' emotions and sufferings, is a medieval tragedy, not a modern one, and Chaucer's rendering of Petrarch pulls in that direction, and away from the valuation of individual experience. He seems to have engaged with a Petrarchan form whose structure he observed, but whose characteristically Petrarchan drive he chose to divert back into what he himself called 'pleynt', that is, the moral protest of man faced by the hostile forces of the universe. (*DoS*, pp. 66-7)

Just as the 'drive' in Petrarch's sonnet emanates from the tension between the disordered emotions trapped within – and therefore struggling against – the strictures of the form, the progression in Chaucer's rhyme royal rendition of the same sonnet develops out of the confluence which allows the content to extend beyond the rigours of the sonnet structure: content yields to form yields to content cyclically in a process of quasi-dialectical poetic development.

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[21] Chaucer's alteration of the nature of the question may stem from the nature of Italian syntax compared to English. In Italian the adverb 'non' will always precede the verb, in this case 'è'; thus 'S' amor non è' would translate syntactically as 'If love not is', but semantically as 'If it is not love'. This shows a deft translative sleight of hand on Chaucer's part, a deliberate misprision informed by knowledge of Italian grammatical nuance.

Similarly, Chaucer's view towards translation reflects his method in that it develops through compromise rather than domination, in some ways imitating Petrarch's approach, in others creating a respectful distancing from it. Chaucer, for example, would not view a translation as an 'attack', as Petrarch termed it. Nevertheless we may glimpse Chaucer's translative technique within the methodology that Petrarch advocates in his translation's framing epistle, which echoes the earlier letter:

> Not neglecting the precept of Horace in his *Art of Poetry*, that the careful translator should not attempt to render word for word, I have told your tale in my own language in some places changing or even adding a few words, for I felt that you would not only permit, but would approve, such alterations. (Robinson, p. 193)

Chaucer, if he is to follow Petrarch's – or rather Horace's – rules for translation, is therefore permitted to transpose *Rs* 132 into his 'own language [...] in some places changing *or even adding a few words* [my italics]'. In writing (and disseminating) such discourses on *translatio* Petrarch has offered up his own *corpus* for imitation, and set in motion the literary Petrarchism that would envelop all of Europe in the following centuries. He has sanctioned not only Chaucer's translation, but the translations of Wyatt, Surrey, Marot, Boscan and Sidney.

Yet an important question has remained unanswered throughout: why does Chaucer, whilst translating Boccaccio, suddenly – *in medias res* – invoke a Petrarchan sonnet? In order to answer this question it is vital that we endeavour to understand the degree to which Chaucer distinguished between Petrarchan lyric and Boccaccian narrative, which is not as simple a distinction as the presence of formal boundaries may lead us to imagine. As Giulia Natali points out:

> the structure of the *Filostrato* is altogether unusual in that it adopts a narrative form traditionally employed to entertain the public with accounts of battles to relate a story of love [...] the relationship between eros and epos has been reversed both

quantitatively and qualitatively so that the former has taken over the space and importance which was previously given to the latter.[22]

The form and genre of the *Filostrato* are dynamic, neither strictly narrative nor strictly lyric, but a midpoint between the two, punctuated as it is by *canzone* both sung and written (as *billets-doux*), and oscillating between the *vulgari eloquentia* of the *dolce stil nuovo* and the *poesia popolare* of the *canterini*. It is this multiple *intermezzo* status that Chaucer develops in his *Troilus and Criseyde* as a means of transcending the thematic constrictions of genre without incoherence, and which allows for the admission of Petrarch's *Rs* 132 as the *Canticus Troili* without producing a stasis in stylistic contiguity.

It remains to mention briefly one further aspect of Boccaccio's text that enables us to appreciate the facility with which Chaucer inserted Petrarch's *Rs* 132 into the *Troilus*: that is, Boccaccio's lyric stanzas which Chaucer replaces with his reading of the Petrarchan substitute. Troiolo's song in *Filostrato* I. 38-39 is fourteen and a half hendecasyllabic lines, just over a sonnet:

E verso amore tal fiata dicea
con pietoso parlar: – Signor, omai
l'anima è tua che mia esser solea;
il che mi piace, però che tu m'hai,
non so s'io dica a donna, ovvero a dea,
a servir dato, ché non fu giammai,
sotto candido velo in bruna vesta,
sì bella donna come mi par questa.

Tu stai negli occhi suoi, signor verace,
sì come in luco degno a tua virtute;
per che, se 'l mio servir punto ti piace,
da quei ti priego impetri la salute
dell'anima, la qual prostrate giace
sotto i tuoi piè, sì la ferir l' acute
saette che allora le gittasti,
che di costei 'l bel viso mi mostrasti. (I. 38-39)

(And to Love at times he said with reverential words: 'Lord, thine henceforth is the soul which used to be mine. This pleaseth me, for thou hast given me to serve I know

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[22] Giulia Natali, 'A Lyrical Version: Boccaccio's Filostrato', in *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 49-73 (pp. 50-51, 59).

not whether to say a lady or a goddess, for never was there under white veil in dark habit a lady so beautiful as this one appeareth to me.

Thou takest thy station in her eyes, true lord, as in a place worthy of thy power. Therefore if my service at all pleaseth thee, I beseech thee obtain from them the healing of my soul, which lieth prostrate at thy feet, so wounded it the sharp arrows which thou didst hurl at it when thou didst show me the lovely face of this lady.')[23]

Why omit Boccaccio's lines and replace them with Petrarch's? I am inclined to agree with John V. Fleming's assertion that Chaucer has 'invoked the profounder Petrarch to redress the amatory puerilities of Boccaccio'.[24] However, these 'amatory puerilities' belong to Troiolo rather than Boccaccio, despite the latter's age at the time of composition. As Fleming himself posits:

Troilus' response to love is distinctly literary, not merely in the sense that his behaviour reflects certain discernible literary traditions but in the sharper, more explicit sense that it is controlled by specific and identifiable literary texts. The most important of these in terms of Chaucer's philosophical ambitions is of course the *Consolation* of Boethius; but the first in the priority of its explicit introduction into Chaucer's poem is the *Canzoniere* of Petrarch. (p. 119)

Troiolo's song, which is displaced by Chaucer via the inclusion of the Petrarchan sonnet, is also 'distinctly literary', and shows Boccaccio using his character as a mouthpiece for a traditional lyric plaint. If the *Filostrato* is intended to depict, as Boccaccio avers in his *proemio*, a young lover's passage from immaturity to maturity through the bitter experience ('Amara esperienza', 6) of infidelity – a maturity never attained due to the premature death of Troiolo at the hands of Achilles – then such amatory and literary 'puerility' must surely be intentional, given the song's appearance in book I? However, whether Chaucer overlooked Boccaccio's irony here,

[23] See *The Filostrato of Boccaccio*, trans. by N. E. Griffin and A. B. Myrick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929), pp. 152-3, for the English translation. For the original see Vittore Branca, ed., *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, 12 vols (Verona: Mondadori, 1964), II, 1-228 (pp. 35-6).
[24] John V. Fleming, *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 183. Future citations will be included in the body of the text. The puerility must surely be a comment on Boccaccio's age at the time of composing *Il Filostrato*, even though, as we see repeatedly in the *Decameron*, he was perfectly capable of puerility in his later years. Boccaccio was born in 1313, and *Il Filostrato* composed *circa* 1335, although some critics place it around 1339-40. Wilkins for example places it *circa* 1339 due to certain Petrarchan echoes which can only have come from a reading of the early circulated version of the *Rime sparse* (compare for example *Fil.*, III. 83-5 with *Rs* 61). See *The Making of the "Canzoniere"*, p. 289. See also Gordon R. Silber, 'Alleged Imitations of Petrarch in the *Filostrato*', *Modern Philology*, 37 (1939), 113-24, for the counterpoint to Wilkins' claim, or rather a questioning of it.

or whether he saw it but still felt it did not justify the inclusion of an insipid reiteration of stock images and rhetoric, he nevertheless chose to replace it with a sonnet which suggested a character with the potential capacity for deeper thought and greater poetry.

II

The *Canticus Troili* may not be a *quatorzain*, or "true sonnet", but Chaucer's three stanzas of rhyme royal can at least be considered as a variation on the 'Petrarchan form whose structure he observed'; an idea that is reinforced by Chaucer's choice of metre, the self-containment of the *Canticus*, and its length (fourteen lines and half again).[25] However, if we are to investigate this claim to kinship with the sonnet we must return to the remaining stanzas of the *Canticus*:

> S'a mia voglia ardo, onde 'l pianto e lamento?
> S'a mal mio grado, il lamenter che vale?
> O viva morte, o dilettoso male,
> Come puoi tanto in me, s'io nol consento? (*Rs* 132, 5-8)

> And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
> From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
> If harm agree me, wherto pleyne I thenne?
> I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.
> O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
> How may of the in me swich quantite,
> But if that I consente that it be? (*TC*, I. 407-13)

The opening lines of Chaucer's stanzas certainly conform to Spiller's translative ratio, '4 to 7; 4 to 7; 4 and 2 to 5 and 2' (*DoS*, p. 66). That is to say that the first two stanzas of the *Canticus* correspond with the two quatrains of *rime incrociate* (crossed rhymes: ABBA ABBA) which constitute the octave, while the final stanza contains the sestet.[26] As we see in the second stanza, Chaucer continues to shift between verbatim

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[25] The notion of the true English sonnet would not emerge until the sixteenth century thanks to critics such as George Gascoigne (*c.* 1535-1577). See Introduction, pp. 12-3.
[26] This final act of insertion produces the effect of impending closure that we experience in the sonnet form.

translation, line extension, addition and omission in an imitation of Petrarch's own method of *translatio*. However, Chaucer is not simply 'adding a few words'; if this were the case the rhyme royal stanza would docilely follow its corresponding quatrain *al coda* before attaching three extra lines as a kind of poetic addendum.

Such simplification would never be admissible for Chaucer; indeed, such a mechanical process would serve no purpose, it would neither test nor express the poet's ability. Similarly, Chaucer refuses simply to place Petrarch's *corpus* on the rack, his approach has no desire to stretch the sonnet form out of dispassionate poetic curiosity. Rather the *Canticus Troili* is a testament to Petrarch's immortality, a means of showing that the Petrarchan *corpus* continues to live and evolve organically even after the death of the author. Comparison allows us to witness this evolution as it occurs, for example in the second stanza. The first line of the Italian becomes the opening lines of the rhyme royal, perhaps as Chaucer's language cannot express Petrarch's sentiments within the same metrical constraints; it takes Chaucer twenty syllables to translate what Petrarch manages in eleven. However, this is not a weakness on the part of the English poet, but rather a matter of poetic choice. To illustrate this point,[27] Chaucer translates Petrarch's second line ('S'a mal mio grado [...] ') as his third ('If harm agree me [...] '), without any metrical problems whatsoever.

The lines appear to expand and contract as if the body-text were breathing, an idea reinforced by Chaucer's insertion of a line that has no correspondent in the Italian: 'I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte'.[28] If the opening lines of the Chaucerian stanza signify inhalation and the third line exhalation (expansion and contraction), then the

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[27] That he *chose* to extend Petrarch's line through coalescence with the form, rather than through necessity.

[28] John M. Fyler makes a similar claim for *The House of Fame*, when he describes how it 'moves in a diastolic / systolic rhythm of expansion and collapse'. See *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 25.

fourth line represents the 'mezza state';[29] the point between inhaling and exhaling, a state of breathlessness which causes the speaker to 'feynte'. Yet Chaucer, rather than transpose the third line of Petrarch's quatrain on to two lines, translates it as one, and thereby continues to exhale. The line itself is focussed upon inspiration and expiration, in both the Italian and the English; 'O viva morte, o dilettoso male', effortlessly becomes 'O quike death, O swete harm so queynte'; the distinction between living and dying being blurred by oxymoron following that midpoint between inhalation and exhalation signified by the addition of the fourth line.[30]

However the key to the stanza's erratic artificial respiration may lie in Chaucer's inclusion of 'queynte', and how it relates to Shoaf's discussion of translation.[31] *Queynte* is an English word that Chaucer has added specifically, a word that has no correspondent in the Italian. In addition to the familiar definition, denoting the strange, the cunning or the curious, it is also a medieval slang term for the pudendum, in particular the female genitalia.[32] In relation to Shoaf's statement then, that the 'translator is always at some risk of becoming a rapist', may we ascribe the erratic exhalation and inhalation of the translation to an underlying sexual metaphor? Shoaf certainly helps us toward such a conclusion:

> if discourse is a kind of intercourse, intercourse is also a kind of discourse, a dialogue and dialogic that can ignore one of the partners [...] only at the risk of discovering too late that she can speak for herself, and of herself.[33]

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[29] Surrounded as it is by three lines either side.

[30] The overall effect of this formal inhalation and exhalation is to embody the image of the lover sighing as he lies upon his bed, as Chaucer posits prior to the *Canticus*: 'And whan that he in chambre was allone, | He doun upon his beddes feet hym sette, | And first he gan to sike, and eft to grone [...] And over all this, yet muchel more he thoughte | *What for to speke, and what to holden inne*' (358-60, 386-7 [my italics]).

[31] See Larry D. Benson, 'The "Queynte" Punnings of Chaucer's Critics', *SAC*, Proceedings No. 1 (1985), 23-47.

[32] See the Glossary to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by F. N. Robinson, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974; repr. 1979). See also *queint(e* (2a-b) in the *MED*. In all likelihood the term stems from the ON *kunta*, and is actually a pun on the ME *cunte*.

[33] Shoaf, p. 114. Rape of course signifies the sexual only in the strictest biological sense, it is not sexual in the sense that sexuality is often confused with sensuality – rape is concerned with power, not with the erotic. Petrarch's assault on Boccaccio's tale was born of a desire for mastery, as was Walter's despoilment of Griselda ('la fece spogliare ignuda', *Dec.* X. 10). The eroticization of the body-text, in this instance, does not enter into it.

Yet as we know, Chaucer's translations rely on 'consente' rather than coercion, courtship and marriage rather than molestation. Is it therefore conceivable that Chaucer's *mezzo* stanza, with its direction towards the 'queynte', and its formal emphasis on breathing and breathlessness, represents a poetic generation, the process of the source giving birth to the translation? The relationship, for Chaucer, between translator and source is *de facto* a marriage, the result of which is the translation, the offspring that bears the characteristics of both its parents.

Of course, this interpretation is almost entirely dependent on our reading (or misreading) of a single word, and a translated rhyme scheme which may be altogether coincidental, even arbitrary, although this is unlikely. Yet it is an interpretation that is partially reinforced by the inhaled question of the closing couplet: 'How may of the in me in swich quantitie | But if that I consente that it be?'[34] The familiar problem faced by any translation is the inevitable identity crisis it must undergo; does it belong to the source or the translator, who as Shoaf posits, 'puts his [body] in (the place of) the other'? This problem of identity is at the core of the third stanza, in which the roles of source, translator and translation are constantly held up to scrutiny in an attempt to provide the *Canticus* with the answers to the questions asked by the sonnet:

E s'io 'l consento, a gran torto mi doglio.
Fra si contrari venti in frale barca
Mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
Se lieve di saver, d'error si carca
Ch'i' medesmo non so quell ch'io mi voglio,
E tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno. (*Rs* 132. 9-14)

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. Thus possed to and fro,
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, betwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
Allas, what is this wondre maladie?
For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye. (*TC*, I. 414-420)

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[34] One of Petrarch's lines again expands to become two of Chaucer's, as occurred in the opening lines.

The correspondence between the English and the Italian lines here attains a level of complex integration that almost confounds distinction. This is perhaps due to Chaucer's adaptation of Petrarch's entire sestet within his seven line stanza, a process which necessitates fluid expansion and omission. The vital elements of the Petrarchan sestet are present within the final stanza, but they cannot be traced as exactly and to the same degree of symmetry as the preceding verses. However, the Chaucerian stanza's central metaphor provides a sense of unity that its predecessors lack, although this centripetal tendency finds its source in the crisis of identity that concluded the previous verse. Chaucer's opening line and its enjambed hemistich agree to follow the first line of the Petrarchan sestet without complaint; indeed, the lines form around this central 'consento'. But it is from the middle of Chaucer's second line through to the couplet that the stanza finds its true centre, both in terms of form and content, adding as it does a much greater significance to the original metaphor. For Petrarch the image of the fragile bark ('frale barca') caught at sea ('in alto mar'), torn between two winds ('contrari venti'), signifies the poet-lover's psychosomatic *confusum*; *id est*, is love a mental or a physical state? For Chaucer it also represents the flux and reflux of translation. The anxiety felt by Troilus echoes the poet's anxiety of influence as the translation finds itself 'possed to and fro' between the source and the translator; as Shoaf says, 'the substance will be between him and his original'. Just as we witnessed the poem's nascent *individualismus* in the second stanza, as it inhaled Petrarch and exhaled Chaucer, so in the confusion of the third stanza do we see the translation continuing to search for a fixed identity.[35] The stock image of the seafarer gathers resonance from this quest for poetic selfhood, as the translation is caught 'betwixen

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[35] See Wallace, pp. 56-60 for a discussion of early modern individualism. See also Greenblatt's seminal *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). The question of paternity/maternity is one addressed by Shoaf, as Chaucer translates into English he is in fact continuing the contest between Latin, or patriarchal discourse, and the vernacular, the "parlar materno" (*Purgatorio* 26. 117)' (p. 120).

Wyndes two'; one blows it towards *trecento* Italy, the other back to fourteenth-century England.

This voyage of self-discovery by extension then leads us to re-examine the question of periodization that we are inevitably faced with when drawing any comparison between Chaucer and Petrarch. Is Chaucer's *Canticus* a medieval text or does it belong to a Renaissance mindset? Alternatively, is it still even feasible for us to be discussing literature in accordance with such terminology? David Wallace thinks not:

> No magic curtain separated 'medieval' London and Westminster from 'Renaissance' Florence and Milan; all sites were interlinked for Chaucer (and, indeed, through Chaucer) as part of a transnational nexus of capital, cultural, mercantile and military exchange [...] suspend belief in cultural partitions such as 'medieval', 'Renaissance' and 'humanist'. There is nothing going on in Petrarch and Boccaccio that cannot, with profit, be brought into intelligible relation with Chaucer. (pp. 1-7)

From this perspective the question of identity within the final stanza is nullified, and Troilus finds himself 'Amydde the see' that Chaucer has traversed many times before.[36] The translation seeks a single identity that is at odds with Chaucer's 'transnational' ideology, an outlook that renders 'cultural partitions such as "medieval", "Renaissance", and "humanist"' almost entirely redundant. The poem therefore cannot continue to be torn between its Italian (or Renaissance) inheritance and its English (or medieval) attributes, as it is the legitimate offspring of the marriage

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[36] Chaucer, in addition to his early experience of the Italian families who resided near his father's Vintry, had made many diplomatic visits to Italy, the first being possibly around 1368 following Prince Lionel's marriage to the daughter of Galeazzo Visconti (although this visit was not officially recorded, and therefore cannot be certified). In 1372-3 he was granted a commission that took him to Genoa and Florence. On 8 June 1374 Chaucer became the customs controller for 'wool, sheepskins and leather' (Benson, p. xvi), a post that he held for the next twelve years, which brought him into daily contact with that 'transnational nexus' described by Wallace. See the valuable account of Chaucer's life by Martin M. Crow and Virginia E. Leland in Benson (pp. ix-xxii), and the first chapter of Wallace's *Chaucerian Polity* entitled 'Chaucer in Florence and Lombardy' (pp. 9-64). See also Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); the essays by John Larner, Janet Coleman, and Wendy Childs in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; repr. 1994); and Howard Schless's introduction to *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1984). It is interesting to consider, in relation to Chaucer's matrimonial *translatio*, that his first potential visit to Italy in 1368 – although this journey is now largely discredited – would have been to attend the marriage of an Englishman and an Italian *donna*.

between the two, the product of a poetic diplomacy which negates what James Simpson has termed 'the disabling logic of periodization' (p. 44).

If this is the case, however, what are we then to infer from these 'wyndes two | That in contrarie stonden evere mo'? The answer to this question may lie in the integration of the *Canticus* within *Troilus and Criseyde* as a whole, and the encompassment of the politico-literary relationships that are inherently linked to Chaucer's experience of Italy. The contraries to which Troilus refers – although they find their source in Petrarch's 'contrari venti' and the antitheses that constitute the sonnet – may represent the presiding genii of the *Troilus* and the *Canticus*: Boccaccio and Petrarch.[37] The contrasting ideologies of these two poets to some extent exemplify the dominant political thought of Chaucer's Italy. Boccaccio's *brigata* of the *Decameron* and the *Filocolo* represent his commitment to Florentine republicanism, whereas the isolated individual of Petrarch's *Rime sparse* points towards Lombard despotism. Both of these models provide Chaucer with an indication of the direction in which the political 'wyndes' of change may be blowing in England, as Wallace argues:

> These polarized Italian options offered Chaucer (as poet and political subject) clarifying visions of possible English futures [...] The discrete yet mutually defining paradigms of Florence and Lombardy serve not only to clarify the possibilities of English polity but also to reveal its extraordinary complexity. (p. 63)

Chaucer's best known works, *The Canterbury Tales* (*c*. 1387-1400) and *Troilus and Criseyde*, would appear to imply that he favoured Boccaccio, but pieces such as the *Canticus* and *The Clerk's Tale* declare a simultaneous loyalty to Petrarch. Is it perhaps

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[37] As Petrarch states in *Sen.*, XVII. 3: 'You [Boccaccio] can easily imagine the warlike stir about me, for, far as I have been from actual participation in the disturbances, I could not but be affected by the critical condition of the state' (Robinson, p. 191).

Chaucer's allegiance that finds itself 'Amydde the see'?[38] Possibly, yet the political element, as Wallace avers, is not to be discounted; after all Chaucer, in the final years of his life, witnessed the accession of Henry IV following the removal (and relative despotism) of Richard II. Thus the *Canticus Troili* can perhaps be said to pre-empt, albeit embryonically, the politicized sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey.[39]

But where does this leave the translation at its finish in relation to its source? Chaucer omits the opening line of Petrarch's final tercet, opting instead to contain the final lines of the sonnet within his own closing couplet, with particular attention being paid to the sonnet's parting antitheses: 'For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye'. The *Canticus*, with the insertion of its last words, achieves the sense of closure that Petrarch's *rime* seeks ('e tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno'). Chaucer ensures finality with 'I dye', whereas Petrarch's 'verno' (winter) of discontent inherently suggests that soon spring will be come again, and the cycle will begin anew, which it does in *Rs* 133. The "death" of Troilus at the close of the *Canticus* thereby acts a guarantee that this will be Chaucer's only foray into the sonnet, at least in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

What then has been achieved by Chaucer's translation of Petrarch? Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, Chaucer has set a precedent by being the first English poet to translate not only a Petrarchan sonnet, but any work of Petrarch's, thus granting a legitimacy for later poets such as Wyatt and Surrey who would go on to popularize the form in England. Secondly, Chaucer has indicated the wide range of themes that the sonnet may explore: not only introspective courtly love, but also the body

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[38] Of course, Chaucer also relied on the other great *trecentisto*, Dante, most obviously in the *House of Fame*, but also in *Troilus and Criseyde*. See for example III. 1261-7; IV. 225-8; V. 1541-7; V. 1863-5; which draw upon *Para.*, III. 13-8; *Inf.*, III. 112-4; *Inf.*, VII. 73*ff*.; and *Para.*, XIV. 28-30, respectively. For a detailed discussion of Chaucer's relationship with Dante see Schless.
[39] Chaucer's political sympathies would, after all, have been torn between the King and the dispossessed son of his patron, John of Gaunt (although this, admittedly, was after the writing of *Troilus and Criseyde*).

language of the materialist psychology; the complexity of politics (and the body-politic); and the self-reflexive nature of sonnet writing and translation itself. Finally, Chaucer lays the formal foundations for the English sonnet by producing a translation of a Petrarchan sonnet that includes iambic pentameter (not the hendecasyllables of the Italian), rhyming couplets and twenty-one lines that echo the original fourteen in accordance with a definite observance of sonnet structure. What Chaucer has left for English poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a formal legacy that would provide a possible basis for the English sonnet as we know it today; what he has left for modern scholars is a navigable passage between medieval and Renaissance poetry, between *trecento* Italy and fourteenth-century England.

Chapter 4
Lydgate's Lyrics: Reception, Transition and Transmission

There is, in the hundred lines and more [of the *Floure of Curtesye*], not a single detail of descriptive visualisation, almost as if Lydgate were responding to a sense of challenge. This type of description (or non-description) seems to have been, at least at such length and so systematically constructed, Lydgate's own development, and he developed it probably because the more familiar type of female description was now outworn. This older technique of description was in the form of an inventory or catalogue of physical excellences. The poet would begin at the top, with the lady's hair, and then work his way downward, through eyes, nose, mouth, teeth, and so on, with a wealth of predictable detail and conventional imagery.

(Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 98)

We never see a totalizing description of Laura [...] given an entire volume devoted to the 'painting' of one woman, the absence of an attempt at a coherent or comprehensive portrait is significant. Laura is always presented as part or parts of a body. When more than one part figures in a single text, sequential inclusive ordering is never stressed.

(Nancy Vickers, 'The Body Re-membered', p. 102)[1]

I

The poetry of John Lydgate (*c*.1371-1449) ought to be the last place one looks when tracing the development of the English sonnet, for a variety of reasons. The first and most obvious reason stems from the charge which his poetry cannot possibly refute, namely prolixity. Of the 140, 000 lines Lydgate is thought to have produced there is not a single sonnet, and this should not surprise us. Given the academic debate as to whether or not Chaucer himself apprehended the nature of the form when he translated Petrarch's *Rs* 132 as the *Canticus Troili*,[2] the likelihood of Lydgate recognizing a form entirely alien to him within Chaucer's three stanzas of rhyme royal is negligible. Also, Lydgate's own pronouncements upon the nature of poetry in

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[1] Nancy J. Vickers, 'The Body Re-membered: Petrarchan Lyric and the Strategies of Description', in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols Jr (London: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 100-9. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[2] The dimensions of the *Canticus* suggest that he did. See previous chapter, p. 139.

his *Fall of Princes* (a translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*) initially reinforce his obliviousness to the allure of the sonnet's condensed brevity:

> For a story which is nat pleynli told,
> But constreynyd vndir woordes fewe
> For lak off trouthe, wher thei be newe or old,
> Men bi report kan nat the mater shewe;
> These ookis grete be nat dou*n* ihewe
> First at a strok[e], but bi long processe,
> Nor longe stories a woord may not expresse. (I. 92-8)[3]

However, this is a redaction of Laurent de Premierfait's justification regarding his own *amplificatio* of Boccaccio's original.[4] And although it is an ethic of which Lydgate appears to approve, it does not necessarily render him antipathetic to abbreviation, as Pearsall avers:

> though Lydgate is by nature long-winded, he knows when this kind of elaborate tautology is not appropriate, and can write in a comparatively abbreviated, aphoristic style [...] Such a passage stands beside many others in Lydgate which advocate brevity as the ideal of style, and no doubt both views [*amplificatio* and *abbreviato*] could be accommodated in a poetic loosely formulated as [being] Lydgate's. (*JL*, pp. 8, 233)

Lydgate can allow himself to be 'constreynyd undir woordes fewe', not perhaps to the extent that he would ever have considered or approved of the sonnet form had he known of its existence, although had Chaucer openly advocated it one suspects that Lydgate would have had no option but to emulate his much-praised 'maistir'.[5] Yet this is not to say that Lydgate played no part in the sonnet's transmission from Italy into England. As we shall see, he is instrumental in the preparation of an aesthetic and an audience which would eventually embrace Wyatt's translations, even if he himself was unconscious of the historical role he was fulfilling.

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[3] *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. by Henry Bergen, 4 vols, EETS, ES 121-4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1927; repr. 1967). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[4] It is generally accepted that Lydgate worked exclusively from Laurent's French translation and probably never encountered Boccaccio's Latin.
[5] See for example *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. by Henry Bergen, 4 vols, EETS, ES 97, 103, 106 and 126 (London: Kegan Paul, 1906-1935), II, 4697-4700, or *Fall of Princes*, I. 246-52. See also Jackson C. Boswell and S. W. Hilton, 'References to Chaucer's Literary Reputation', *ChR*, 31 (1997), 291-316.

It is necessary at this point to clarify the argument and the influence that Lydgate had upon the arrival of the English sonnet form. I am not attempting to attribute to Lydgate a "Renaissance" or "early modern" poetic. Nor am I proposing as some critics have done that Lydgate was a fully-fledged humanist, despite the circumstantial evidence to support such a claim (for example his link with Humphrey of Gloucester).[6] I agree with Pearsall not only in that Lydgate is 'perfectly representative' of his age (*JL*, p. 14), but also in his opinion that any attempt to shunt him forward into the *cinquecento* 'would be flat on its face in the mud'.[7] Unlike Pearsall, I also concur with the arguments of Walter Schirmer – that 'Lydgate's life falls in a restless period of transition from the old feudal order to a new system'[8] – and Alan Renoir, who believes that the responsible reader must

> take Lydgate for what he was: neither a poet of the fourteenth century nor one of the sixteenth, but simply a poet of the fifteenth century in England whose works reflect the intellectual climate of his time and country. In brief, Lydgate can be done justice only if we accept him as a poet in transition.[9]

Lydgate *is* representative of his age, but it is an age of *transition*, as both Schirmer and Renoir posit. It would be mistaken to claim that he belonged to the age of Erasmus, but equally erroneous to aver that he was no more than a relic from the age of Chaucer. Lydgate was somewhere *in medias res*, belonging to neither yet

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[6] I do not doubt Lydgate's credentials, but have neither the time nor the space required to do this case justice, and a number of texts in recent years have already testified to Lydgate's cultural and historico-political import. See for example, Lee Patterson, 'Making Identities in Fifteenth Century England: Henry V and John Lydgate', in Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, eds, *New Historical Study: Essays in Reproducing Texts, Representing History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 69-107; James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, ed. by Jonathan Bate, The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2: 1350-1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002; repr. 2004); Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes: Narrative Tragedy in its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). See also David Lawton's seminal 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH*, 54 (1987), 761-99. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[7] Derek Pearsall, 'The Apotheosis of John Lydgate', *JMEMS*, 35 (2005), 25-38 (p. 31). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[8] Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. by Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961), p.16. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[9] Alan Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 143. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

connecting both. His poetry by extension represents not only an historical-discursive isthmus which refutes the arbitrary practice of discrete periodization, but also a poetical *intermezzo*, and it is from this perspective that I intend to examine his courtly love lyrics.

The ways in which Lydgate's poetry charts the progression from Chaucer to Wyatt prepares us for the second reason we would not ordinarily look for intimations of the sonnet in Lydgate: he 'had no Italian'.[10] Whilst I defer to Duffell in every other aspect of his exacting argument for the Italian origins of iambic pentameter, I would disagree, pedantically, upon this single point. Lydgate may not have spoken Italian, and he never studied in Padua, as some earlier historians and critics had claimed (Bale and Morley for example), but this is not to say that his work was devoid of Italian influence, far from it. The earlier belief that Lydgate had studied in Padua may even stem from the perception of an Italianate undertone in some of his works. Or perhaps it was the fact that he translated works by Italian authors such as Boccaccio and Guido della Colonna. However, it was the Latin works of these authors which Lydgate translated. Similarly, the Petrarch Lydgate was familiar with was the Latin author of *De remediis*, not the poet-lover of the *Rime sparse*.

Nevertheless, we cannot help but notice the affinity between Pearsall's and Vickers' respective accounts of Lydgate's and Petrarch's descriptive strategies. Both poets implicitly dismiss *effictio* ('an inventory or catalogue of physical excellences') by refusing to practise it. The 'sequential inclusive ordering' of the beloved's figure absent from Petrarch's "portrayal" of Laura is also absent from Lydgate's courtly lyrics, and this is not entirely coincidental.

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[10] Martin J. Duffell, '"The craft so long to lerne": Chaucer's Invention of the Iambic Pentameter', *ChR*, 34 (2000), 269-88 (p. 284).

In the first instance there is the question of form, and what we might term a poetic consanguinity between the rhyme royal and sonnet forms (via the *strambotto / ottava rima*). Lydgate's poetic output, mostly composed in rhyme royal, was in fact an unconscious mass production of an Italianate verse form, which itself would help lay the foundations for the creation of the English sonnet; the latter with its characteristic closing couplet which it most likely inherited from the rhyme royal. As Maura Nolan has argued in relation to Lydgate's poetry of the Lancastrian minority, 'there are critical moments in Lydgate's writing during this period at which we see emergent forms lurking beneath the medieval conventions of which it is comprised' (p. 13).[11] The notion of an English sonnet, or its equivalent, does not completely vanish following Chaucer's translation of 'S' amor non è', only to resurface in the Henrician court, but assumes a different, almost pseudonymous guise in Thomson's 'small group of rhyme royal stanzas' which 'provides a medieval equivalent to the Renaissance sonnet – an equivalence to which some colour is lent by the "Canticus Troili"' (p. 116). It is also vital to remember that Wyatt's audience would have been familiar with the works of Lydgate, who was still considered at that time to be on a par with Chaucer and Gower, and whose works were printed by Pynson (in 1494) and the same Richard Tottel (in 1554) who published the works of both Wyatt and Surrey just three years later.[12] Furthermore, such an audience would have been more *au fait*

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[11] Nolan focuses on the poetry produced by Lydgate during the minority of Henry VI, who acceded to the throne when he was only nine months old following the premature death of Henry V on August 31st, 1422. Nolan posits that 'as the traditional form of kingship was vigorously asserted in the face of the necessity of conciliar government', so does Lydgate 'turn to traditional form [...] an attempt to appropriate its stability, its resistance to temporality and change, as a way of compensating for the radical uncertainty brought about by the loss of Henry V. As a close look at these texts shows, however, matters are not that simple' (p. 27). A central feature of my own argument is that those 'emergent forms' are inchoately present in the (allegedly) earlier courtly lyrics.

[12] It is unlikely that there would have been a seismic demographic shift between 1554 and 1557 (had it occurred it would have been a year later with the death of Mary I). The same audience who read Lydgate would have read the 'songes and sonnets' of *Tottel's Miscellany*. Petrarch's *Trionfi*, translated into English in by Lord Morley, were also published in 1554.

with Lydgate's secular rather than his religious works, which largely disappeared from publication after 1534.[13] Hence the sonnet, when it finally arrived, achieved popularity at court because it was 'reformist' rather than 'revolutionary', to use Simpson's terminology (p. 35), novel but reassuringly familiar in the light of unsettling political and religious upheaval. As Nolan posits in relation to Lydgate's 'manipulation of form':

> those moments at which forms are altered, invested with new content and thereby reshaped, become extremely significant [...] historical change – typically understood as the operation of contingency in time – provokes a response in which form [...] is activated as a way of providing generic stability in the face of historical uncertainty. In the process, it is subjected to the intense pressure of radical contingency and thereby remade, sometimes with surprising results. (pp. 7-8)

And it is not only a shared poetic gene pool which links Lydgate's rhyme royal lyrics to the sonnet, but also a descriptive strategy which arises out of Lydgate's and Petrarch's shared inheritance of a poetical-rhetorical tradition, set down in the *artes poeticae* of medieval commentators such as Geoffrey of Vinsauf (*Poetria Nova*) and Matthew of Vendôme (*Ars versificatoria*). As we have seen, Petrarch often substitutes the *effictio* for an implicit, autoreflexive emphasis upon the physical beauty of the textual form. This semiotics of *cupiditas* tantalisingly suggests both the perfection and the absence of the *donna angelicata* through formal harmony and symmetry, as the body-text displaces the body. Lydgate adopts a similarly implicative methodology in the *descriptio feminae* of his courtly lyrics, using the physical frame of the rhyme royal stanza, or the conjoined rhyme royal stanza unit, as an alternative means of embodiment for the abstract virtues. The corporeal virtues manifest, as Laura does in the *Rime sparse*, an absent presence which is inextricably bound up with the form of the text, constituting what Jaeger terms the 'textual contract', which is drawn up

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[13] Although Lydgate's secular works inevitably began to struggle as the Reformation politicized literary taste. See chapter 2 of Simpson ('The Energies of John Lydgate'), pp. 34-67. See also Mortimer, pp. 8-9.

between body and text in order to counteract their 'mutual insufficiency'.[14] The examination of Lydgate's lyrics will show that the contract eventually written out between body and text is not as straightforward as a simple *pictura poesis*, painted or dressed in the colours of rhetoric, as the body is that pure naked form which exists beneath such ornament; the canvas upon which the rhetorical decoration is applied.[15] Yet before we can merit the lyrics the attention they deserve, there remains one final precondition to consider: Chaucer.

II

A. C. Spearing, amongst many others, has noted that, following Chaucer, the fusion of form and meaning becomes a primary poetic concern, and 'Lydgate and other early disciples clearly recognized and attempted to imitate this new musicality, in which the garment of eloquence seems scarcely distinguishable from the body of sense'.[16] This does not entail an analysis of Lydgate only 'as a reflex of Chaucer' (Simpson, p. 43); rather one ought 'to examine the nature of Lydgate's Chaucerianism [...] while at the same time attempting to identify the merit of the later poet's work'.[17] Indeed, the critical history of Lydgate is inextricably bound up with that of Chaucer, as Pearsall posits:

> There is something quite touchingly ironic in the fact that it was Lydgate who helped to make the way broad for Chaucer's poetry to be accessible to later readers, particularly by ensuring that the language of the poetry was more widely and

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[14] C. Stephen Jaeger, 'Charismatic Body – Charismatic Text', *Exemplaria*, 9 (1997), 117-37 (p. 128).
[15] See Introduction, p. 6.
See Sheila Delany, *The Naked Text: Chaucer's Legend of Good Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 115-52: 'For a medieval writer, the desire for naked text [free of rhetorical *descriptio*] is even more problematic than for a modern, complicated as it is by the intertextual nature of medieval poetic production [...] if we are to imagine text as a naked body, we can only think of it as Protean, capable of infinite incarnations' (pp. 117-35). Delany is drawing upon discussions of the naked text in Chaucer, for example in *LGW* (G 85-8), and the *The Romaunt of the Rose* (6555-7).
[16] A. C. Spearing, 'Lydgate's Canterbury Tale: *The Siege of Thebes* and Fifteenth-Century Chaucerianism', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. by Robert F. Yeager (Hamden: Archon, 1984), pp. 333-64 (p. 344).
[17] Ibid., p. 338.

serviceably current, and that it is Lydgate who is trampled underfoot in the flood of admirers who flock to the older poet.[18]

The subsequent audience would inevitably pass through Lydgate in order to reach Chaucer, and from this perspective Lydgate may be seen as responsible for his own critical fate. He did profit from his connection with Chaucer well into the seventeenth century, and was commended by Warton and Gray, amongst others, in the eighteenth, but with the advent of Joseph Ritson's *Bibliographia Poetica* in 1802 his career took an almost irreversible turn for the worst.[19] Lydgate's reputation has never quite recovered from Ritson's dismissal of his 'stupid and fatigueing [*sic*] productions, which by no means deserve the name of poetry, and their stil [*sic*] more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer'.[20] Ritson's bile infected later critics such as Lounsbury and Saintsbury, who, like their predecessor, 'searched the works of Lydgate in the hope of finding Chaucer', but were duly disappointed (Renoir, p. 56).

Modern criticism has largely adhered to this praxis of comparative evaluation, but rather than reviling Lydgate for not being Chaucer, has approached from the opposite direction, as Simpson argues:

> The clichés are now 450 years old, but criticism still repeats them, caught as it is in the disabling logic of periodization [...] the discussion of other, 'medieval' writers, and especially of Lydgate, was generated by saying that they were *not* like Chaucer, and that in their unlikeness they conform to their age. Where Chaucer is a 'Renaissance' poet, his fifteenth-century imitators are irredeemably 'medieval'. (pp. 44-6)

Again Lydgate was, of course, partly culpable, as his works repeatedly align themselves with Chaucerian precedent: his *Temple of Glas* is built upon the same

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[18] Derek Pearsall, 'Chaucer and Lydgate', in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. by Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 39-53 (p. 40). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[19] See Renoir's and Mortimer's opening chapters for Lydgate's critical heritage.

[20] Joseph Ritson, *Bibliographia Poetica: A catalogue of English poets of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centurys, with a short account of their works* (London: Roworth, 1802), p. 88.

foundations as Chaucer's *House of Fame*; the *Siege of Thebes* is an addendum to *The Canterbury Tales* (whereby Lydgate's narrator effectively becomes a hybrid of Chaucer's Monk, Canon and Clerk); whilst the *Complaint of the Black Knight* recalls both the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Book of the Duchess*. In the midst of such mimesis it is necessary to recall not only the translative nature of medieval literary culture, but also Lydgate's motivation, critical reception of which may be interpreted as variations upon a theme – the dilemma of establishing poetic individuality in the light of a figure that instigates the English canon.[21] As Spearing argues, 'the fatherhood of Chaucer was in effect the constitutive idea of the English poetic tradition' (*Medieval to Renaissance*, p. 92).

Yet Lydgate's emulation of Chaucer is not an enclosed action; rather acknowledgement of his illustrious predecessor is the necessary first step in the process of extrication. It is possible to view Lydgate's reaction to Chaucer as following the same binary model upon which his adherence to both *amplificatio* and *abbreviato* is based. When we encounter such encomia as that in book II of the *Life of Our Lady*,

> And eke my maister Chaucer is ygrave
> The noble rhetor, poete of Brytayne
> That worthy was the laurer to haue
> Of poetrye, and the palme atteyne,
> That made firste, to distille and rayne
> The golde dewe, dropes, of speche and eloquence
> Into our tunge, thurgh his excellence. (1628-34)[22]

it becomes necessary to bear in mind its counterpoint in *The Floure of Curtesye*:

> Chaucer is deed, that had suche a name
> [...]
> We may assay for to countrefete
> His gay[e] style, but it wyl not be. (236-40)[23]

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[21] See Simpson, pp. 62-5.
[22] Joseph A. Lauritis and others, eds, *A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 1961), p. 426.
[23] For all of Lydgate's shorter poems I have referred to *The Minor Poems*. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

Praise is enabled in both examples by Chaucer's death, after which he may be placed upon one of the pedestals which upheld the figures of Virgil, Ovid and Lucan in his own *House of Fame*. Furthermore, Lydgate emphasizes the futility of mimesis, Chaucer's style 'wyl not be' counterfeited. Such praise constitutes a securing of Chaucer, a removal of him to an eminence whereby his influence may only exude benevolence.[24] This elevation may be seen as the natural method by which the subsequent poet writes within and subverts the potentially egregious shadow of his predecessor, and it is a process which must be diligently worked out in the poetry.

Pearsall is thus correct when he speaks of Lydgate's attempts to provide 'not a servile imitation of Chaucer, but a *de luxe* version of Chaucer' ('Chaucer and Lydgate', p. 44). Lydgate is working away from the light of the Chaucerian sun, yet it still casts a shadow, and Pearsall's phrase is presumably to be read as a further asseveration of Lydgate's inability to escape from beneath the Chaucerian aegis.[25] But it is erroneous to posit Chaucer as a singularity; the English poetic tradition is part of an international poetic continuum, and is understood as such by Chaucer himself:

Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
[...]
But litel book, no makyng thow n'envie,
But subgit be to alle poesye;
And kis the steppes, where as thow seest pace
Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace. (*TC*, V. 1786-92)

Moreover, Chaucer is actually adding to a poetic tradition of adding one's self to a poetic tradition, as Wallace reminds us, 'Like Jean, Dante and Boccaccio before him, Chaucer takes sixth place in a series of six poets, completing a poetic fraternity that

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[24] Petrarch did the same to Dante, as Kenelm Foster has posited: 'Having thus "placed" Dante, Petrarch can easily dispose of the "odious and ridiculous" rumour that he envied him'. See *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. 29.
[25] See Daniel T. Kline, 'Father Chaucer and the *Siege of Thebes*: Literary Paternity, Aggressive Deference, and the Prologue to Lydgate's Oedipal Canterbury Tale', *ChR*, 34 (1999), 217-235. Kline draws on Spearing's Bloomian reading of post-Chaucerian poetry, as expounded in both *Medieval to Renaissance*, and 'Lydgate's Canterbury Tale' (elements of the latter reappear in the former).

conjoins the pagan past and the Christian present'.[26] Thus in addition to Lydgate's

osmotic reception of an Italianate form there is the reception of an Italianate tradition

of concatenation, which by its very nature must continue beyond him.

In terms of an evolving formal tradition this concatenation does continue, but

another continuum is set in motion by Lydgate's references to Chaucer: that of critical

idiom and literary history. One cannot help but notice the affinities between Lydgate's

praise of Chaucer in the *Troy Book* and Puttenham's 1589 eulogy of Wyatt and

Surrey:

> Noble Galfride, poet of Breteyne,
> Amonge oure englisch þat made first to reyne
> Þe gold dewe-dropis of rethorik so fyne,
> Oure rude langage only t'enlwmyne. (II. 4697-700)

> two chieftaines, who hauing trauailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and
> stately measures and stile of the Italiã poesie as nouices newly crept out of the
> schooles of *Dante Arioste* and *Petrarch*, they greatly pollished our rude & homely
> maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before. [27]

Yet the core of Lydgate's extolment stems from Chaucer's own work, and we

recognize the Clerk's reference to 'Frauncys Petrak [...] whos rethorike

sweete | Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie' (*CProl.*, IV E 31-33). Lydgate often aligns

himself with the Clerk, the scholar of 'Padowe', which helps to explicate further the

myth that he studied in Padua. For example, in the *Siege of Thebes* when the Host

demands of him, 'To telle a talë / pleynly as thei konne [...] some tale / of myrth'

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[26] David Wallace, 'Chaucer and Boccaccio's Early Writings', in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; repr. 1994), pp. 141-62 (p. 151). See *Inf.*, IV. 85-103: 'ch' e' sì mi fecer de la loro schiera, | sì ch'io fui sesto tra cotanto senno' ('for they made me one of their band, so that I was sixth among so much wisdom', 102-3).
[27] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 60. C. David Benson suggests that we 'should honor Lydgate for his critical acumen (and consider him the patron saint of academic Chaucerians)'. See 'Critic and Poet: What Lydgate and Henryson Did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Writing After Chaucer: Essential Readings in Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Daniel J. Pinti (New York and London: Garland, 1998), pp. 227-41 (p. 239). Benson nevertheless makes his dislike for Lydgate as a poet quite clear.

(138, 68),[28] recalling the words spoken in the *Clerk's Prologue*: 'Telle us som murie thyng [...] Speketh so pleyn at this tyme' (*CProl.*, E IV 15, 19). Importantly, the *Clerk's Tale* is dependent upon the securing of Petrarch just as Lydgate repeatedly secures Chaucer, 'He is now deed and nayled in his cheste' (*CProl.*, E IV 29). To paraphrase Barthes, the death of the *auctour* is necessary for the birth of the reader/rewriter.[29]

We need to recognize the dissimilarity between Lydgate and Chaucer not in terms of lesser and greater poet respectively, which is the charge that Simpson levels against previous Lydgate critiques, but with reference to Lydgate's deliberately differentiated style. It would not only be unfair but, as Pearsall avers, unwise 'and singularly pointless to criticise Lydgate for lacking precisely what he has spent the resources of a very considerable art in trying to avoid' (*JL*, p. 103).

One way in which Lydgate deliberately distances himself from Chaucer is via Jaeger's formal body-text 'contract' which refutes the *effictio* and broadens the way for the self-reflexivity of the English sonnet. Lydgate does not emphasize psychological introspection – at least not his own – but by omitting physical description of the object in his courtly lyrics he indirectly contributes to the development of the subjective lyric. The absence of the expected, external physicality of the *effictio* inevitably results in an increased awareness of the internal physicality which replaces it, producing a self-reflexive poetics. As Maura Nolan argues,

> Lydgate's seemingly simple texts are far from being monologic and straightforward [...] [they] are distinguished by layers of textual complexity and ambiguity, and particularly by poetic and dramatic self-referentiality [...] works that are clearly

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[28] See Axel Erdmann and E. Ekwall, eds, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, 2 vols, EETS, ES 108, 125 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1911-30), I, 8-9.

[29] See Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's praise for Petrarch, in *The Fall of Princes*, VIII. 64-86. The description is unmistakably akin to Lydgate's praises of Chaucer. See also Schirmer, p. 221; Robert J. Meyer-Lee, 'Lydgate's Laureate Pose', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 36-60 (p. 50).

identifiable as 'literary' texts, written by a poet who clearly saw himself responding to other 'literary' texts, within an identifiable tradition of such writing. (pp. 22-8)[30]

Lydgate's lyrics implicitly refer to their own artistry, their own process, which is evident in a poem such as *A Ballade, of Her that hath All Virtues*:

> Fresshe lusty beaute, ioyned with gentylesse,
> Demure appert, glad chere with gouuernaunce,
> Yche thing demenid by avysinesse,
> Prudent of speeche, wisdam of dalyaunce,
> Gentylesse, with wommanly plesaunce,
> Hevenly eyeghen, aungellyk of visage:
> Al þis haþe nature sette in youre ymage.
>
> Wyfly trouthe with Penelope,
> And with Gresylde parfyt pacyence,
> Lyche Polixcene fayrely on to se,
> Of bounte, beaute, having þexcellence
> Of qweene Alceste, and al þe diligence
> Of fayre Dydo, pryncesse of Cartage:
> Al þis haþe nature sett in youre ymage.
>
> Of Nyobe þe sure perseueraunce,
> Of Adryane þe gret stedfastnesse,
> Assured trouthe, voyde of varyaunce,
> With yonge Thesbe, exsaumple of kyndnesse,
> Of Cleopatres abyding stabulnesse,
> Meeknesse of Hester, voyde of al outrage:
> Al þis haþe nature sette in your ymage.
>
> Beaute surmounting with feyre Rosamounde,
> And with Isawde for to beo secree,
> And lych Iudith in vertu to habounde,
> And seemlynesse with qwene Bersabee
> Innocence, fredame, and hye bountee,
> Fulfilled of vertu, voyde of al damage:
> Al þis haþe nature sette in youre ymage. (1-28)[31]

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[30] See also James Simpson's '"For al my body…weieth nat an unce": Empty Poets and Rhetorical Weight in Lydgate's *Churl and the Bird*', in ibid., pp. 129-46.

[31] We cannot date Lydgate's lyrics with any certainty. J. Schick, in his introduction to *TG* (p. c), posits that the courtly lyrics were likely to have been composed around 1400-3. Renoir (p. 50) suggests a possible later date – 1420 – for *The Temple of Glas*, due to the reference to the Paston family motto in line 310 (William Paston married Agnes Bury in 1420). Janet Wilson argues that 'the earlier date of 1403 proposed by Schick and Schirmer is the more likely one', whilst Julia Boffey claims that there is 'no real support for this view, and indeed the outlines of Lydgate's career suggest that his middle years were the period of most intense activity on behalf of the secular patrons and audiences who might have found *TG* to their taste'. See 'Poet and Patron in Early Fifteenth-century England: John Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*', *Parergon*, 11 (1975), 25-32 (p. 26); *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 16, respectively. Finally, Pearsall claims that the courtly poems were probably written in the 1420s-early 1430s; see *John Lydgate (1371-1449): A Bio-bibliography*, ELS Monograph Series, 71 (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1997), pp. 14, 31. What is more important than the date of *TG*'s composition is its popularity and its contribution to the *rezeptionästhetik* which assimilated the sonnet; Boffey points out that it was 'printed by Caxton *c.* 1477 (STC 17032), and in several other editions well into the sixteenth century' (p. 18).

The poem's form is, as its title proclaims, 'A Ballade' in the style of the French medieval *dits amoreux*, complete with refrain and *l'envoi*. Yet there is a minor, but discernible, shift away from those French poems with which Lydgate was so familiar – characteristic of what Nolan describes as Lydgate's 'unique deployment of residual forms with unexpectedly new contents' (p. 26).[32] The French octosyllables are replaced by decasyllables, and the poem as a whole consists of seven stanzas of rhyme royal, imbuing it with a formal harmony for the poet to work within (seven times seven). The refrain is semantically altered with every repetition as it is absorbed by the couplet of the rhyme royal, thereby providing each stanza with an individuate status, yet without rupturing the sequential flow.

Physical *descriptio* is rendered superfluous by the symmetrical harmony of the form, which provides a spatiotemporal perfection for the reader to see. If the physical virtues are expressed by the poem's physical structure as it appears on the page, Lydgate need only focus upon the abstract qualities which complete the figure of the text's idealized 'Her'. This suggestive displacement of corporeal via poetic form is in fact supported by the French *auctours* of the *artes poeticae* who informed late medieval aesthetics. As Hass posits:

> The bulk of [Geoffrey of Vinsauf's] discussion is devoted to the prescription of epithets that portray a body that is aesthetically pleasing – a form that is ordered, proportionate [...] The attributes of the beautiful (order, proportion, color) are the components of good poetry. In addition to being associated with verse, aesthetic characteristics comprise the beautiful female form at the same time that the female body is presented as a text [...] Reading a beautiful poem resembles viewing a beautiful woman, and both processes evoke pleasure.[33]

Furthermore, Lydgate's avoidance of physical *effictio* presents the body-text as naked, even though his intention in the omission of such description is most likely to

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[32] For an account of Lydgate's relationship with the French tradition see Susan Bianco, 'A Black Monk in the Rose Garden: Lydgate and the *Dit Amoureux* Tradition', *ChR*, 34 (1999), 60-8.
[33] Robin R. Hass, '"A Picture of Such Beauty in their Minds": The Medieval Rhetoricians, Chaucer, and Evocative Effictio', *Exemplaria*, 14 (2002), 383-422 (pp. 392-7).

maintain a sense of propriety. A monk writing courtly love lyrics is one thing, a monk dipping his quill in what Cowell terms the 'dye of desire', which stains the beauty of the unadorned body-text, is another.[34] Lydgate may have been the unofficial Poet (L)aureate of the fifteenth century, but when it comes to the rhetorical ornamentation of the female body he directs his accretion towards the abstract virtues, not the palpably manifest.

As has been argued, one effect of such a methodology is the production of an increasing self-reflexivity inherent within the text, akin to that which we later encounter in the sonnet.[35] When one reads the opening stanza of Lydgate's description of the perfect lady, one cannot help but notice that almost every adjective may be read as reflecting back upon the descriptive strategy which the poet employs in order to convey 'Her'. The opening line declares the poem's reformist aesthetic novelty: 'Fresshe lusty beaute'. The second hemistich, however, serves as a caveat to assuage any alarm which may have been caused by its predecessor; the poem and its style are 'Fresshe' in their hybridization of French and Anglo-Italianate poetic traditions, but 'ioyned with gentylesse'. The stanza continues in this explanation of its process, focusing as it does upon the conjunction of elements which are brought together under the form's 'gouuernaunce'. The body-text is calm and composed ('Demure') but also open to examination of its parts ('appert'). Lydgate's poem, like his lady, has 'Yche thing demenid by avysinesse' and is 'Prudent of speeche'. The connection between the female body and the text which conveys it is reiterated in the vagueness of 'wommanly plesaunce' – the apprehension of the poem evokes the same

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[34] Andrew Cowell, 'The Dye of Desire: The Colors of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Exemplaria*, 11 (1999), 115-39.
[35] See for example chapter 1 of Sandra L. Bermann's *The Sonnet Over Time: A Study in the Sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare and Baudelaire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 10-50, for a detailed discussion of Petrarch's 'use of the lyric collection as a self-reflexive, indeed a self-creative device' and his 'self-anatomizing figures of speech' (pp. 15-6).

pleasure in the male reader as does the apprehension of the female body – before a stock outline of the *donna angelicata* ('Hevenly eyeghen, aungellyk of vysage') signals the arrival of the couplet.[36] The refrain compares, and to a certain extent aligns 'nature' with the artistic, signified by 'ymage', which reinforces the argument that the description is directed towards itself. It is not the ostensible object (the lady) who possesses 'Al þis' but 'your ymage', the body-text, in accordance with the *artes rhetoricae*.

The refrain, which deliberately highlights Lydgate's undoubted source, the 'Balade' from Chaucer's prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, invites comparison with the Chaucerian equivalent – 'My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne' (F 255); 'Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne' (G 209) – in a display of intertextual distinction. Chaucer's refrain directs the virtues of his stanza and its referents towards 'My lady', Lydgate points to 'your ymage', that is *his* poem. As with all of Lydgate's Chaucerian echoes, it is necessary both to acknowledge influence and recognize deliberate, subtle alteration:

Hyd, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere;
Ester, ley thow thy meknesse al adoun;
Hyd, Jonathas, al thyn frendly manere'
Penelope and Marcia Catoun,
Mak of youre wyfhod no comparisoun;
Hyde ye your beautes, Ysoude and Eleyne:
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

Thy fayre body, lat it nat apeere,
Laveyne; and thow, Lucresse of Rome toun,
And Polixene, that boughte love so dere,
Ek Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,
Hide ye youre trouth in love and youre renoun;
And thow, Tysbe, that hast for love swich peyne:

[36] See for example the 'angelica forma' of Petrarch's *Rs* 90, or the initial description of Chaucer's Criseyde: 'So aungelyk was hir natif beaute, | That lik a thing immortal semed she' (*TC*, I. 102-3), which is in fact a translation of Boccaccio's 'sí bella e sí angelica a vedere | era, che non parea cosa mortale' ('she was so beautiful and so angelic to see, that she did not seem to be a mortal thing', *Fil*. I. 11). See *Filostrato*, in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca, 12 vols (Verona: Mondadori, 1964), II, 15-228 (p. 28). The translation is my own.

Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

Herro, Dido, Laodomya, alle in-fere,
Ek Phillis, hangynge for thy Demophoun,
And Canace, espied by thy chere,
Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,
Mak of youre trouthe in love no bost yt which ne soun;
Nor Ypermestre or Adriane, ne pleyne:
Alceste is here, that al that may disteyne. (*G* 203-23)

As Chaucer's prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* exists in two texts (F and G) it is difficult to place the text which Lydgate may have known and worked from. There is every possibility that Lydgate depended upon a manuscript containing elements of both surviving texts, but which is no longer extant. Such a possibility would perhaps explain Lydgate's reference to 'Alceste' (to whom Chaucer's entire *'Balade'* is dedicated but whose name does not appear in the F text version), and the resonance of the F text's refrain in Lydgate's 'al this'. Yet Lydgate clearly reworks his *ballade* in other ways, for example the inclusion of Chaucer's 'Greseylde' and 'Rosamounde', which reaffirms the poetic genealogy cited by Chaucer himself at the close of the *Troilus*, and by extension ratifies Lydgate's appension to it.

It is possible that Lydgate is selecting specific referents from Chaucer's catalogue, the relation of whose virtues may correlate with the adjectives which he has reserved for his own descriptive strategy (for example the 'trouthe' of the rhetorically unadorned body-text).[37] Yet he moves beyond autoreflexive adjectives such as 'stedfastnesse' and 'stabulnesse' to an exposition of what his body-text lacks: 'voyde of variaunce [...] voyde of al outrage'. Such undescription, which has no counterpoint in Chaucer's version, works paradoxically to create a "fuller" figure, as exemplified in line 27: 'Fulfilled of vertu, voyde of al damage'.

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[37] In this he perhaps echoes John of Garland's 'apparent vilification of the feminized text and textualized woman [...] Ornamental language and the female body, according to John, are deceptive in nature and dangerous in their allure, whereas the "naked text" reflects truth' (Hass, pp. 399-400). See *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland*, trans. by Traugott Lawler (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 90-93.

In fact, Lydgate's use of 'outrage' and 'damage' provides another potential reason for his divergence from Chaucerian *descriptio*:

> The authorial intent and thematic purpose behind the portrait of a beautiful woman perpetuate the definition of the female body as desired object, while holding the body accountable for the deeds done to it. [...] The ideology that informs Matthew [of Vendôme]'s proposed depiction of the female body [in the *Ars versificatoria*] promotes fictive rape and in so doing supplies discursive fodder for a rape culture. (Hass, p. 390)

Lydgate refuses to supply his readership with such 'discursive fodder', at least in his courtly lyrics, and does so by employing terms that suggest his awareness of the practical effects of literary theory – both 'outrage' and 'damage' serve as synonyms for rape (*MED*). Of course the process whereby 'fictive rape' manifests itself in actual molestation through the inordinate desire of the male reader aroused by the *effictio* also works in reverse. The refusal to incorporate such dangerous and impious description displays Lydgate's disgust at the prospect of committing such 'outrage' upon the 'Innocence, fredame, and hye bountee' of the body-text. Lydgate's translation of Chaucer's '*Balade*' thus follows Chaucerian translative methodology, which shuns molestation in favour of consent.

However, Lydgate's great respect for his idealized Lady and her referents also contrasts with Chaucer's overall attitude towards his paragons of womanhood, which is, as his refrain asserts, one of 'disteyne'. Virtues are incorporated only to be repeatedly negated at the close of the stanza, whereas those listed in Lydgate's revision culminate in and are subsumed by the refrain. Furthermore, the Lydgatean litany of virtues, as has been mentioned, constitutes an accretive removal of the physical 'ymage' from the reader's field of imaginative vision, and so may be considered an implicit refiguring, or rather disfiguring, of Chaucer's explicit negation. Yet it is an accretion achieved through reduction, displaying Lydgate's ability for *abbreviatio*. Of the twenty-two figures who appear in Chaucer's twenty-one lines,

Lydgate includes only eight, although he complements his selection with two Chaucerian heroines ('Gresylde' and 'Rosamounde'), two Biblical figures ('Bersabee' [Bathsheba] and 'Iudith'), and one classical heroine ('Nyobe'). In accordance with the descriptive ethic of the entire poem Lydgate must expurgate the four male figures (Absolon, Jonathas, Demophoun and Jasoun) and erase physical *descriptio* such as 'gilte tresses' and 'fair body'.[38]

Lydgate's laudatory epithets are, like their referents, selected carefully, each attempting to contain the quintessence of the allusion whilst providing a catalogue of virtues which elude definition; terms such as 'bounte, beaute' and 'diligence' that tend towards a cumulative obfuscation of the figure. Just as the sense of the physical ideal is dependent upon our awareness of the poet's handling of the form, so does the description of that ideal lie beyond the descriptive content of the stanza. Lydgate presupposes an audience not only familiar with the heroines of Homer ('Penelope') and Virgil ('Dydo'), but also with contemporary poets who continue the lineage, with 'Gresylde' suggesting not only Chaucer, but also Petrarch and Boccaccio.[39] Lydgate's lady receives her physical virtues from the text's reflective 'ymage', but the description of those virtues develops out of the reader's interaction with other texts. The *corpus in absentia* becomes a composite of intertextual poetic beauty created across literary history, and the lack of specificity allows it to be individualized by

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[38] One may in fact apply this line from Chaucer to Lydgate's descriptive strategy throughout the courtly poems: 'Thy fayre body, lat it nat apeere', that is, let it not be 'appert', open to voyeuristic desire.

[39] It is not known whether Lydgate read the Latin or the Italian tale of Griselda, although we do know that copies of Petrarch's translation were circulating in Britain in the mid-fifteenth century. See *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism in the Fifteenth Century: Catalogue of an Exhibition held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, compiled by Tilly de la Mare and Roger Hunt (Oxford: Bodleian, 1970), pp. 33-4 (Oxford, Magdalen College MS. Lat. 39, fol.1). Lydgate was connected to the Chaucer family through patronage, and may have had access to his *maistir*'s books (see Schirmer, pp. 59-62; Pearsall, *JL*, pp. 160-3). Larry Scanlon's discussion of Lydgate's reading of Griselda implies knowledge of her pre-Chaucer existence, but no evidence is given. See 'Lydgate's Poetics: Laureation and Domesticity in the *Temple of Glass*', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, pp. 61-97 (pp. 80-91). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

each reader – we are given the opportunity to re-member the body in accordance with our own *rezeptionästhetik.*

However, 'mere classical name dropping is not enough to earn a poet his place among the Renaissance humanists' (Renoir, p. 72), and Lydgate is undoubtedly relying upon his Chaucerian example at the very least in terms of structure. Yet it would be erroneous to suggest that Lydgate was almost entirely ignorant of the works of antiquity, given the fact that he had access to one of the greatest libraries in England, had studied at Oxford, and had the foremost early English humanist for his patron.[40] *Florilegia* were available to the fifteenth-century reader, just as they were to his/her sixteenth-century counterpart, but in Lydgate we sense a deeper affinity between the author and his exempla than we would of a lesser poet in possession of a who's-who in classical literature. This sense perhaps stems from those quintessential, almost Homeric epithets: Penelope is the perfect example of 'Wyfly trouthe', an apt description of the woman who remained true to her absent husband's memory through the continual deception of her suitors. Similarly, 'fayre Dydo', another abandoned heroine whose fate was less happy than that of the wife of Odysseus, is associated with 'diligence'. Whilst fairness and diligence may appear as poetic platitudes, they seem less so when the reader recalls that both Dido's success and her failure were born of her great beauty and dedication.[41] Yet despite the likelihood of Lydgate's familiarity with classical texts, a number of the referents here may be found in Chaucer's *Legend.* Nevertheless Lydgate's organization and expurgation of these

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[40] See Renoir, p. 41. See also Roberto Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), in particular chapters 3 and 4, for an impression of Humphrey's substantial humanist library, which would later form the base of the university library at Oxford. See also De la Mare and Hunt.

[41] 'Diligence' may be interpreted as a reference to Dido's success in tricking Iarbas through her determined creation of Carthage, whilst her fairness attracted those who feared her (Iarbas himself), and drove her to her death (Aeneas).

figures, and the autoreflexive adjectival phrases he assigns to them stem from his own desire to provide the '*de luxe* version of Chaucer' which Pearsall argues for.

This is achieved formally by transplanting Chaucer's rhyme royal stanzas from their original narrative framework, and embedding them within his own structure in order to achieve a greater sense of harmony. After the three Chaucerian stanzas are concluded the tone undergoes what may be described as a *volta*:

> What shoulde I more reherce of wommanhede?
> Yee beon þe myrrour and verray exemplayre
> Of whom þat worde and thought accorde in deede,
> And in my sight fayrest of alle fayre,
> Humble and meek, benygne and debonayre,
> Of oþer virtues with al þe surplusage
> Which þat nature haþe sette in your ymage.
>
> I seo no lack, but oonly þat daunger
> Haþe in you voyded mercy and pytee,
> Þat yee list not with youre excellence
> Vpon youre seruantes goodely for to see;
> Wher-on ful soore I compleyne me,
> Þat routh is voyde to my disavauntage,
> Siþe all þees vertues be sette in youre ymage.
>
>   Lenvoye.
>
> Go, lytel balade, and recomaunde me
> Vn-til hir pyte, hir mercy, and hir grace;
> But first be ware aforne, þat þou weel see
> Disdayne and daunger be voyde out of þat place,
> For ellys þou may have leysier noon, ner space,
> Truwly to hir to done my message,
> Which haþe alle vertues sette in hir ymage. (29-49)

Lydgate surprises the Ritson reader here by offering up a refutation of prolixity: 'What shoulde I more reherce of wommanhede?' One suspects that he considered cessation following the completed redaction of Chaucer's stanzas, yet wished to achieve the formal unity which the poem finally offers in its numerical harmony of seven stanzas of seven lines each. As such the *ballade* represents the successful conjunction of *abbreviato* and *amplificatio*.

The existence of the body-text is reinstated in the fifth stanza through the blurring of the beloved with her 'ymage'. It is unclear to whom 'Yee' refers to if we do not credit the poem's implicit self-orientation. If 'Yee' refers to the Lady then she herself is only an example, a signifier or reflection of one more accomplished than her, a 'myrrour and verray exemplayre | Of whom that worde and thought accorde in deed'. The pivotal preposition here prevents us from a reading of 'Yee' as *Her that hath all Virtues*. However, if we read 'Yee' as referring to the poem itself the lines make more sense: the stanzas are a true ('verray') reflection of one (the lady) who holds word, thought and action ('deed') – that is both abstract virtues and their physical manifestation – in perfect 'acorde'. Yet there is by extension of such interpretation a further reading: if 'Yee' does refer to the beloved then the one 'Of whom þat worde and thought acorde in deede' is the poem, and 'in my sight fayrest of alle fayre'. Art surpasses Nature in its 'Beaute surmounting' as the text displaces the body. There is indeed an argument to be made for such a displacement, as Pearsall says of Lydgate:

> Literature is closer to him than life, and the material of his poetry is experience strained through literary convention, or sometimes literary convention alone. Unlike the Wife of Bath he prefers 'auctoritee' to 'experience', and the Middle Ages on the whole shared his preference. So the taste for the concrete and the personal is faced with poetry which is systematically abstract and impersonal. (*JL*, p. 17)

Had Lydgate known of Petrarch's vernacular works we might have suspected a deliberate progression from the transposition of the lover into what Bermann terms an 'erotically charged plane of words' (p. 27) towards a semantic displacement devoid of erotic sentiment, or in which physical sexuality is reconfigured as abstract feminine virtues. One cannot help but be reminded of the accusations levelled at Petrarch concerning Laura's non-existence; that she had no "real-life" referent but was composed solely of text.

At this point in the poem we are forced to consider the nature of the speaker. In the *Rime sparse*, for example, we may understand the speaking-voice as constituting a hybrid poet-lover; not exactly autobiographical but not entirely removed from the author either. In Lydgate such a conjunction is not always possible; the speaker may be either real poet or abstracted lover, but not both.[42] In the *Ballade* we presume that Lydgate is presenting us with the voice of the late-medieval *amante*, and yet the poem's flashes of autoreflexivity occasionally obfuscate and present us with glimpses of the poet – an abstracted Poet figure of course, not Lydgate personally, although it remains impossible to put the two asunder.

It is the lover who knows of the lady's 'oþer vertues', that is, her physical attributes, of which she possesses, he is keen to remind us, a 'surplusage'. Indeed, it is the constraint of the lover's latent desire for the beloved's body that cannot manifest itself explicitly through *effictio*, due to the Poet's sense of propriety, which forms the basis of the penultimate stanza. The opening emphasis upon visible beauty and the speaker's privileged position – the lover as viewer of the beloved's body, 'I seo no lack' – prepares us for the 'but' which immediately follows. There is a lack, and it is the lack that the Poet has striven throughout to maintain; the absence of the revelation, and therefore submission, of the beloved's physical body to rhetorical *descriptio*, and by extension to the lover's carnal desire. Can the lady be said to possess all virtues if she is explicitly described as lacking 'mercy and pytee'? Clearly not, but can we take the desirous lover's claims at face value? Mercy and Pity can only be made manifest through response to external stimuli: we *show* both as reactions. The lover is pleading for such a demonstration. We are then forced to reinterpret the previous stanza(s) as

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[42] The peritext claims that 'Lydegate wrote [the *Ballade*] at þe request of a squyer þat serued in loves court', yet this does not make the identity of the speaker any less complicated, quite the opposite. To what extent can the Poet position himself in the role of the Lover who needs poetry to express love?

being directed toward this implicit request: 'worde and thought' must be shown to 'acorde in deed', else they cannot be said to exist. Ergo the accusation that the beloved is of 'routh [...] voyde to my disavauntage' is not only a request that she look 'Vpon youre seruantes goodely for to see', but simultaneously that *he* be allowed to look upon her 'goodely for to see'. To possess 'oþer' (physical) virtues in 'surplusage' (note the crucial addition of 'Siþe' to the refrain), and not share them with the lover – who is by this point 'ful soore' with desire – is a pitiless withholding. As Thomson argues, the 'idea of "pity" in it [the courtly love lyric] is [...] barbarous, for it simply means yielding to a lover's pressure' (p. 121). The lady is thus suspended within the paradox of having to relinquish one virtue (Chastity) in order to practise another (Mercy), and it is upon this painfully unresolved decision that we reach the envoy.

It is no accident that Lydgate's 'Go, lytel balade', reprises Chaucer's words at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* ('Go, litel bok, go litel myn tragedye', V. 1786), as Criseyde herself faced a similar moral dilemma, and the tragic culmination of Chaucer's poem may have been interpreted as advocating the retention of chastity at all costs: 'Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love [...] Swich fyn his lust (*TC*, V. 1828-31).[43] However, as in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the last word must go to the Poet, and not the lover, not only via the device of the envoy but also due to the indeterminacy of 'þat place', which may be read as referring either to 'hir' or to that

[43] There is no anaphorical equivalent in *Il Filostrato*, but there is a slight resemblance in the words spoken by Petrarch's countryman in the *Triumphus Cupidinis*: '"This [punishment] now comes of love!" [...] "This I have because of the harsh burdens of my chains which I carry [...]"' ('"Or questo per amar s'acquista!" [...] "Questo m' avven per l' aspre some | de' legami ch' io porto [...]"', I. 42-6). See Francesco Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. by Francesco Neri and others (Milan: Ricciardi, 1951), pp. 481-508 (p. 482). The translation is my own. Lydgate's views on Criseyde are expressed in the *Troy Book* (II. 4756-60). According to Lydgate, Guido (della Colonna) upbraids Criseyde for her 'newfongilnes' (II. 4762), and proceeds to a wider misogyny, which Lydgate relates before berating him for such an attitude (see III. 4264-448): 'My counseil is, liȝtly ouer passe | Wher he [Guido] mysseith of hir [Criseyde] in any place [...] Taketh noon hede, but late him be *with* sorwe, | And skippeth ouer wher ȝe list nat rede' (III. 4413-7).

'space' which contains her 'ymage'; the poem itself. The chiasmic 'daunger' of rhetorical revelation of the body-text – more adornment, by means of *effictio*, is added in order to establish less, whereas less detail reveals more of the naked physical-poetical form – is didactically emphasized: 'be ware aforne, þat þou weel see'. The ultimate displacement arrives in the poem's altered closing couplet, which declares the inextricable collusion of Art and Nature. It is in fact 'my message, | Which haþe alle vertues sette in hir ymage'. This last line is entirely dependent upon the reader: we may either interpet 'hir' as the Lady, in which case 'my message' has conferred virtue upon her ('sette [virtue] in hir ymage'); or 'hir' may refer to the poem itself which has the beloved's 'ymage' set within itself. As Robert J. Meyer-Lee has argued in relation to 'Lydgate's Laureate Pose',

> the great claim of the epideictic poet is that he or she brings into being a verbal double of the ideal nature of that which he or she praises. And in the extreme, this claim goes beyond analogy and insists that the poem has made manifest ideality per se. The most authentic poem of praise, in this sense, becomes an instance of the same ideal nature that makes the object praiseworthy in the first place. This understanding of poetic praise would have been quite familiar to Lydgate [...] the poem will be a memorial to itself.[44]

Thus, whilst the form contains the poem, it simultaneously gives rise to a self-reflexive semantic indeterminacy which ensures that though it may be 'constreyned undir woordes fewe', its meaning cannot be closed under them.

III

Yet there remains in the courtly love poems, despite Lydgate's ability to fuse *amplificatio* and *abbreviato*, an implicit debate between the enabling and disabling semantic and expressive effects of formal constraint, which would resurface in critical

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[44] 'Lydgate's Laureate Pose', pp. 42-7. Interestingly, Meyer-Lee claims that Lydgate's understanding of such epideixis stems from 'the theological commonplace that a human being being becomes most fundamentally Godlike when praising God' (p. 42), and proceeds to compare it with the Petrarchan discourse of laureation.

discussions of the sonnet. And if the ambiguous language of the *Ballade* subverts the poem into a thesis in favour of a self-sustaining poetic form, then the *The Floure of Curtesye* initially presents us with the ostensible antithesis:

> And so, for anguysshe of my paynes kene,
> And for constraynte of my sighes sore,
> I set me downe vnder a laurer grene
> Ful pitously; and alway more and more,
> As I beheld the holtes hore,
> I gan complayne myn inwarde deedly smerte,
> That aye so sore craunpisshed myn herte. (43-9)

Once again the shadow of Chaucerian influence hangs over the poem, and indeed it was originally credited as Chaucer's, being included in Thynne's 1532 edition. Yet Lydgate's poem veers between genres, including elements of both the dream vision framework and the *pleynt*: the sleepless poet reminiscent of the *Book of the Duchess*, roused from his bed by the sound of birdsong, which echoes the commotion of the *Parliament of Fowls*; yet the speaking voice is that of the Lover figure who appears in Chaucer's *Complaints*. The topoi are all too familiar, but, as in the *Ballade*, Lydgate's organization of and reaction to them render it more than what Schirmer terms 'yet another perambulation through the gardens of the French allegorical school in which the poet had so often wandered' (Schirmer, p. 34). *The Floure of Curtesye*'s status as 'a near-flawless piece of craftmanship' reaffirms Lydgate's preoccupation with form as semantic expedition, as Pearsall argues:

> its [Lydgate's love poetry's] significance [is] not in relation to real life but in the harmony of its parts [...] What counts is not recognition of the accuracy of the emotions displayed, but delight in the ordering of these emotions into a formal pattern which is internally coherent and harmonious and basically conceptual. (*JL*, pp. 94-7)

The overall distinction between life and text, if such a distinction can be said to exist at all, poses a problem for the reader of Lydgate's lyrics. Not all medieval monks were strangers to love (as Boccaccio frequently reminds us in the *Decameron*), which leads one to question what Pearsall terms 'our sense of the preposterousness of a monk

writing love-poems' (*JL*, p. 84). Petrarch had taken religious orders in 1330, which committed him to celibacy, at least in theory, and became Archdeacon of Parma in 1346; ought we then to dismiss the *Rime sparse*'s professions of love as absurd? To consider Lydgate as being entirely unfamiliar with the fundamental desire which is the animating principle of *fin amour* would perhaps be taking the computer analogy too far.[45] The London copyist John Shirley, who evidently knew Lydgate well, upbraids him for bewailing the infidelity of women via marginal comments which remind the Monk of Bury of his vocation: 'Be stille Daun Johan. Suche is youre fortune [...] be pees or I wil rende this leef out of your booke' (cited in Pearsall, *JL*, p. 75). A. C. Spearing also argues that the section of the *Temple of Glas* (196-206) which describes 'those who were entered into religious orders in their youth, and who must now hide their true feelings [...] was Lydgate's own situation', and that it 'is not, I think mere sentimentality that makes one detect more feeling and better poetry in this passage than in most other parts of the *Temple*'.[46] Yet this is not to aver that the speaking voice of the *Floure of Curtesye* is any less of a fictionalized subjectivity than that of Lydgate's *Testament*, or even Petrarch's *Rime sparse*. The Author we encounter in Lydgate's *amour courtois* poetry is as much of a fabrication as Chaucer's bumbling caricatures of himself; differentiated, but not entirely alien.

Nevertheless, Lydgate must be seen to extricate himself from any potential charges of impropriety, and he does so through a method which Wyatt would later

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[45] 'Lydgate's mind, like a computer, operates thus on a binary system [...] All passion is synchronised to this mechanism of contrast, so that every human situation becomes a dilemma, and every shade of feeling is resolved into a straight antithesis' (*JL*, pp. 113-4). Janet Wilson argues that, in *TG* at least, Lydgate is drawing upon the Boethian 'doctrine of contraries' (p. 30). The other sources of such antithetical thought are Ovid, and of course Petrarch, who provides an antithetical epistemology not only in his vernacular poetry but also in his Latin treatises. Petrarch's *De remediis*, which Lydgate knew (see *Fall of Princes*, prol., 257-68; Gloucester possessed 3 MSS of *De remediis*), draws heavily on Boethius's *De Consolatione*. See also F. N. M. Diekstra, *A Dialogue between Reason and Adversity: A Late Middle English Version of Petrarch's De remediis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968).
[46] A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 174.

adopt in his concealed references to Henry VIII: reliance upon acquittal by hermeneutics. In a quasi-Barthesian manner semantic responsibility passes from the Author to the Reader, who, to borrow Wolfgang Iser's term, 'concretizes'[47] the text through inference, and thereby enables the poet to plead *habeas corpus*, as Renoir posits:

> Whenever his poetry verges on the religion of love, he inserts whatever unobtrusive statements might of necessity afford him a technical plea of not guilty; whenever his topic includes an erotic situation, he either stops short of the expected conclusion or he makes it ambiguous enough to leave the actual consummation of the sexual act to the reader's imagination. [...] What Lydgate really expresses is the hope that the sentiment of love – perhaps even the desire for sexual experience – will drive the lady to grant her suitor's request before his passion kills him. Nor does he formulate a single explicit statement that might make his hope technically sinful in the monastic mind [...] it is we, and not the poet, who are disregarding the teachings of the Church. (pp. 84-5)

However, even if one were to maintain that Lydgate is entirely unversed in the actuality of 'Th' olde daunce' (*TC*, III. 365), wherein 'worde and thought acorde in deed', desire still insidiously permeates the text, as what Barthes terms *The Pleasure of the Text*:

> Does writing in pleasure guarantee – guarantee me, the writer – my reader's pleasure? Not at all. I must seek out this reader (must 'cruise' him) *without knowing where he is*. A site of bliss is then created. It is not the reader's 'person' that is necessary to me, it is this site: the possibility of a dialectics of desire [...] The text you write must prove to me *that it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself) [...] Does the text have human form, is it a figure, an anagram of the body? Yes, but it is our erotic body [...] The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do.[48]

What Barthes calls the 'dialectics of desire' are produced at the edges of Lydgate's body-text, at the points of reception. The first point of reception stems from Lydgate's taking of 'pleasure' in the Chaucerian or otherwise established *corpus* (that of Jean de

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[47] Iser's term is *konkretisation*, whereby the 'convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence'. See *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), pp. 274-94 (pp. 274-5).

[48] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), pp. 4-17. Carolyn Dinshaw discusses the significance of Barthes's concept for Chaucerian hermeneutics in *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), pp. 16-7.

Meun for example, or the *Somnium Scipionis*), and his desire for corporeal intermingling; a form of textual intercourse which is achieved through the re-membering of the precedent's *membra* in his own poem. The second dialectic is produced by Lydgate's "cruising" of his implied reader-body, whose status shifts from *voyeur of* to *active participant in* the textual intercourse.[49] However, an eroticized hermeneutics may produce feelings in the transitional author (in this instance Lydgate) which are tantamount to sexual frustration when the site of pleasure becomes, as surely as it is wont to do, the site of pain. Such moments manifest themselves in Lydgate's verse as recurrent devices, leitmotifs and topoi, such as the *paragone* – the indescribable figure of desire who renders the poet's ability impotent, and of which Petrarch's Laura is exemplar – and the topos of false modesty. The performance anxiety of false modesty is, in Lydgate's case, often an authentic admission of poetic impotence, as Renoir has argued (pp. 54-5).

Yet there is a remedy in Lydgate's poetry which restores Barthesian pleasure: an incorporating fabulation whereby textual frustration is subsumed by the body-text. As the above stanza from the *Floure of Curtesye* shows, the ordering, harmonizing process becomes part of the finished product. The restitutive beautification process through which frustration is assimilated by pleasure becomes almost an *essential* ingredient in the production of the body-text. The courtly Lover's 'anguysshe of my paynes kene' and 'sighes sore' are born of desire for 'actual consummation of the sexual act'. Yet the 'constraynte' of literary decorum necessitates that actual intercourse must be left to the reader's imagining. The lover is aware of this necessary absence, and so must also be constrained to imagination, the vividity of which leads

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[49] See A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

him to 'complayne myn inwarde deedly smerte'. The complaint thus replaces both 'the sexual act' and the imagined rhetorical *descriptio* of it which ought to provide provisional sexual-textual pleasure and release for the lover. It is a form of displacement, which mirrors the sexual act by replacing sexual climax and dissemination with rhetorical equivalents ('alway more and more | As I beheld [...] I gan complayne myn inwarde deedly smerte'), followed by the relative calm of the envoy. Such dissemination is intended to arouse the reader's own sexual desire via the *effictio* – the means by which the poet 'cruises' his reader, or, more disturbingly, promotes the 'rape culture' of which Hass speaks – which is absent in Lydgate. And so what is transmitted to the reader of the *Floure of Curtesye* is not the erotic imagining of the beloved's body-text but the space where it ought to be (but isn't). We may consider such a continuous deferral of sexual-textual frustration, which is in fact a deferral of absence, as a form of sexual Derridean *différance*.[50] Lydgate may have doubted the propriety of the traditional *effictio*, yet he has replaced it with an erotically charged absent presence which has twice the force of that which it is intended to displace.

Sexual-textual frustration is then heightened but simultaneously released by the 'constraynte' of the poetic form, the observance of which is another means of sexual displacement: akin to the self-flagellation and the wearing of hair-shirts by the pious. It is not by accident that the tree under which the lover 'set me downe', that is to say set himself and his desperate state down on parchment, is 'a laurer grene'; the poetic laurel which Petrarch had eroticized for future generations by paronomastically intertwining it with his beloved Laura. Lydgate again relies upon ambiguous epithets

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[50] Whereby meaning is created out of difference and so endlessly deferred. See Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

and adjectives which refer to both the lover's increasing desire ('alway more and more'), and therefore increasingly 'craunpisshed' state, and the 'constraynte' of the inherited parameters.

It may even be argued that Lydgate considers the possibility of returning to the more traditional romance form of the couplet when his solitary knight enviously reflects upon how 'The foules sytte, alway twayne and twayne' (52); birdsong traditionally being synonymous with the poet's song. Such a form would release rather than constrain desire as it is not self-contained, and therefore not self-reflexive, but rather copulative and open-ended. Yet such formal reflection of the copula would perhaps undermine the integrity of the knight's complaint of solitude, of being trapped within the desiring self, and so Lydgate begrudgingly maintains his *maistir*'s form:

> But man alone, alas, the harde stounde,
> Ful cruelly, by kyndes ordynaunce,
> Constrayned is, and by statute bounde,
> And debarred from al such plesaunce
> What meneth this? What is this purueyaunce
> Of God aboue, agayne al right of kynde,
> Without[e] cause, so narowe man to bynde? (64-70)

The language of received formal regulation in the first four lines of the stanza may be seen to reinforce the poem's self-orientation. The poet 'Constrayned is' by 'kyndes ordynaunce [...] by statute bound' both to and by the Chaucerian stanza, and therefore 'debarred' from the 'plesaunce' of the copulative French form; in both the grammatical and sexual senses of the word.[51] The autoreflexive interpretation gains credence from line 68's reference to Chaucer's translation of Petrarch, with 'What meneth this?' echoing Troilus's 'what fele I so? [...] what thing and which is he?'

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[51] The negative connotation of 'bound', however, is particular to this form of love complaint – Lydgate is at times perfectly capable of transcending the strictures of the rhyme royal stanza, as in the *Life of Our Lady*. See Phillipa Hardman, 'Lydgate's Uneasy Syntax', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, pp. 12-35 (p. 17).

(*TC*, I. 400-1). The *auctour* is then deified as the creator of the stanza form which itself recreates 'man alone', in accordance with the etymological principle of the poet (*poiein*, to create), and as such progresses to the 'purueyaunce' (providence) of the Barthesian Author-God; a term which Spearing associates with Lydgate's reception of Father Chaucer (*Medieval to Renaissance*, pp. 106-7).

However, the desire which rails against the stanza form's narrow bind reaffirms itself as the aetiology behind the adoption of that form:

> For I my herte haue set in suche a place
> Wher I am neuer lykely for to spede,
> So ferre I am hyndred from her grace
> That saue Daunger I have none other mede;
> And thus, alas! I not who shal me rede
> Ne for myne helpe shape remedye,
> For Male bouche, and for false Enuye. (78-84)

The 'herte' itself is synonymous with constraint – it was 'craunpisshed' in line 49 – and Lydgate here explains why. Both the lover's and the poet's desires have been, 'set in suche a place' whereby they may never achieve their objectives: sexual gratification and poetic renown respectively. Lydgate's admission that 'I am neuer lykely for to spede' appears somewhat prescient given the mauling he has received at the hands of critics who either deride him for not being Chaucer or, as Simpson posits, 'can praise Lydgate only as a reflex of Chaucer' (p. 43). The above stanza then may be read as representing the disruption ('I am hyndred') caused by Bloomian anxiety. The poet – temporarily focalized through the lover – does not know who will read his works ('I not who shal me rede') as precisely that, *his*, due to the 'grace' of the exalted figure who presides over the complaint: explicitly the lady, implicitly Chaucer. The question the poet is effectively asking is how that he may 'shape remedye' against critics who will accuse him of the 'false Enuye' that is mimesis; in the sense that imitation may be 'rede' as envy disguised as encomium. And not only does the poet fear that his Chaucerian inversions will arouse accusations of jealousy

on his part, but he also fears charges of inferior retelling or 'Male-bouche' through comparison with his source.

Yet the lover, and by extension the poet, confirm their loyalty by averring that

Whateuer I say, it is of du[we]te,
In sothfastnesse, and no presumpcion;
This I ensure to you that shal it se,
That it is al vnder correction,
What I reherce in commendacion
Of her, that I shal to you, as blyue,
So, as I can, her vertues here discryue. (106-12)

The interpretation of the lover's desire as being synonymous with that of the poet gains credibility from the St Valentine's Day trope (see *Book of the Duchess*), through which the customary letter equates sexual frustration with textual representation. It is 'you that shal it se', not "you that shal it hear", which reinstates the pleasuring of the reader who is superimposed on to the lady as the object of desire. Lydgate's 'du[we]te' to his predecessor expresses itself in a characteristic display of false modesty, yet his description of it places everything under a form of Derridean erasure, 'it is al vnder correction'.[52] The poem, in its finished state, remains oddly unfinished, subject to a semantic indeterminacy born of the same hermeneutic process whereby it is brought into existence; again stressing the incorporation of frustration as essential to the poem's completion. The reference to 'her' not only signifies the beloved lady but also the beloved pretext from which the poet draws inspiration, just as the lover's song is inspired by his internalized image of the beloved.[53] The feminization of the earlier text is enabled by the textualization of the female form which Hass speaks of,

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[52] This line is itself a 'correction' of *TC*, III. 1331-2: 'For myne wordes, heere and every part, | I speke hem alle under correccioun'. Lydgate's admission is doubly erased, both in its admission of incompletion and in the fact that it does not belong to him.

[53] As Geoffrey of Vinsauf posits: 'the work is first measured out with his [the artist's] inward plumb line, and the inner man marks out a series of steps beforehand, according to a definite plan; his heart's hand shapes the whole before his body's hand does so [...] Let the mind's inner compass circumscribe the whole area of the subject matter in advance', *Poetria Nova*, trans. by Jane Baltzell Kopp, in *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*, ed. by James J. Murphy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 27-108 (p. 34). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

and which decrees that 'writing is a masculine act, an act performed on a body construed as feminine' (Dinshaw, p. 9). Yet Lydgate's dilemma is that the matter he wishes to feminize already possesses a very definite shape, and he by extension must 'shape remedye' to cure himself of accusations of servile mimesis.

As we have seen in the *Ballade*, this remedy is concocted by digression from Chaucerian *effictio*, whilst retaining the shape, the form, which embodies the abstract 'vertues'. In other words, shape *is* 'remedye'. Lydgate himself counsels in *A Dietary, and a Doctrine for Pestilence*, that to remedy illness one must 'Dryve out a mene, excesse or scarsete, | Set thi botaill vpon temperaunce' (79-80). Accordingly, he avoids the 'excesse' of *effictio*, but retains the stanza form in order to avoid 'scarsete', and thereby achieves 'temperaunce', as he posits:

> And ouer this in her dalyaunce
> Lowly she is, discrete and wyse [and fre],
> And goodly glad by attemperaunce,
> That every wight of high and lowe degre
> Are glad in herte with her for to be;
> So that shortly, if I shal not lye,
> She named is 'The Floure of Curtesye'. (141-7)

The autoreflexive language of this stanza is not fully revealed until its final line, whereupon 'her' and 'she' are unveiled as referring to Lydgate's poem itself: 'I shal not lye, | She named is "The Floure of Curtesye."' The topos of false modesty is retroactivally abandoned as the poet heaps praise upon his own work, praising its own subtlety and individuality ('discrete'), and also its successful combination of aureate, courtly terms (such as 'dalyaunce' and 'attemperaunce') with a populist poetic form.[54] Thus 'every wight of high and lowe degre | Are glad in herte with her for to be'. Lydgate's poem achieves median 'attemperaunce' through its appeal to both 'high

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[54] Temperance of course is a key component in Galenic bodily discourse, see Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 40-73.

and lowe' readerships, and testifies to critical claims that the 'number and diversity of patrons for whom Lydgate wrote bear witness to the high respect in which his contemporaries held his talent' (Renoir, p. 2).

Such poetic mediation, which has often been misread as mediocrity, leaves the poem 'fre' of obeisance to Chaucerian precedent. As a number of critics have noted, Chaucer's audience was not the same as that which received the poetry of Lydgate.[55] Yet what Paul Strohm terms a 'Narrowing of the "Chaucer Tradition"' was simultaneously a broadening of availability. In brief, 'Chaucer's select audience, with its taste sharpened on French literature, and its delight in allusions, wit and irony had ceased to exist' and was replaced by 'the new bourgeoisie' of the burgher class, as 'a radical transformation of the reading public was set in motion' (Schirmer, pp. 35-6). Those aspects of Chaucer's poetry which were favoured by this new audience may have narrowed, but the exclusive access of the Ricardian court to Chaucer's works was also contained in terms of textual dissemination; although this is not to say that Lydgate was similarly confined, far from it.[56] Autoreflexivity, one suspects, is bound up with a certain desire for recognition.

The metamorphosis of the desired 'her' from source poem into *The Floure of Curtesye* declares its independence. Lydgate has overcome the dilemma of how to apply the principle of *dator formarum* to that which already has shape by maintaining that shape, whilst altering the matter, and retaining the source's "femininity", which is entirely congruent with late-medieval concepts of authorship, as Simpson posits:

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[55] See for example Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the "Chaucer Tradition"', *SAC*, 4 (1982), 3-32; Derek Brewer 'The Presidential Address: The Reconstruction of Chaucer', *SAC*, Proceedings No. 1 (1984) 1-19; Helen Cooper, 'The Presidential Address: After Chaucer', *SAC*, 25 (2003), 3-24; Nolan, pp. 5-10.
[56] See Simpson, p. 55.

the decentred institutional conditions of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England disallow cultural monopolies, artists build on to artefacts from the past accretively rather than beginning afresh. Textual practice in such a society is not at all embarrassed about locating the presence of the writer receiving an old text. Writers in such a textual culture often represent themselves as readers, whose rereading of old texts produces a rewriting. This rewriting reveals a complex layering of textuality, where texts from different sources are juxtaposed to form a composite yet heterogeneous whole [...] where the self can only be expressed through a complex textual collage. (pp. 62-4)

Directly the poem is declared to be 'fre' – due to it being 'but of wordes fewe' (156), which counterpoints the asseveration in *The Fall of Princes* that poetry 'constreynyd undir woordes fewe' lacks 'trouthe' – and so can progress on to the self-referential *descriptio* which we saw in the *Ballade*, without fear of 'Male-bouche' or 'Enuye':

> So trewly in menyng she is in-sette,
> Without chaungyng or any doublenesse;
> For bountie and beautie are together knette
> On her persone vnder faythyfulnesse;
> For voyde she is of newfanglenesse,
> In herte aye one, for ever to perseuer
> There she is sette, and neuer to disseuer.
>
> I am to rude her vertues eueryone
> Cunnyngly to discryue and write,
> For, wel ye wot, colour have I none
> Like her discrecioun craftely to endyte,
> For what I say, al it is to lyte;
> Wherefore to you thus I me excuse,
> That I aqueynted am not with no muse.
>
> By rethorike my style to gouerne
> In her preise and commendacioun,
> I am to blynde so hylye to discerne
> Of her goodnesse to make discrypcioun,
> Save thus I say, in conclusyon,
> If that I shal shortly [her] commende,
> In her is naught that Nature can amende. (169-89)

Encomium redresses or at least displaces the 'anguysshe' felt earlier by the poet-lover, as the beloved body-text's immutability, which previously caused 'constraynte', becomes a source of praise. The transposition of both beloved and desire into a 'trewly' linguistic or semiotic existence ('in menyng she is in-sette') releases rather than inhibits the poet-lover, as desire is vented as eulogy as opposed to plaint. The shift which has taken place is then one of emphasis, rather than form; the

dimensions of the stanza are now seen to enable rather than disable desire. Indeed, the poet-lover's earlier jealousy of other poets who made use of rhyming couplets ('alway twayne and twayne') rather than the complexity of rhyme royal refracts as disdain. His text-beloved is 'Without chaungyng or any doublenesse', and its/her fusion of abstract virtues and physicality, in the shape of the form, are reiterated when Lydgate declares that 'bountie and beautie are togyther knette | On her persone'.

The knitting together of 'bountie and beautie' via a balance of physical form and abstract matter is then placed in direct opposition to the *effictio* in the following stanza. The false modesty topos returns tinged with irony, thus 'I am to rude her vertues euerychone | Cunnyngly to discryue and write'. Lydgate will not 'discryue' the beloved's 'vertues everychone', that is both her abstract and her physical virtues, because this would render him 'rude', base. Furthermore, the reader well knows ('wot ye wel') that Lydgate possesses great rhetorical skill. Rather than 'colour haue I none', Lydgate has spectra in abundance, but he does not apply such colour to his *descriptio feminae* due to a sense of propriety. Lydgate thus aligns himself more with Alain de Lille's Reason than Geoffrey of Vinsauf:

> A mass of ferment discolours everything with which human speech or the human mind busies itself [...] the wavering frame of the human structure recognises our work and calls for our anvil. Our customary art brings man's body into being: it does not extend to the soul of man which is ever exempted from these laws of yours and is fashioned by a higher hand.[57]

The colours of rhetoric, when applied to the feminized body-text, suggest impiety, as Alain posits elsewhere, '[man] discolours the colour of beauty by the meretricious dye of desire'.[58] Lydgate therefore stops short of such coloration ('what I say, al it is to

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[57] Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus or The Good and Perfect Man*, trans. by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: PIMS, 1973), pp. 67-8. Future citations will be included in the body of the text. For evidence of Lydgate's familiarity with and subscription to Alan's concept of natural (unadorned) beauty see *Horns Away*, 'Aleyn remembreth [...] He sauh Nature in hir moost excellence | Vpon hir hed a kerche[f] of Valence, | Noon other richesse of counterfet array' (17-22), in *The Minor Poems*, pp. 662-5 (pp. 662-3).

[58] Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans. by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: PIMS, 1980), p. 135.

lyte'), but rather 'brings man's [or woman's] body into being' through his use of the form, whilst imbuing it with a recollection of the abstract virtues which are 'fashioned by a higher hand'. He is content to paint himself as colourless, 'I aqueynted am not with no muse', a declaration which nevertheless may be undermined by its use of the double negative. The possible pun on 'aqueynted' bolsters the statement; Lydgate has never been intimate with a woman who will serve as his muse, and he cannot paint what he has not seen. Such a reading may be reinforced by both crafty 'discrecioun' in the fourth line and a potential pun on 'Cunnyngly' in the second line of the stanza (although it is just as likely that Lydgate was punning on *aqueintise* as meaning elegant apparel).

Lydgate moves quickly on from such potential misprision to the rather deceptive stanza which precedes the characteristic litany of literary paragons. Despite declaring that 'colour have I none' he invites 'rethorike my style to govern | In her preise and commendacion'. We may interpret this illogical reaffirmation of rhetoric in a variety of ways. Either Lydgate is separating rhetoric as a whole from the physically descriptive colours which are only a fragment of its demesne – the incitement to morality is more important perhaps – or is in fact distinguishing 'colour' from 'rethorike' entirely. A further possibility is that the third and fourth lines of the stanza form a continuum with the opening lines, and thus 'I am to blynde' to govern 'By rethorike my style'. This negation of the opening submission to that capability which the poet previously denied appears the most feasible reading, and also prevents him from attempting to delay the brief 'conclusyon' towards which he is striving: 'If that I shal shortly [her] commende, | In her is naught that Nature can amende'. In addition to the echo of the refrain of the *Ballade* prompted by the stanza's final line, Lydgate's reference to Nature's amendment again recalls Alain of Lille:

the hand of God Himself will make good what the norm of nature leaves below the standard of perfection. What Nature makes, the divine Artist will perfect. The Divine creates from nothing. Nature makes mortal things from some material; God commands, she serves; He directs, she acts; He instructs, she accepts instruction. (*Anticlaudianus*, p. 68)

If Lydgate had consciously adopted Alain's recommendations for natural colour as opposed to the 'meretricious dye of desire' (as *Horns Away* suggests), then the question of his observance of the concept of the 'divine Artist', or *deus artifex*, as it relates to his statement in line 189 of the *Floure of Curtesye* becomes somewhat problematic.

If in the beloved, and the text, there is 'naught that Nature can amende', does this imply that it/she is, like Petrarch's Laura, created by the 'divine Artist', and does Lydgate by extension equate himself with this figure? If this is the case, and the textual beloved embodies the 'standard of perfection', then Lydgate would appear to be making steps towards what we may think of as a Renaissance mindset, discussed in chaper 2 – this is suggested by the notions of the true *donna angelicata*, and the poet as earthly reflection of the 'divine Artist'. Yet this motion is achieved through a practical application and alteration of core medieval *auctoritees*, and testifies to Huizinga's asseveration that such a conception of the artist 'grew up among the luxuriant vegetation of medieval thought'.[59] However, Alain asserts *creatio ex nihilo*, and Lydgate is working upon an established model; is Chaucer then the Author-God to Lydgate's Nature, 'who makes mortal things from some material'? Such a reading may be reconciled with Lydgate's earlier claim that 'I am to blynde so hylye to discerne | Of her goodnesse to make discrypcioun', but creates a significant problem for Lydgate's relationship with Chaucer as it reasserts the latter's numinosity.

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[59] J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. by F. Hopman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955; repr. 1979), p. 307.

The dilemma he faces in such an interpretation is how to exist independently of Chaucer's Author-God without becoming Him, as Lydgate's poetic piety would not allow such blasphemous claims, unlike the Poet-Creators of the Renaissance towards whom he is ineluctably moving. The answer to this continuing problem of extrication lies perhaps in the further incorporation of the self-contained unit within the longer poem, which in turn contains what we might think of as detachable units. This is first attempted, in relation to the courtly love poetry, in *The Complaint of the Black Knight*. As in both the *Ballade* and *The Floure of Curtesye*, the poem begins in a characteristically "medieval" vein:

> In May, when Flora, the fressh[e] lusty quene,
> The soyle hath clad in grene, rede, and white;
> And Phebus gan to shede his stremes shene
> Amyd the Bole, wyth al the bemes bryght;
> And Lucifer, to chace awey the nyght,
> Ayen, the morowe our orysont hath take,
> To byd[d]e lovers out of her slepe awake,
>
> And hertys heuy for to recon forte
> From dreryhed of heuy nyghtis sorowe:
> Nature bed hem ryse and [hem] disporte,
> Ageyn the goodly, glad[e], grey[e] morowe,
> And Hope also, with Saint Iohn to borowe
> Bad in dispite of Daunger and Dispeyre,
> For to take the holsome lusty eyre. (1-14)

Again there are a number of Chaucerian precedents evident in both the framework and the complaint itself, most noticeably the *Book of the Duchess*, but also echoes of the *General Prologue*, *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. We also detect the influence of texts such as the *Roman de la Rose* and Froissart's *Dit du bleu chevalier*, as Renoir avers: 'Lydgate shares these [generic] features with Chaucer, but he also shares them with the courtly poets of the thirteenth and fourteenth century on the continent' (p. 50).[60] It is unlikely that Renoir would have included Petrarch under

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[60] The *locus classicus* behind such natural description is book II of Virgil's *Georgics*.

the 'courtly poets' aegis, yet the similarities between Lydgate's opening and sonnets such as 'Zefiro torna' (*Rs* 310) give us some indication of the level to which both Lydgate and Petrarch were drawing upon a shared cache of images and formulae:

> Quando 'l pianeta che distingue l'ore
> ad albergar col Tauro si ritorna,
> cade vertù da l'infiammate corna
> che veste il mondo di novel colore.
> Et non pur quel che s'apre a noi di fore,
> le rive e i colli, di fioretti adorna,
> ma dentro, dove giamai non s'aggiorna,
> gravido fa di sé il terrestro umore,
> onde tal frutto et simile si colga.
> Così costei, ch'è tra le donne un sole,
> in me movendo de' begli occhi i rai
> cria d'amor penseri, atti et parole:
> ma come ch'ella gli governi o volga,
> primavera per me pur non è mai.

> (When the planet that marks off the hours returns to dwell with the Bull, from his flaming horns falls virtue which clothes the world in fresh color.
> And not only that which opens to us without, the riverbanks and the hills, he adorns with flowers, but within, where day never dawns, he makes the earthly moisture pregnant of himself,
> that it may yield such fruit as this and others like it. Thus she who among ladies is a sun, moving the rays of her lovely eyes, in me creates thoughts, acts, and words of love;
> but however she governs or turns them, spring for me still never comes.) (*Rs* 9)

There is of course no evidence to suggest that Lydgate ever read any of Petrarch's vernacular works, yet the repetition of tropes and topoi intimates the intertextuality of late-medieval poetic transmission. Petrarch's 'Tauro' finds its reflection in Lydgate's 'Bole' just as the latter's 'soyle [...] clad in grene, rede, and white' unconsciously echoes Petrarch's 'veste 'l mondo di novel colore'. Again, Lydgate's use of such figures provides not only a route back to Chaucer, through whom Lydgate's Petrarchan inversions are filtered second-hand, but also forward to the Petrarchan poetry of the Henrician court. One need only look to a poem such as Surrey's 'The soote season' in order to see the culmination of the osmotic process Lydgate effectively sets in place.

Lydgate begins his poem with a conjoined rhyme royal stanza unit which allows him to express both the eroticized landscape and its effects upon the lover. There is a skilfully manoeuvred shift from the personified deities of Nature ('Flora', 'Phebus' and 'Lucifer') to the abstracted 'lovers'; as the abstract is realized so is the real abstracted, producing a continuum between Man and Nature that will ultimately manifest itself in the figure of the Black Knight. The tonal distinction and mutual interdependence between the first and second stanzas, from the chromatic levity of the former's exterior to the 'hertys heuy' of the latter's interior, puts one in mind of the *volta*, effecting a *chiaroscuro* of exteriority and interiority which produces subtle shades of movement between objective and subjective modalities. Hence the world exterior to the lover is a spectral riot of colour ('grene, rede, and white') and sunlight ('bemes bryght'), whilst the same scene refracted through the prism of 'heuy nightis sorowe' is rendered a 'grey[e] morowe', which the lover must position himself in contradistinction to as 'Ageyn' ambiguously hovers between its repetitive and oppositional definitions. In order to emphasize the self-containment of the opening fourteen lines, Lydgate repeats the word which underpins the main body of the text; as the 'fressh[e] lusty' opening to the poem becomes its 'holsome lusty' counterpoint. The poem effectively begins again in line 15, 'And wyth a sygh [I] gan', but now the reader is aware of a cumulative, metamorphic semiotics in which the same signifier may never appear twice imbued with the same exact meaning.

Lydgate employs the conjoined stanza unit throughout the text in order to create centres of meaning and thematic focus, as for example between lines 85-98:

The water was so holsom, and so vertuous,
Throgh myghte of erbes grovynge [ther] beside;
Nat lyche the welle wher as Narci[ss]us
Islayn was th[o]ro vengeaunce of Cupide,
Wher so couertely he did[e] hide
The greyn of deth vpon ech[e] brynk,
That deth mot folowe, who that eu*ere* drynk;

Ne lyche the pitte of Pegace,
Vnder Parnaso, wher poetys slept;
Nor lyke the welle of [pure] chastite,
Which as Dyane with her nymphes kept,
When she naked in-to the water lept,
That slowe Acteon with his ho[u]ndes felle,
Oonly for he cam so nygh the welle.[61]

The 'water [...] so holsom, and so vertuous' is repeatedly polluted by association. As we saw in the second stanza, the word 'holsom' is tainted through its relationship with 'lusty'; here it generates the references to the myths of Narcissus and Actaeon, both of whom were victims of lust in accordance with medieval exegesis of Ovidian myth. Lydgate further undermines his language via paraleptical description which disenfranchises negation, as the anaphorical *repetitio* of 'Nat lyche [...] Ne lyche [...] Nor lyche' forces him into, rather than away from, disclosure. Such deft exploitation of rhetorical devices is mirrored in the veiled eroticism of the intertextual referents as their myths are configured by the stanzas themselves. Interestingly, Petrarch also read the warning against inordinate desire ('vengeaunce of Cupide') exemplified by Actaeon and Narcissus as constituting a mythical dyad, as Vickers explains:

> The space of that alternation is, of course, a median one – a space of looks, mirrors and texts [...] Actaeon is, like Narcissus, a hunter. Like Narcissus he seeks rest and shade in a grove and sees, by chance, a beautiful body in a pool. For Narcissus that body is his own; for Actaeon it is that of Diana, chaste goddess of the hunt. ('The Body Re-membered', pp. 104-5)

Lydgate's acknowledgement of this 'space of looks, mirrors and texts' is reflected in his conjunction of the stanzas in order that the myths may formally mirror one another. Narcissus appears alone, *id est* alone with himself, as Echo is fundamentally a vocal reflection (*imago vocis*) who emphasizes the superiority of visual self-reflection (*imago formae*). Echo, it may be argued, represents the oral tradition of

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[61] In addition to the conjunction of stanzas 1-2 and 13-14 see 19-20, 21-22, 28-29, 30-31, 36-37, 38-39, 48-49, 61-62 and 85-86.

transmission whilst Narcissus himself may be seen to reflect the eroticized, visual, written text. Lydgate's fidelity to the most important aspect of his source-myths – namely lust – is reinforced by his placing of 'Dyane' in position prior to the appearance of 'Acteon'. The two myths contribute to a tripartite whole concatenated by the naked figure of Diana: Narcissus is both Diana, the desired figure in the pool, and Actaeon, the desiring figure forever outside of it.[62] Lydgate tempers the intertextual unit with a further myth which stands between and enables both: that of 'Parnaso, wher poetys slept'. The introduction of Pegasus is a means of moving to Parnassus, to the subject of poetry, without breaking the unruffled waters of the 'welle' which unites both the myths of Actaeon and Narcissus. Lydgate effectively travels on 'Pegace' to 'Parnaso', whereby the myths are related to the reader. However, the paraleptic recollection of the myths also serves to emphasize the nature of desire in Lydgate's poem: Lydgate's well is *not* 'lyke the welle of [pure] chastite', it will not be the site of frustrated sexual-textual desire as are those pools by which we see Narcissus and Actaeon. The negated referents promise gratification for the desirous speaking subject of the poem who finds his reflection in the figure of the Black Knight. From this perspective the entire text constitutes a retelling of those same myths which it denies any connection with.[63]

In positioning the adumbrated figure of the Black Knight as a reflection of the forlorn narrator, Lydgate is not only refiguring the myth of Narcissus but also reviving the hermeneutic connotations associated with it. Such an interpretation of the

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[62] The two adverse myths which combine via a third element may be seen to correspond with the 'Principle of the Triad' which Lewis observed in certain medieval texts. The quasi-dialectical principle which, according to Lewis, was inherited from Apuleius's *De deo Socratis*, offers an interesting counterpoint to Pearsall's insistence upon Lydgate's binarity. See *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; repr. 2005), pp. 40-4 (pp. 43-4).

[63] Interestingly, Anna Torti has discussed the myth of Narcissus as a classical counterpoint in medieval poetics to the Judaeo-Christian ideal of Man as God's *speculum inferius*. See *The Glass of Form: Mirroring Structures from Chaucer to Skelton* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991), pp. 1-35.

myth, as connoting the primacy of the written word over oral transmission (Narcissus's aphasiac visualization over Echo's disembodied voice), is reinforced by the fact that the Black Knight tells the beginning of his tale mute, via the narrator's reflection upon his body:

> But first, yf I shal make mensyou*n*
> Of hys p*er*sone, and pleynly him discrive,
> He was in sothe, with-out excepciou*n*,
> To speke of manhod oon the best on lyve –
> Ther may no man ayein[es] trouthe stryve – ,
> For of hys tyme, and of his age also,
> He proued was, ther men shuld haue ado.
>
> For oon the best ther of brede and lengthe
> So wel ymade by good proporsiou*n*,
> Yf he had be in his delyuer strengthe;
> But thoght and sekenesse wer occasiou*n*,
> That he thus lay in lamentaciou*n*,
> Gruffe on the grounde, in place desolate,
> Sole by him-self, aw[h]aped and amate.
>
> And for me semeth that hit ys syttyng
> His wordes al to put in remembraunce,
> To me that herde al his compleynyng
> And al the grounde of his woful chaunce,
> Yf ther-with-al I may yow do plesaunce:
> I wol to yow, so as I can anone,
> Lych as he seyde, reherse[n] eu*er*ychone.
>
> But who shal helpe me now to compleyn?
> Or who shal now my stile guy or lede?
> O Nyobe! let now thi teres reyn
> Into my penne, and eke helpe in this need
> Thou woful Mirre, that felist my hert[e] blede
> Of pitouse wo, and my honde eke quake,
> When that I write for this mannys sake. (155-82)

We notice immediately the characteristic non-description, although the figure of the knight seems somehow more tangible than the Lady of the *Ballade*; he appears to possess a distinct shape, which nevertheless hovers on the margin of the reader's peripheral vision. Lydgate prepares us for a description, and pledges to 'pleynly him discrive', yet this plainness blurs into vague generality as soon as it is attempted. We are informed that the knight was 'oon the best on lyve', which effectually tells us nothing. He is 'wel ymade in good proporsiou*n*', which likewise gives little away.

There is a form of negative *amplificatio* operating here; Lydgate gives us no description of his knight, and he does so repeatedly, in various ways. Yet, as we have seen, there is reason for this; the knight is a literary product of the romance tradition. Lydgate anticipates his readership's familiarity with similar figures in numerous contemporary works and so does not need to digress with a formulaic portrait; the very mention will conjure up an image in the reader's mind. The knight's presence, however, does emanate from this 'good proporsiou*n*', and his 'brede and lengthe' gives him dimensional existence.[64]

The figure of the knight is spatial, not allegorical, and as such is bound up with the form that contains him; his physical presence arises out of the 'brede and lengthe' of the stanza form as part of a shared *corpus*.[65] The almost ponderous consistency of the rhyme and metre gives the figure a certain weight, a gravity which, we sense, would not exist had the poem been constructed out of the comparative lightness of French octosyllabic couplets.[66] Indeed, his woes, reflected in the verse, are so heavy that the knight is physically held down: 'he thus lay in lamentaciou*n*, | Gruffe on the grounde', whereas his model 'sat and had yturned his bak | To an ook' (*Book of the Duchess*, 446-7). The Chaucerian stanza has a shape all of its own, with a capacity for self-containment ('Sole by him-self') which we will see again in the English sonnet – just

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[64] Such a description also makes the knight, somewhat oddly, reminiscent of the *imago pietatis* or Man of Sorrows. See *Ephesians* 3. 17-18: 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height' ('Christum habitare per fidem in cordibus vestries, in charitate radicati et fundati, ut possitis comprehendere cum omnibus sanctis quae sit latitude, et longitude, et sublimitas, et profundum').

[65] Janet Wilson argues for 'a de-allegorising process' (p. 28), in *The Temple of Glas*, which is closely aligned with the *Complaint of the Black Knight* in terms of theme and imagery. This process contributes to 'the appearance of realism in the vernacular courtly love tradition [which] can be seen as a precursor of renaissance values in fifteenth century-century England, in much the same way as that humanism which filtered into England slowly through the Universities and the new centres of learning' (p. 25). See also Boffey, *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions*, p. 18.

[66] The Black Knight's Chaucerian ancestor, the 'man in blak' (445) of *The Book of the Duchess* is composed out of French octosyllables.

as the *strambotto* may exist in a single stanza, or may be incorporated by the *ottava rima* narrative. Thus the description of the knight is featureless, yet his portrait still feels complete.

The Black Knight is, in Lydgate's negated *effictio*, truly 'with-out excepciou*n*', yet at the same time an established figure, 'For of hys tyme, and of his age also, | He proued was'. The reader cannot help but suspect that Lydgate is again incorporating a self-reflexive lexicon which is dependent upon contemporary notions of the body-text. Awareness of the text's self-consciousness is heightened following the knight's undescription by Lydgate's immediate shift to 'syttyng | His wordes al to put in remembraunce'. The physical form of the knight's 'good proporsiou*n*', creates the formal framework within which the poet-speaker may set 'His wordes [...] ther-with-al I may yow do plesaunce'. Lydgate's 'plesaunce' here is equivalent to Barthes's pleasure, as 'yow' unequivocally refers to the reader whom Lydgate is "cruising". The attempt to create a site of textual 'bliss' is enabled – as it was in *The Floure of Curtesye* – by the 'dialectics of desire' formed between the textualized body of the knight, which will 'yow [the reader] do plesaunce' via the medium of the embedded poet who must himself constitute a body-text.

This act of constitution is duly performed in stanza 26, 'let now thi teres reyn | Into my penne [...] felist my hert[e] blede [...] and my honde eke quake, | When that I write for this mannys sake'. If the 'good proporsioun' of the knight's body reflects the form which shapes and contains the poetic matter, then that matter, the knight's complaint of sexual dissatisfaction, is reflected in the narrator's own eroticized textual frustration. The speaking 'I' of the poem rises 'Out of my slombre' and goes 'Vnto the wode, to her the briddes sing' but instead hears the doleful song of the Black Knight who 'lay in lamentacioun'. The poem constitutes

subjectivity's metamorphosis into objectivity through linguistic self-reflection as the 'heuy nightis sorowe' from which the speaking 'I' rises becomes the knight's heavy sorrow which keeps him weighed to the ground. It is vital that the 'I' only begins to feel 'An huge part relesed of my smert' (116) following the 'good draght' (112) which he takes of the 'water pure as glas' (78). Nature's 'glas' enables the reflection of the subject's sorrow in the knight, who is in turn rendered an anthropomorphic personification of that sorrow as it is expressed through verse.

Furthermore, the 'I' who finds his mirror-image in the knight refracts him through a second reflection, as the quaking hand traces the convulsions of the figure on the ground who 'shoke ful petously' (137). One cannot help but be reminded of the formula which Vickers posits in relation to Petrarch's presentation of Laura in the *Rime sparse*:

> the relation between the two is, by extension, one of mirroring. 'I' tells us that he stood fixed to see, but also mirror Laura [...] The specular nature of this exchange explains, in large part, the often disconcerting interchangeability of its participants [...] her flesh made words (made flesh). ('The Body Re-membered', pp. 104-9)

In this instance the interchangeability takes place between the Black Knight and the narrative subject. The knight's flesh, his 'good proporsioun', is made of words – or rather of form, and the verbal *potentia* and hermeneutic phenomenology that it enables – which revert back to flesh through the 'I' who writes and quakes 'for this mannys sake'. The knight, who is also the personification of poetic complaint, serves as a means of 'summe relese of [my] peyn' (20) just as 'I' releases the knight's pain as part of a reciprocal catharsis.[67]

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[67] We may, if we wish, go further in the reflective theme by suggesting that the Knight's colouring mirrors the black habit of the Benedictine monks as worn by Lydgate, the Black Monk of Bury; a reflection perhaps suggested by the title of Susan Bianco's article, 'A Black Monk in the Rose Garden'.

Thus the 'Compleynt' is presented as a joint composition, signified by the anaphorical use of the definite article (as opposed to the personal pronoun), an act of textual intercourse between the body-texts of 'I' and 'he', which together form 'The':

> The thoght oppressed with inward sighes sore,
> The peynful lyve, the body langwysshing,
> The woful gost, the herte rent[e] and tore,
> The petouse chere pale in compleynyng,
> The dedely face lyke asshes in shynyng,
> The salt[e] teres that fro myn yen falle,
> Parcel declare grounde of my peynes alle.
>
> Whos hert ys grounde to blede on heuynesse,
> The thoght resseyt of woo and of compleynt,
> The brest is chest of dule and drerynesse,
> The body eke so feble and so feynt,
> With hote and colde my acces ys so meynt,
> That now I shyuer for defaute of hete,
> And hote as glede now sodenly I suete.
>
> Now hote as fire, now colde as asshes dede,
> Now hote for colde, [now colde] for hete ageyn,
> Now colde as ise, now as coles rede
> For hete I bren, and thus betwyxe tweyn
> I possed am, and al forcast in peyn,
> So that my hete pleynly as I fele
> Of greuouse colde ys cause euerydele. (218-38)

The context of the dual complaint and the Aristotelian distinction between form and matter perfectly frames the antithetical movement of these stanzas, which inevitably descend into psychosomatic *confusum*. The first two stanzas are far more Petrarchan in their balanced antitheses than the frenetic vacillation of the third, but of course antithetical structures are common in the poetry of the Middle Ages, although perhaps even more so in the poetry of Lydgate, as Pearsall confirmed, 'Lydgate's mind, like a computer, operates thus on a binary system'. Yet it is the nature of Lydgate's antitheses here that sets him apart from his contemporaries. The dichotomy between body and mind bears a definite Petrarchan stamp as the binary constituents of the human whole become so confused within one another that they cannot be told apart in terms of cause and effect. The psychosomatic interrelation between 'the body

langwysshing' and 'The woful gost' declares both an awareness of Aristotelian *anima* and a consciousness moving slowly towards the age of Cartesian dualism. The symbiotic, circular relationship between mental and corporal 'peynes' is perfectly contained within the structure of the form, which unites psyche and soma in anguish. The result of this osmotic marriage of body and mind is evident in the chaos of lines 232-8, in which neither body nor mind can distinguish between the extremes that hold them in place.[68]

Of course this stanza is entirely dependent upon Chaucer's *Canticus Troili*, itself a translation of Petrarch's *Rs* 132, 'S' amor non è', and in particular the closing line of Troilus's lament ('For hote of cold, for cold of hote, I dye'). But Lydgate's delicately arranged confusion takes Chaucer's complaint a step further. Again the poet is demonstrating amplification and repetition, and again it is not simply for show, but to create the subjective experience of the knight within the reader's mind. The erratic movement between the binary oppositions allows the reader to experience a modicum of the disarray felt by the knight by means of a performative action. Yet the constraints of the form just about manage to hold the *confusum* in check. As in the sonnet, the matter here struggles against the form which imposes order upon it, just as the lover's body contains the disordered mind, which in turn controls the body's motility. The poem progresses through these antithetical extremes, as it does for Petrarch.

Yet the mirroring of 'I' by 'he' prior to the complaint creates a framework which artfully distinguishes Lydgate's reflection of Chaucer's *Canticus*, and by extension Petrarch's *Rs* 132, from its source(s). The 'thoght oppressed with inward sighes sore'

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[68] Chaos in the modern sense of supra-order rather than disorder, which corresponds with Lydgate's aptitude for Gothic poesis (in the archaeological sense).

may be read as indicating the poetic mind of the 'I' who narrates the poem, whilst 'the body langwysshing' signifies the body-text of the stanza form personified by the knight. This traditional body-soul dichotomy as applied to the specular relationship between subject and object is, however, further confused by its conflation of philosophical and poetical discourses. Form (*eidos*), in an Aristotelian context, is synonymous with *psyche,* the animating principle which the Scholastics – such as Aquinas and Scotus *et al,* and no doubt Lydgate also – equated with the Christian soul, or the 'goste'.[69] Matter (*hyle*) or 'body', in the Aristotelian schema, is that which is acted upon and in turn incorporates both *eidos* and *psyche,* creating a relationship based upon clear hierarchical distinction and interdependence. Such reciprocal manifestation is reflected in the body-text 'contract' as posited by Jaeger: 'Because each has what the other lacks, they enter an agreement' (p. 128). Aristotelian form (soul) needs matter (body) in order to manifest itself through motility; matter in turn needs form if it is not to be inert. Yet in Lydgate's courtly lyrics such contradistinction is blurred as form – in both its poetical and philosophical senses as shaping, animating principle – *is* body, hence the rapid, indistinct confusion of the two elements which form a 'Parcel' that 'declare[s] grounde of my peynes alle'. The central image of the 'hert' in turn becomes the space, the 'Parcel' in which both 'I' and 'he', form and matter, are conjoined, uniting as it does the physical and the abstract (in Aristotelian theory the soul was thought to reside in the heart), and as such signifies the stanza form itself.

The antitheses of hot and cold, indistinguishably united as they are in stanza 34 (232-8) by extension signify the heat of subjective passion as felt by the knight and the detached objectivity which the 'I' ought to be representative of but isn't, due to

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[69] See Introduction, pp. 4-5.

the reflective relationship which culminates in the paronomastic mirroring of heat in ice ('colde [...] coles'). The continual metamorphosis of narrator into knight and vice versa is, however, refracted through a further binary opposition of truth and falsehood which points back to Chaucer and forward to Wyatt:

> Lo her the fyne of lover[e]s seruise!
> Lo how that Love can his seruentis quyte!
> Lo how he can his feythful men dispise,
> To sle the trwe men, and fals to respite!
> Lo how he doth the suerde of sorowe byte
> In hertis such as must his lust obey,
> To save the fals and do the trwe dey! (400-6)

This anaphorical stanza is undoubtedly drawing on the close of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. In Chaucer's work it is the narrator – not Troilus – who utters the warning to would-be lovers, whereas it is Lydgate's knight who, having assumed the narrator's admonitory tone, angrily bewails not only duplicity but the world's proclivity towards it, both as practitioner and prey. The tone here arguably prepares the ground for Wyatt's verse in its fusion of objectively pessimistic reflections upon love and subjective torment by it. The bitterness of lines such as 'she hath ioy to laughen at my peyn [...] Of this grete wrong I compleyn[e] me' (448-55) portray a mind attuned to the perniciousness of unkept love bargains. As Larry Scanlon argues, 'Lydgate makes erotic betrayal a subcategory of the larger problem of *trothe*, or fidelity' (p. 78) in much the same way as Wyatt does.

Yet Lydgate cannot continue with this voice for long and soon reverts to autoreflexive praise and negotiation (solicitation?) of textual pleasure:

> For bounte, beaute, shappe, and semelyhed,
> Prudence, wite, passyngly fairenesse,
> Benigne port, glad chere with loulyhed,
> Of womanhed right plentevous largesse,
> Nature in her fully did empresse,
> Whan she her wroght, and altherlast Dysdene,
> To hinder Trouthe, she made her chambreleyne
>
> [...]

In this mater more what myght I seyn,
Sithe in her honde and in her wille ys alle,
Bothe lyf and dethe, my ioy, and al my peyn;
And finally my hest[e] holde I shall
Til my spirit, be destanye fa[ta]l,
When that her list, fro my body wynde;
Haue her my trouthe and thus I make an ynde.

[...]

And while the twilyght and the rowes rede
Of Phebus light wer deaurat a-lyte:
A penne I toke and gan me fast[e] spede,
The woful pleynt of this man to write,
Worde be worde, as he dyd endyte;
Lyke as I herde, and coude him tho reporte,
I have here set, your hertis to dysporte. (498-504, 568-74, 596-602)

The complaint's focus is returned inward by the now familiar conflation of external beauty (the lady) with internal form (the text) via Lydgate's obliquely self-reflexive lexicon: 'bounte, beaute, shappe'. The earlier comparison of Lydgate with Alain's Nature, who operates upon existing 'mater', to Chaucer's Author-God, who creates the form or animating principle around which that matter is shaped, is reaffirmed by the lines 'Nature in her fully did empresse | Whan she her wroght'. Such a reversal of the male and female creative roles – the source material is, in medieval poetics, feminine matter, whilst the transmuter assumes masculine creativity – solves Lydgate's problem of how to shape that which already possesses a definite form. He aligns himself with the feminine *Natura* who shapes poetic matter around the pre-existent form created by the Author-God (Chaucer). This model is clarified in lines 491-6:

The myghty Godesse also of Nature,
That vnder God hath the gouernaunce
Of worldly thinges committed to her cure,
Disposed hath thro her wyse purveaunce,
To yive my lady so muche suffisaunce
Of al vertues.[70]

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[70] The role fulfilled by such a Nature is perhaps more akin to the Platonic Demiurge than to the Judaeo-Christian Creator. See Lewis, pp. 36-40.

The role reversal correlates with the beloved's assumption of textual status, whereas previously it was the lover, the Black Knight himself, who was the embodied analogue of the form. Nor should such a switch, from Black Knight as body-text to Black Knight's beloved as body-text, create any problem for the reader. The Knight signified the perfect form for the narrative 'I' ('He was [...] the best on lyve') whilst his lady signifies the perfect form for him ('in her honde and in her wille ys alle'). With both the male and female figures embodied through the form the complaint, and the poem as a whole, are allowed to draw to a close ('thus I make an ynde'). Lydgate's concern is not with the resolution of the Knight's situation – the narrator says a prayer to Venus before going to bed and leaves it at that – but rather with the containment of it: 'A penne I toke and gan me fast[e] spede, | The woful pleynt of this man to write, | Worde be worde', in order for 'your hertis to disporte', that is to pleasure his reader.

IV

The series of reflections and displacements enacted by *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, although grounded in the constrained sexuality of 'disporte', goes far beyond simple entertainment. The poem has supplied Lydgate with a possible solution to his anxiety of Chaucerian influence (he assumes a more passive, organizational role, rather than an active, creative role; effectively becomes *Natura* to Chaucer's Author-God), and in the process exemplified the shifting movement between poetic subject and object which we also encounter in the *Rime sparse* – in that the Black Knight realizes the poet-lover in the same way that Laura does Petrarch's *io*. Yet certain key issues have been left unresolved, such as the reflective relationship between the narrative 'I' and the embodiments he projects into and encounters within the text, and

the effect of this upon the embedded lyric units within the larger poem. These issues however do achieve resolution in Lydgate's greatest courtly love poem, the *Temple of Glas*, which is effectively a collection of love lyrics, as Pearsall suggests:

> It was, it seems, a poem to be *used*, used for instance, as a quarry for lesser rhymesters [...] [it] was extremely popular in the fifteenth century, particularly as a quarry for other poets, both practising and aspiring, to draw from. For this it was well suited by its sprawling and eclectic construction [...] three set speeches are in rhyme-royal, and thus formally distinguished from the narrative frame, which is in couplets. (*JL*, pp. 18, 104-5)[71]

Quarry is an apposite term for *The Temple of Glas*, as in addition to its conventional meaning it also connotes 'a pile of dead bodies' (*OED*), and is related to 'quarron' or 'quarromes', which literally means 'the body', and 'quaier', referring to text (*MED*). Lydgate's poem is then a *corpus* to be dissected, or fragmented (in accordance with the medieval *quaren*, 'to cut up'). We might think of it as the Lydgatean equivalent of the *Rime sparse*, which also served as 'a quarry for other poets'.[72]

Furthermore, the conventional Chaucerian analogue for the *Temple of Glas* is *The House of Fame*, with its Dantean influence and its emphasis upon what Boitani terms 'the physical nature of words [...] physiological linguistics'.[73] However, despite Lydgate's Temple being built upon the same foundations as Chaucer's House, the interior is quite different, and follows instead the design of Chaucer's Boccaccian masterpiece, *Troilus and Criseyde*, with its series of reflective lyric plaints (every

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[71] Judith Davidoff reiterates this argument when she says that '[*TG*] is composed of ballades and lyrics with just enough narrative connection to make everything cohere'. See 'The Audience Illuminated, or New Light Shed on the Dream Frame of Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*', *SAC*, 5 (1983), 103-125 (p.112). This could just as well be a definition of Petrarch's 'scattered rhymes'. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[72] It also tallies with the *Rime sparse* in its theme of symbolic union, as Janet Wilson argues, '[Lydgate] attempted to exclude any sexual implications from the situation by presenting the lovers' union as idealized and therefore as one that would not conflict with the claims of the prior, earthly marriage of the Lady' (p. 28). We will recall that the Laura was supposed to be one Laura de Sade, wife of an Avignon merchant.

[73] See Piero Boitani, 'Chaucer's Labyrinth: Fourteenth-Century Literature and Language', *ChR*, 17 (1983), 197-220 (p. 212). For the reflective structure of Lydgate's Temple see chapter of 2 of Torti's *The Glass of Form* ('"Atwixen two so hang I in balaunce": Lydgate and the *Temple of Glas*'), pp. 67-86.

complaint made by Troilus is mirrored by one of Criseyde's).[74] Also, in the *Temple* the relationship between the narrative 'I' and the knight templar is clarified, as Judith Davidoff posits:

> The reconstruction of conventional late-medieval expectations, however, shows that needs expressed in the frame were to be fulfilled in the vision [...] if any amelioration of that pain took place in the vision, it too implicitly applied to the dreamer even if he was not the explicit beneficiary within the plot of the vision. [...] There is no paradox in saying that Lydgate's dreamer did not have to dream about himself to dream about himself. (p. 112)

Indeed, the Temple's physical material ('Glas') guarantees a series of reflections: between the interchangeable lover and beloved; dreamer and lover; the dark tone of the frame and the illuminated vision; and of course the poem's self-reflexion upon its own process in an expansion of the *The Complaint of the Black Knight*'s refractive fountain ('the water pure as glas', 78). As Chaucer says in the *House of Fame*, 'folkys complexions | Make hem dreme of reflexions' (I. 21-2).

Lydgate's frame also serves to ground the Temple mythologically in the mutual self-realization of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* via an exhaustive list which not only includes the tragic binaries of 'Dido' and 'Eneas', 'Medee' and 'Iasoun', 'Venus' and 'Addoun' and 'Mercurie and Phil[o]log[y]e', but also the poetic metaphors of 'Hov Philomene into a ny3tyngale | Iturned was, and Progne vnto a swalow' (98-99), and inevitably, 'hou þat Daphne vnto a laurer tre | Iturned was, when she did[e] fle' (115-6).[75] Such a background culminates in the figure of the lady herself, who is almost entirely textualized:

> An exemplarie, & mirrour eke was she
> Of secrenes, of trouth, of faythfulnes

---

[74] It needs to be recalled that Chaucer is removed from his 'temple ymad of glas' (*HF*, 120) by the Eagle, who takes him to the House of Fame. Lydgate's Temple is thus an expansion of a minor geographical feature in Chaucer's poem, and the ethic behind it is akin to that which underpins the *Siege of Thebes*. That ethic may be encapsulated up by Lewis's 'Principle of Plenitude', whereby 'Nothing must go to waste' (p. 44), or Simpson's 'reformist model [which] operates by accretive bricolage' (p. 35).

[75] Such lists were not rare, and may be found for example in the *Roman de la Rose* or Petrarch's *Triumphus Cupidinis*.

[...]
Wiþ sondri rolles on hir garnement,
Forto expoune þe trouth of hir entent
[...]
Therfore hir woord wiþoute variaunce
Enbrouded was, as men my3t[e] se:
'De mieulx en mieulx' (294-310)

Lydgate here successfully conflates the real with the textual – in addition to his familiar 'conflation between the poetic and the erotic' – or suggests that he does not posit any discontinuity between the two, as he conjoins Boethius's Lady Philosophy with the Paston family motto.[76] We experience the same blurring of textual and actual boundaries as we do in Petrarch's sonnet sequence, but from a reversed perspective. In the *Rime sparse* Laura is posited as a non-fictional figure, and yet Petrarch's readership often understood her as an allegorical personification of poetry. Lydgate's description of the Lady is dependent upon textual precedent, and yet the inclusion of the motto grounds her in the world outside of the text (again, if such a sphere may be said to exist). The potential textual reference is reinforced by the Lady's seeking of consolation: 'hir list hir harmes to redresse [...] Forto compleyne she hade gret desire' (314-6). However, consolation itself is a further means of realization, as M. J. Marcus argues in her discussion of Boccaccio's 'debased Boethian ideal':

> the standard dictionary definition of consolation [...] is the peace attendant upon the relief of psychic pain, there is a second definition, now obsolete [...] Consolation, in this second sense, means the gratification of personal needs (often physical ones) and hence reduces the original psychological and spiritual meaning of the term to the level of sensual pleasure. [...] The alleviation of psychic pain through philosophical insights becomes, for the successful lover, the alleviation of sexual frustration in the embraces of his lady.[77]

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[76] Scanlon, 'Lydgate's Poetics', p. 69. See Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by Victor Watts (London: Penguin, 1969; rev. 1999), pp. 3-4. See Bianco, pp. 64-5; Schirmer, pp. 37-8; Pearsall, p. 108, for references to the Pastons' motto (which translates roughly as "better and better").
[77] Millicent Joy Marcus, *An Allegory of Form: Literary Self-Consciousness in the Decameron* (Saratoga, CA: Anma Libri, 1979), p. 120. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

Lydgate endows both his lady and his knight with this desire for sexual catharsis, indeed he must if he is to maintain the *Temple*'s reflective structure. Hence whilst 'she had gret desire', 'he compleyned for lak of his desire' (564), which, although ostensibly antonymic, amount to the same thing. It is the former who instigates sexual desire, as it is she who voices her 'litel bil' first (317), to be mirrored by the latter. The roles of male lover and female beloved are thus diffused, as each figure constitutes both.[78] The active role (lover) is achieved only through textual expression, which the lady and the knight practise; thereby constituting an interchangeable continuum akin to that encountered in Petrarch's sequence, which cannot be arrested until the two are conjoined within a univocal, cathartic formal space (which they will be in stanza 115). Also, just as the lady and the knight constitute a binary process, so are the psychological and the sensual needs for *consolatio* intertwined. As the *Rime sparse* has already shown us, the one produces the other reciprocally *ad nauseam* (*aegritudo amoris* was considered by medieval scientists to be a serious, even fatal, medical condition).

Lydgate's lady's expression of the condition is based around the characteristic language of formal constraint:

> For I am bounde to þing þat I nold;
> Freli to chese þere lak I liberte;
> And so I want of þat myn hert[e] would;
> The bodi [is] knyt, al þouȝe my þouȝt be fre,

---

[78] The organization of detachable lyric pieces reinforces this reflection: both the Lady's complaint and thanks to Venus begin with conjoined stanzaic units (stanzas 1-2 and 21-22), as do both Venus's reply to the Lady (28-9) and the Knight's eulogy to the Lady (64-65). Also, Davidoff stresses the importance of the 'rhetorically restrained fourteen-line opening that not only foreshadowed the theme of the vision but also set in motion a process whereby the audience was taught how to respond to the rest of the poem' ('The Audience Illuminated', p. 103). However, Davidoff cites John Norton-Smith's 1966 selection as the text she is using, which does not have a full stop after the end of the fourteenth line in any editions that I have so far come across (as it does in Davidoff's article), nor does Schick's edition – both have a comma. Similarly, the MS which Norton-Smith bases his text upon – MS Tanner 346 (76r-97r) – bears no physical or tonal indication of a break or a shift between lines 14-5: 'Me did oppresse a sodein dedeli slepe, | Wiþ-in þe which me þouȝt[e] þat I was | Rauysshid in spirit in [a] temple of glas' (14-6). The logical break follows line 16, which is where both Norton-Smith and Schick position it. For a discussion of "punctuation", or rather 'the inherent punctuation of metrical verse', in Lydgate MSS, see Hardman (p. 26).

So þat I most, of necessite,
Myn hertis lust out[e]ward contrarie;
Thogh we be on, þe dede most[e] varie. (335-41)

The familiar conflation of sexual desire with textual frustration is evident. Ostensibly the lady is referring to the struggle between *caritas* (or *castus*) and *cupiditas*, yet our experience of Lydgate's autoreflexive discourse, and the conspicuously textual nature of the lady, enable the translation of the plaint into fabulation. As such 'I' may be read as the voice of the poem itself, which sounds an heteroglossia via its polyphonic progression through the dreamer, the lady, the knight and the goddess. Despite there being only one means of vociferation – the text – the reflective nature of the plaints as they echo around the *Temple*'s interior creates a contrapuntal impression upon the reader, which is congruous with Schirmer's analogy:

> The same phenomenon is to be found in the music of John Dunstable [...] the counterpart voices resemble an apparently disorderly interplay of melodic lines, so that the *cantus firmus*, the basis of the composition, is obscured by fluid polyphonous ornamentation. In poetry Lydgate's deliberately obscure and excessively ornate style tends to conceal his line of thought and the syntactical structure. When seen in due relation to its environment, the literary style of the fifteenth century ceases to appear strange and peculiar, but falls into place as organically suited to the pattern of the age. (p. 70)

The lady's complaint thus develops out of the creative struggle against the strict parameters of the *cantus firmus*, which in this instance is both social decorum and poetic form. The implicit formal circumscription is, unconsciously, spelled out by the embedded metrical reference in the stanza's opening line: 'For *I am* bounde [my italics]', before it proceeds to outline the poetic psychomachia between matter and form in the second. Hence the ambiguous 'Freli to chese there lak I liberte' may be interpreted as referring to the inheritor's freedom to choose what matter s/he will for the complaint, as long as it is shaped by the received form; a sentiment made more explicit by the line, 'The bodi [is] knyt, al þouȝe my þouȝt be fre', which appears to underline the complex interweaving of the Chaucerian stanza in contrast to the

poem's framing couplets. We know from the *Complaint of the Black Knight* that the 'hert[e]' is associated with the confined space of the form through its signification of restrained desire ('Myn hertis lust'), which yearns to 'be fre'. The internal desire for *amplificatio* or encyclopaedism, which was given free rein in the frame's exhaustive account of classical exemplars, must display its 'out[e]ward contrarie' in the *abbreviato* of the stanza form.[79] And so when the lady declares that 'Thogh we be on, þe dede most[e] varie' we do not only read the correlation of physical and mental 'necessite', of *consolatio* in both of its definitions, but also the bipartite structure of the poem, the open-ended couplets and the close 'knyt' body of the rhyme royal, which together constitute a poetical diptych in accordance with A. C. Spearing's position that

> formal symmetry implies connection in meaning [...] The bipartite poem seems to offer a literary structure analogous to a favourite pictorial form of the Middle Ages, the diptych. [...] In such a case, the juxtaposition is genuinely creative: the medieval artist is in no way limited by his habit of composing a work in self-contained, discontinuous sections. It is precisely the discontinuity that makes possible a creative gesture in which the spectator or reader himself participates. Sparks leap across the gap between the two parts, and the onlooker's mind is set alight by them. [...] structural variation is a common method of conveying – or, as I would prefer to put it, of creating – meaning in medieval poems. (*Medieval to Renaissance*, pp. 129-31)

Yet Lydgate contains within his overall diptychous structure a series of smaller reflections between the four central figures. For example, the lady 'al clad in grene and white' (299) receives from Venus in reply to her plaint some hawthorn 'branchis white and grene' before the goddess reflects upon the unity posited by the lady in line 341:

> And as þese bowȝis be boþ faire & swete,
> Folwiþ þeffect þat þei do specifie:
> This is to sein, boþe in cold and hete,
> Beþ of oon hert & of o fantasie,
> As ar þese leues, þe which mai not die
> Þuruȝ no dures of stormes, þat be kene,

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[79] See Pearsall, *JL*, pp. 11, 44-5.

No more in winter þen in somer grene. (510-6)[80]

Venus is praising the lady's admission ('we be on'), but also assuaging any aggravation caused by the 'out[e]ward contrarie' and 'þe dede' that 'most[e] varie'. According to the goddess, unity is born of such antithetical reflection, not hindered by it, which is what the Black Knight had not realized when he echoed Troilus's Petrarchan plaint. That complaint reverberates again here, but since it is uttered in the *Temple of Glas* it becomes praise: 'faire and swete', 'cold and hete', 'winter þen in somer' are the keys to 'oon hert' and 'o fantasie'. Indeed, the *Canticus Troili* is held together by its Petrarchan antitheses, just as the poet-speaker of the *Rime sparse* locates selfhood in a tessellated fragmentation. And as this method of antonymic reconciliation achieved immortality for Lydgate's predecessors, so too will 'þese leues, þe which mai not die', as long as the text observes the methodology of its sources and 'Folwiþ þeffect þat þei do specifie'.

Although Venus has indicated the way to sexual-textual catharsis for the lady (and by extension for the dreamer), there remains the matter of the knight who, whilst he figurally re-members the Black Knight (see 556-9), also voices that same desire for the text which we see in both the *Ballade* and *The Floure of Curtesye*:

> For in myn hert enprentid is so sore
> Hir shap, hir fourme, and al her semelines,
> Hir port, hir chere, hir goodnes more & more,
> Hir womanhede, & eke hir gentilnes,
> Hir trouth, hir faiþ and hir kynd[e]nes,
> With al vertues, Iche set in his degre;
> There is no lak, saue onli of pite.
>
> [...]
>
> For lak of spech I can sey nov no more:
> I haue mater, but [I] can not plein;
> Mi wit is dulle to telle al my sore;

---

[80] Hawthorn branches were used to crown the May-queen and in Greek wedding processions, and were strewn about the altar of Hymen, and so serve as a symbol of fidelity and sexual reproduction; see Schick's introduction to *TG*, pp. 99-100.

A mouth I haue, & ȝit for al my peyne,
For want of woordis I may not nov atteyne
To tell[en] half þat doþ myn hert[e] greue,
Merci abiding, til she must releue. (743-9, 820-6)

Just as sexual and textual frustrations are copulative for the lady, so is sexual desire inextricable from its textual counterpart for the knight. Desire for 'Hir', by extension of her latent textuality, becomes Barthesian desire for the text. Also, the 'hert' here reasserts its synonymity with the 'fourme', as the stanzaic expression of the heart's desire is an account of 'hir shape', and as in the *Ballade*, serves to contain and fulfil the abstract ('Hir trouth, hir faiþ') in the physical (the spatiotemporality of the 'hert'-form). Furthermore, if we are to maintain the central tenet of Pearsall's argument – that Lydgate is 'impregnably medieval' (*JL*, p. 299) – then we may presume that he would have located the soul in the 'hert'; a soul which the Scholastics had conflated with the Aristotelian animating principle. The 'hert' in Lydgate's lyrics becomes the point at which poetic and psychic forms intersect, as the adored lady animates desire for the text which she embodies. Just as the 'sondri rolles on hir garnement [...] expoune þe trouth of hir entent', so is it possible for her to be 'in myn hert enprentid', as words are printed upon a blank sheet and then given 'Hir shap, hir fourme' by the Chaucerian stanza.

Even that which claims to be amorphous cannot help but be shaped by the form. For example when the knight, in a reflection of the false modesty topos, claims that 'For lak of spech I can sey nov no more: | I have mater, but [I] can not plein'. To an extent, 'mater' in itself suffices, as the poetic form provides the Aristotelian *eidos*. Yet Lydgate's purpose here is to provide in the knight's inability a mirror of the lady's complaint, in a further reminder of the dichotomy between form and matter. The lady's 'þouȝt be fre', but as we recall, her 'bodi [is] knyt'. In Aristotelian terms: she possesses potential for motility but lacks movement (*kinesis*), which can only be

brought about through interaction with matter (*hyle*). The knight possesses this 'mater', but only as capacity (*dunamis*), as he lacks the animating and organizing principles (*psyche* and *eidos*), which the lady represents. In short, he is *matter* to her *form*, body to her soul (as in the *Rime sparse*), and these reflective, mutually dependent elements manifest their incompletion through desire (*epithumia* [appetite], rather than *orexis* [desire including rational motivation]) for union, thereby constituting a reverse psychomachia akin to Jaeger's body-text contract.

And so when Venus says to the knight that 'we shal refourme | The pitous complaint, þat makiþ þe to mourne' (858-9), she effectively sanctions the copulation of the two textual elements, and proceeds to declare 'That she for whom þou soroist most in hert, | Shal þuruʒ hir merci relese al þi smert [...] ʒif ʒe lust mekeli abide a litel space' (860-1, 868). Venus underlines the beloved's textuality by positing the icon of the lady written by the 'pitous complaint' as the source of the knight's mourning. This 'makiþ þe to mourne', not the lady herself; pain, and therefore pleasure, comes of the text. And pleasure will be forthcoming, but only if the knight's 'lust'[81] can abide the 'litel space' of the Chaucerian form which contains the source of that painful desire, as we see in the following stanzas:

> And þerwithal, as I myn eyʒen cast
> Forto perceiue þe maner of þese twein,
> Tofore þe goddes mekel[i] as þei past,
> Me þouʒt I saw, with a golden cheyne,
> Venus anon enbracen & constrein
> Her boþ[e] hertes, in oon forto perseuer,
> Whiles þat þei liue and neuer to disseuer.
>
> [...]
>
> That þere mai be of al ʒoure old[e] smertis
> A ful relese vndir ioy assured;
> And þat oo lok be of ʒoure boþe hertes
> Shet with my key of gold and so wel depured,
> Oonli in signe þat ʒe haue recured
> ʒoure hole desire in here in þis holi place,

---

[81] 'Lust' is ostensibly "list" here, but its other meaning is by no means absent.

Within my temple nou in þe yere of grace.

[...]

So ferforþ euer in oure eternal se
The goddes haue, in her presscience,
Fulli deuysed þuruȝ hir deite,
And holi concludid bi hir influence,
That þuruȝ hir myȝt and iust[e] providence
The love of hem, bi grace and eke fortune,
Wiþ-oute chaunge shal euer in oon contune.
(1103-9, 1222-8, 1327-33)

The lady and the knight are symbolically, semiotically bound together in matrimony ('Oonli in signe'), just as Petrarch and Laura are in the *corpora* of the *Rime sparse* and as Troilus and Criseyde, arguably, were.[82] Their union can be only 'in signe' as the Lady is already married (it is implied that she is the epitome of the young bride forced into marriage).[83] Yet, curiously, the image of the 'golden chain' which binds the lovers within the 'litel space' is the same image Petrarch employs in the *Secretum*, a text which Lydgate may or may not have known, as signifying *cupiditas*.[84] Furthermore, Petrarch inherited the image from his beloved Augustine (*Confessions* III), with whose work Lydgate would no doubt have been familiar. Lydgate effectively fuses illegitimate *amour* with the validity of a church marriage ('in þis holi place'), and thereby allows the lady and her knight to achieve that perfection denied to the poet-lover of the *Rime sparse*, and abused by Criseyde's infidelity with Diomede in Chaucer's model.

Yet it is the form which ultimately binds them together 'in oon forto perseuer', as the constraint previously bewailed by the Lady becomes synonymous with the lovers'

[82] See chapter 3, p. 128.
[83] See lines 179-81. That the lady is 'bounde to þing þat I nold', perhaps reinforces the link with the Paston family suggested by the motto on her dress. As Schirmer informs us, while 'the poets continued to sing of love and pay chivalrous honours to the ladies of their choice, Agnes Paston whipped her twenty-year old daughter until she consented to marry the fifty-year old Scrope [...] the dream world made the harsh reality more tolerable' (p. 36).
[84] As Weiss says, Gloucester possessed '*De Vita Solitaria*, the *Rerum Memorandum*, the *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*, and other Latin writings [by Petrarch], the titles of which cannot be gathered from the lists of his donations to Oxford' (p. 64).

union ('enbracen and constrein'). The 'litel space' becomes the intimate room in which the previously discrete body-texts intertwine.[85] This formal union is exemplified by the ambiguous final speech made by Venus (1327-33), itself contained within a single stanza. The ambiguity stems from the goddess's reference to herself in the third-person, 'hir deite', and the placing of responsibility with 'The goddes' rather than accepting her own agency. However, the almost disembodied heterodiegetic voice emphasizes the goddess's advocatory role as minister who conducts the union in the name of the higher power, which aligns her with the medieval *daemon*. The impersonal tone also prepares the reader for the final three stanza song to Venus which closes the dream, and which Lydgate describes as a 'ballade nwe in ful goode intent' (1338). The self-contained, detachable ballade, which constitutes one of Thomson's 'medieval equivalent[s] to the Renaissance sonnet' in the style of Chaucer's *Canticus*, is both polyphonic and univocal, sang 'with notes loude and clere' by all those present but expressed singularly as a means of emphasizing the union of the lovers within the form. It also re-emphasizes the formal reflection which is the *Temple*'s foundation through its mirroring of the poem's opening stanzas (uttered by the Lady), beginning as it does with 'Fairest of sterres, þat wiþ ȝoure persant liȝt' (1341) in a direct echo of 'O blisful sterre, persant & ful of liȝt' (328).

The closing ballade signals the apex of the vision, almost blinding in its imagery of 'ȝoure stremes clere' (1342), a remembrance of the dreamer's initial sight of the Temple: 'The liȝt so in my face | Bigan to smyte [...] That I ne myȝt noþing, as I

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[85] As Donne would say in *The Canonization*, 'if no peece of Chronicle wee prove, | We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes; | As well a well wrought urne becomes | The greatest ashes' (31-4). See John Donne, *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets*, ed. by Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 73-5 (p. 74). Donne is obviously punning on the Italian *stanza* (literally, room). Lydgate's 'herte', occasionally appears to serve a similar purpose as Donne's 'rooms'; the *craunpisshed* core of the lyric 'I' is found in the *hertes hous* (see *MED*, 'herte' [2a.]).

would | considre and bihold' (24-28).[86] Yet this serves only to amplify the contrasting

darkness of the world into which the dreamer awakens, as Davidoff argues:

> This shift away from the illuminated vision back to a lightless dream frame abruptly
> overturns the audience expectations that just a few lines before had apparently been
> so well satisfied. [...] Lydgate's manipulation of conventional expectations has in this
> way transformed the facile love poem into a warning about how easy it is to
> misconstrue. (pp. 119-20)

I would argue that form plays a central role in this shift ('Oute of my slepe anone I did

awake [...] For sodein chaunge oppressid so with drede', 1365-1367), as the 'sodein

chaunge' in tone is reinforced by the regression from Chaucerian stanza to couplets.

The stanza form, as we have seen, is the 'litel space' in which the intimate union of

the lovers is conducted, the couplet – signifying open-endedness and continuity – not

only resumes the 'greuous heuines' (1) of the poem's opening, but is internally

reflected by the Knight's soliloquy, also composed in couplets, in which he complains

of being 'As man dispeired in a double were' (651).[87] The stanza form is thus

(eventually) synonymous with light, union and internal resolution; the couplets are the

vehicle for grief, doubt and deferred resolve.

V

Renoir's comment upon *The Temple of Glas* may be said to epitomize the argument I

am making for Lydgate:

> The truth is that the form and intention of the poem belong to the mediaeval tradition
> while the execution seems on occasion to reflect something of the new humanism,
> and the result reads like a mixture of both. (p. 50)

Lydgate is indeed 'a mixture of both' who conveys the continental elements in

Chaucer's poetry to the proto-humanist readership of the late-fifteenth and early-

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[86] One cannot help but suspect the influence of Bury Abbey itself upon *The Temple of Glas*, with its
frescoed Church doors 'on the Italian model'; also 'Light poured in through the twelve brightly-
coloured stained-glass windows'. However, it is probably mere coincidence that there are a number of
fourteen-line units within the poem, which is just over 1400 lines in length (1403), and the fact that
there 'were no fewer than fourteen altars in the church' (Schirmer, pp. 11-2).

sixteenth centuries – whether consciously or unconsciously, the import lies in the fact that he did it. As has been pointed out, 'much late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century poetry that is generally classified as Chaucerian might be better called Lydgatean' (Spearing, p. 120). And as we shall see in the next chapter, Wyatt himself was as Chaucerian as he was Petrarchan, and would have apprehended Chaucer, at least in part, through Lydgate, just as Lydgate encountered lyric Petrarchism via the *Canticus Troili* and the Boccaccian inflections of those works by Chaucer which he knew best.[88]

Lydgate's influential use of the Italianate Chaucerian stanza cannot be underemphasized considering that he both 'achieved an extraordinary pre-eminence in his own day' (Pearsall, *JL*, p. 1), and posthumously. Even his regulated use of the sonant final –e, which places stress on the word's penultimate syllable, and his syntactical preferences – 'almost invariably the object is placed before the verb, and the adjectives placed after the noun' (Schirmer, p. 74) – tend to lend to his verse an Italianate tint. As Schirmer also avers,

> Lydgate, in contrast to Chaucer, seeks to reproduce Latin words comprehensible to humanistic scholars, and words of marked sonority. Even where it is not a matter of new terms, he prefers the recondite polysyllabic and generally Romance word. (p. 74)

However, even if we were to deny outright any glimpses of modernity in Lydgate's courtly lyrics, and refuse to grant any sense of nascent humanistic thought to the social and cultural spheres in which he found himself, we would still have to acknowledge the fact that Petrarch is himself thoroughly medieval, and born of the same 'luxuriant vegetation' as Lydgate. As Spearing posits, 'the most easily recognizable conventions of Petrarchism [...] had in fact already long been part of the

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[87] 'Were' here means doubt.

[88] Namely the *Troilus* (based on *Il Filostrato*), the *Knight's Tale* (based on *Teseida*), and the Franco-Italianate complaints and dream poems.

language of courtly poetry' (p. 300). Indeed, Lydgate, following on from Chaucer, forces us to dispel arbitrary periodization if we are to do his poetry any justice. He shared his literary background with Petrarch – a lifelong fan of the Provençal troubadours whose influence may be detected in Lydgate's own lyrics – and responded, just as the Italian poets of the *trecento* did, to established poetic formulae.

There is, as we have seen, an autoreflexive movement in Lydgate's courtly lyrics which suggests that he was not as ignorant of (Chaucerian) irony as certain critics would suggest. When Spearing claims that 'Chaucer is more complex than Lydgate grasped' (p. 69), we can see that he is adhering to a critical tradition which we may term the School of Stupid Lydgate, which is born of Lydgate's own use of the false modesty topos, and the elevation of Chaucer at Lydgate's expense which Simpson traces back to the mid-sixteenth century.[89] Why would a well-educated, well-read, well-practised poet be so ignorant of textual nuance? Also, how does Pearsall know that for Lydgate the majority of classical authors, despite his being situated in one of Europe's greatest libraries, 'are mere names, known to him at second-hand from his immediate source-text, from anthologies or Latin grammars'? Or that when Gloucester loaned Lydgate early humanist texts, he 'wearily obliged by translating bits into the *Fall*, not seeing anything particularly gratifying in it, but glad to humour his patron' (*JL*, pp. 15, 245)?

In relation to the second point, we can never know for sure exactly what Lydgate did or did not read, although it seems unlikely that he would have failed to take advantage of the library at his disposal. In relation to the first, the matter of self-reflexivity, we need only look to the *artes poeticae* with which Lydgate certainly was

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[89] Helen Cooper has refuted the image of Lydgate as blind acolyte: 'Lydgate's sense of humor may be a bit elephantine, but it is simply leaping to conclusions on our part to imagine that he could not recognize those other qualities in Chaucer; and it is sheer arrogance on our part to assume that Lydgate himself did not know what he was doing' ('After Chaucer', pp. 14-5).

familiar. For example the apothegmatic *principia* scattered throughout Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*:

> I have said as much but secretly, lest anyone hear [...] step outside the confines of the subject matter [...] by the insight of the mind many things may be apparent in a single statement [...] transsumption of language is like a mirror for you, since you see yourself in it [...] there are flowers [of rhetoric] in which the very thoughts that the words convey is the flower. (pp. 50-77)

Lydgate knows how to compose a poem which elaborates upon its own process, as the *artes* taught him to. Yet he also uses statements such as those above in order to turn the model against itself. He excludes the impropriety of the *effictio* from his courtly lyrics *because* 'many things may be apparent in a single statement', indeed in a single form, as Vinsauf dictates, 'Let the matter manage to marry with the words in due form' (p. 53).

For all these reasons Lydgate helps to prepare the *rezeptionästhetik* which will eventually 'enbracen' the early English sonnet. His assertion of the rhyme royal – into which the Petrarchan sonnet was first translated, and a form which in all likelihood shares its source with the Italian sonnet (via the *strambotto / ottava rima*) – as the most popular poetic form from Chaucer to Wyatt cannot help but affect the English sonnet's arrival. Finally, if we are to agree with Spearing's conflation of Chaucerian with Lydgatean poetics, and ought to hear the latter when we read the former, then his influence upon the poet who first introduces the quatorzain into the English court ought not to be in doubt:

> All this provides Wyatt's English background, a background not wholly devoid of variety and interest, but stronger on the narrative than on the lyric side. Evaluation of his own 'English' lyrics must be largely concerned with his skill or ineptitude in handling the medieval love formulas.
>
> The first question to arise is whether any of the medieval narrative strength is absorbed into Wyatt's lyric. That is, did any literary osmosis take place in the mind of a Tudor courtly lover who admired Chaucer and himself wrote poetry? [...] Wyatt was guided in his use of experience, not only by experience itself, but by the Chaucerian precedent. (Thomson, p. 126)

Indeed, the most potent example of the influence of Lydgatean formal self-reflexivity may be found in *Tottel's Miscellany*. Alongside the poems of Wyatt and Surrey is an anonymous sonnet which encapsulates Lydgate's method of conflating the textual and physical bodies in order to give 'pleasaunce' to the reader, and it is with a brief discussion of this sonnet that I will conclude this chapter:

> With petrarke to compare there may no wight,
> Nor yet attain vnto so high a stile,
> But yet I wote full well where is a file,
> To frame a learned man to praise aright:
> Of stature mean of semely form and shap,
> Eche line of iust proportion to her height:
> Her colour freshe and mingled with such sleight:
> As though the rose sate in the lilies lap.
> In wit and tong to shew what may be sed,
> To euery dede she ioynes a parfit grace,
> If Lawra livde she would her clene deface,
> For I dare say and lay my life to wed
> That Momus could not if he downe discended,
> Once iustly say lo this may be amended.[90]

The *effictio* here is undeniably autoreflexive, and the second quatrain in particular makes it clear that the corporeal object of the poet's desire is the sonnet form itself. Yet it is not only this self-orientation which aligns the sonnet with Lydgatean poetics, but also the copulation of a modern, Italianate form with a distinctly "medieval" diction. For example, 'Her colour freshe' and 'just proportion' recalls the 'Fresshe lusty beaute'(1) and 'Yche thing demenid by avysinesse'(3) of the *Ballade*, whilst the sonnet's closing line nods to the knowing wink of *The Floure of Curtesye* by echoing 'In her is naughte that nature can amende' (189). Likewise, the description of her 'just proportion to her height' and her 'semely form and shap' recalls the Black Knight's 'brede and lengthe | So wel ymade by good proporsioun' (162-3). And whilst it would be possible to trace almost every detail of this poem back to Lydgate (and a number of elements to Chaucer as filtered through Lydgate), its primary service is that it stands

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[90] Hyder Edward Rolllins, ed., *Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587)*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), I, 170.

as a testament to the kind of riddling autoreflexivity which we observe throughout Lydgatean lyric. This sonnet declares such a poetics, predicated upon the concept of the body-text, to be current amongst the first English sonneteers, and helps to broaden the way for Shakespearean apprehensions of the body-text displacement, evident in poems such as sonnet 18: 'So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, | So long lives this, and this gives life to thee' (13-14).[91]

However, it must be said that although Lydgate develops a self-reflexive body-text out of (Italianate) Chaucerian materials and established rhetorical practices, it is not the same form of self-orientation that we encounter in the *corpora* of the *Rime sparse*. In Petrarch's model linguistic desire for the beloved's body results in its textual displacement and the realization of the 'I'; the body-text serves as an inferior substitute for the ineffable *corpus* of the *paragone* and yet itself becomes the object of desire. Lydgate does not fail to (re-)produce the body as *effictio*, he refuses to, and not because he finds *effictio* inadequate, as Petrarch does, but because he finds it inappropriate. Lydgate's body-text is naked in accordance with John of Garland's model, it is not dressed in the adornments or painted by the colours prescribed by Vinsauf and Vendôme. The Lydgatean body-text's beauty emanates from the perceived perfection of its *maister*'s form, and as such it remains implicit. The reader of poems such as the *Ballade,* or the *Floure of Curtesye,* and the poems they influenced, such as the anonymous sonnet in Tottel, is made privy to this clandestine *corpus* which is born of a sense of propriety, and not from the illicit nature of *amour courtois,* and which thereby differentiates the Lydgatean reader from Spearing's voyeur. Yet this peculiarly Lydgatean methodology developed a further secrecy,

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[91] Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series (London: Arden, 1997; repr. 2002), p. 147.

which remained undisclosed for centuries. Certain of Lydgate's rhyme royal lyrics were appended to the Chaucerian *corpus*, were read (and duly revered) by the Henrician poets as Chaucer's own.[92] But as we shall see, Lydgate's clandestine *corpus* may be uncovered in the sonnets of Wyatt, albeit from an adverse perspective. The Lydgatean body-text is not produced or unveiled by the author, but discovered by the reader. Wyatt's sonnets, on the other hand, do produce; they not only reveal but also fashion the text into an ostensible, public, discursive body of lyrics which secrete the interior 'I' from the open view of court. Yet as with Lydgate's rhyme royal body-text, that 'I' is not beyond discovery for the reader willing to open up the *corpus* and reveal 'the mysteries of psychological inwardness that are folded into the stories of the body'.[93] The phrase from Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* perhaps encapsulates this link between Lydgate and Wyatt: 'I have said as much but secretly, lest anyone hear'.

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[92] The *Black Knight* and the *Floure of Curtesye* for example were printed in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's works. See Francis W. Bonner, 'The Genesis of the Chaucerian Apocrypha', *Studies in Philology*, 48 (1951), 461-81. I will return to this issue in the following chapter.
[93] Schoenfeldt, p. 2.

Chapter 5
'To vse new fangilnes': Sir Thomas Wyatt – Revolutionary or Reformist?

a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir *Thomas Wyat* th'elder & *Henry* Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who hauing trauailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italiā Poesie as nouices newly crept out of the schooles of *Dante Arioste* and *Petrarch*, they greatly pollished our rude & homely maner of vulgar Poesie, from that it had bene before, and for that cause may iustly be sayd the first reformers of our English meetre and stile [...] their conceits were loftie, their stiles stately, their conueyance cleanly, their terms proper, their meetre sweete and well proportioned, in all imitating very naturally and studiously their Maister *Francis Petrarcha*.

(George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), pp. 60-2)[1]

One kind of historical transition aims to destroy and efface the immediate past, while another recognizes historicity. I call the first the revolutionary model, and the second the reformist model. The revolutionary model obsessively advertises its own novelty, and operates within strictly defined and contrasted periodic schemata. The second, instead, highlights continuities across historical rupture [...] the revolutionary model works by iconoclasm and demolition, while the reformist model operates by accretive *bricolage*.

(James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, p. 35)

I

Puttenham's famous account of the early Tudor voyage of discovery appears to posit a poetic paradigm shift which travels along Simpson's 'revolutionary' axis, yet it not only commingles the 'new fangilnes' of 'the Italiā Poesie' with the established English poetic tradition which began with Chaucer and was continued by Lydgate ('our rude & homely manner of vulgar Poesie'), but also conjoins it with the Anglo-Italianate tradition that developed symbiotically.[2] Whilst Puttenham is deliberately including himself within a revolutionary lineage of self-conscious modernity which ostensibly began with Wyatt's first forays into the sonnet, the *strambotto* and the *terza rima* – which had taken place 50

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[1] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. by Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).
[2] Alternatively, it may be argued that Puttenham is referring here to populist works such as *Bevis of Hampton*, although his comments on Gower ('[he] had nothing in him highly to be commended, for his verse was homely and without good measure', p. 62) and Lydgate ('a translatour onely and no deuiser of that which he wrate', ibid.) suggest that he did view them, at least, as practitioners of 'vulgar Poesie'.

years earlier – he actually aligns himself with Simpson's alternative discursive axis: Wyatt and Surrey were 'the first reformers of our English meetre and stile'.

Puttenham's concept of reform carries within it that revolutionary awareness of diachronic rupture which one associates with the concept of the Renaissance, yet his language blurs the boundaries between Simpson's divisions. His emphasis on novelty ('novices newly crept') corresponds with the 'revolutionary model', yet his insistence upon precedent – English poetics were 'pollished' rather than erased like a palimpsest, while the Italian style was 'studiously' imitated – confirms the 'accretive *bricolage*' of reform. In this balanced understanding of what had been achieved Puttenham is surely correct, although he is perhaps mistaken in affording Wyatt and Surrey equal responsibility.[3]

However, I would argue that Simpson's persuasive distinction between revolutionary and reformist discourses is itself a reformed discourse, one which follows the critical application by scholars such as Thomas Greene, Jane Hedley and Sandra Bermann of Jakobson's distinction between metaphor and metonymy, or paradigmatic (vertical) and syntagmatic (horizontal) modalities,[4] and in particular as they are brought into relation with Wyatt's adaptations of Petrarch's sonnets:

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[3] My focus will be on Wyatt's achievement, as it was he who first introduced the sonnet into England, as Thomson reminds us: 'Of these two Petrarchans, Wyatt deserves the major emphasis. This is not because he is judged a priori superior to Surrey. Wyatt was first in the field, Surrey being still a boy at the time of the 1527 embassy to Italy. Furthermore, in sheer bulk, Wyatt's Petrarchan poems outweigh Surrey's [...] He is, therefore, the key figure in this pioneering phase of English Petrarchanism' (pp. 168-9). See also Anthony Mortimer, ed., *Petrarch's Canzoniere in the English Renaissance* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005): 'Not only is Wyatt first in the field by at least a decade, but there is also a considerable difference in sheer quantity' (p. 15).

[4] See Roman Jakobson's seminal essay, 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances', in *Selected Writings*, 2 vols (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), II, 239-59. Jane Hedley concisely sums up Jakobson's antithetical relation between metaphor and metonymy: 'Metonymy, uses x to say xY on the strength of the contiguity of x and Y, be it spatial or temporal, either in some specific presupposed situation or else in our habitual experience of the world. Metaphor proposes that X be taken for Y, whereas in language and experience they usually belong to different spheres of activity or being', in *Power in Verse: Metaphor and Metonymy in the Renaissance Lyric* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1988), pp. 1-13 (p. 5). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

The medieval writer works within a system of texts that are all equally available for extension, completion, higher realization. Although this writer may know that some of his texts were produced by a society now disappeared, he has no way of measuring its difference, as Chrétien's reference to Greek and Roman chivalry makes clear. Thus medieval intertextuality can properly be thought of as metonymic, Renaissance intertextuality as metaphoric. [...] Intertextuality is metonymic because the later text touches, connects with, grows out of, the earlier one. All writing enjoys a neighbourly community. Thus there is no perceived threat of anachronism, no clash of *mundi significantes*, no itinerary from one concrete historical moment to another [...] Thus when we read a Wyatt poem that requires us to subread a Petrarchan poem, we experience the passage between them as a process of *stabilization*. The English tends to settle the restlessness of the Italian as it linearizes the cycle and arrests the iteration.[5]

Simpson's 'revolutionary' corresponds with Greene's (or rather Jakobson's) 'metaphoric', in that both necessitate a division between the given text and its predecessors, whilst the 'reformist' discourse involves that linear 'process of stabilization' which Greene posits as the basis of the metonymic. Yet Wyatt is neither a medieval nor a Renaissance writer, or rather he is both, and this combination of the two intertextual methodologies is what we find so concisely expressed in Puttenham's strategically blurred account.

It remains to be seen that, in terms of his polishing of the English tradition and his translations from the Italian, Wyatt corresponds more with Greene's metonymy, Simpson's reform. Indeed, Wyatt's translations – of both English and Italian poetics – are themselves reminiscent of Petrarch's own (Horatian) method of translative reform.[6] The 'sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italiã Poesie' are brought into metonymic relation both with the pre-existent Chaucerian, Anglo-Italianate tradition and the contemporary environment of the Henrician court. As Hedley argues when discussing Wyatt's 'metonymic use of deixis':

Their [Wyatt's and Surrey's] poems are highly context-oriented and context-implicated: they have specific occasions. If we are nevertheless able to read them at a distance from, and even in ignorance of, those occasions, that is because they have used deixis to project a larger context for the social gestures their speakers make. Deixis is Wyatt's most

[5] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 86-260. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[6] See chapter 3, p. 136.

important figurative device, and it is responsible for the characteristic terseness and sometimes obscurity of his poems. (p. 34)

Wyatt's use of deictics – personal pronouns, adverbials and demonstratives which refer to spatiotemporal context – with their dependence upon an insider's knowledge of 'specific occasions', do indeed contribute to Wyatt's ambiguity through their reinforcement of that metonymic contiguity between text and environment which Greenblatt insists is central to Wyatt's poetic:

> I would suggest that there is no privileged sphere of individuality in Wyatt, set off from linguistic convention, from social pressure, from the shaping force of religious and political power. Wyatt may complain about the abuses of the court, he may declare his independence from a corrupting sexual or political engagement, but he always does so from within a context governed by the essential values of domination and submission, the values of a system of power that has an absolute monarch as head of both church and state. [...] Far from struggling against the supposed anonymity of received forms, Wyatt seems to me to have been almost incapable of both genuine anonymity and detachment from received forms.[7]

This chapter will therefore focus upon Wyatt's various metonymic relationships as a means of consolidating the linear progression of the sonnet form and its corporeal descriptive strategies as they emanated from Petrarch and passed through the Chaucerian-Lydgatean *digressio*, and Wyatt's ability to metonymically fuse the Italian and English *corpora* within the context of the Henrician court. *Id est* his ability to convey an impression of revolutionary novelty to his reader whilst adhering to a reformist contiguity.

The key term is 'new fangilnes', both the ability of the 'I' 'to vse new fangilnes' to his own advantage, and the tendency of the Other to use it to his disadvantage. The term is oriented towards novelty. When we read it in 'They fle from me' (XXXVII) it appears almost to constitute a neologism by association; the nature of the signified effectively

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[7] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 120. Future citations will be included in the main body of the text. Greenblatt's asseveration is echoed by Nolan's discussion of 'Lydgate's redeployment of traditional forms'. See *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Unversity Press, 2005), pp. 5-10 (p. 7).

blinds us to the familiarity of the signifier.[8] Fanglement denotes 'something fashioned, an invention, a contrivance' (*OED*), and as such corresponds with the theme of self-fashioning in Wyatt's poetry; a process which Greenblatt associates with Renaissance modernity. But of course the term is not novel. Its precedence is signified by the form in which Wyatt's poem is written, the Chaucerian stanza. Chaucer uses 'newfangelnesse' on three occasions: in the *Legend of Good Women* ('And thoo that hadde doon unkyndenesse —| As dooth the tydif, for newfangelnesse', F 153-4); in *Anelida and Arcite* ('This fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse, | For she to him so lowly was and trewe', 141-2); and most pertinently in *The Squire's Tale*:

> Men loven of propre kynde newefangelnesse,
> As briddes doon that men in cages fede.
> For though thou nyght and day take of hem hede,
> And strawe hir cage faire and softe as silk
> And yeve hem sugre, hony, breed and milk,
> Yet right anon as that his dore is uppe
> He with his feet wol spurne adoun his cuppe,
> And to the wode he wole, and wormes ete;
> So newefangel been they of hire mete,
> And loven novelries of propre kynde;
> No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde. (V F 610-20)[9]

Lydgate also uses the term in *The Temple of Glas*:

> That, if þe spirit of nvfangilnes
> In any wise ȝoure hertis would assaile,
> To meve or stir to bring in doubilnes,
> Vpon ȝour trouþe to giuen a bataile,
> Late not ȝoure corage ne ȝoure force fail,
> Ne non assautes ȝov flitten or remeve:
> For vn-assaied men may no trouþe preue. (*TG*, 1243-9)[10]

In each instance 'newefangelnesse' is synonymous with infidelity, 'doubilnes', 'unkyndenesse', and 'fals' behaviour, and the emphasis on the wild animal in *The Squire's*

Tale, which once took 'breed' at the feeder's hand, but now flees 'to the wode' and refuses to be bound by 'gentilesse', cannot help but suggest an intertextual link between itself and Wyatt's most famous poem:

> They fle from me that sometyme did me seke
> With naked fote stalking in my chambre.
> I have sene theim gentill tame and meke
> That nowe are wyld and do not remembre
> That sometyme they put theimself in daunger
> To take bred at my hand; and nowe they raunge
> Besely seking with a continuell chaunge.
>
> Thancked be fortune, it hath ben othrewise
> Twenty tymes better; but ons in speciall
> In thyn arraye after a pleasaunt gyse
> When her lose gowne from her shoulders did fall,
> And she me caught in her armes long and small;
> Therewithall swetely did me kysse,
> And softely said 'dere hert, how like you this?'
>
> It was no dreme: I lay brode waking.
> But all is torned thorough my gentilnes
> Into a straunge fasshion of forsaking;
> And I have leve to goo of her goodeness,
> And she also to vse new fangilnes.
> But syns that I so kyndely ame serued,
> I would fain knowe what she hath deserued.[11]

We might transfer Thomson's comments upon the sonnet 'You that in love finde lucke and habundance' (XCII) to 'They fle from me', in that it is 'a synthesis characteristic of the best of Wyatt' (p. 127), combining as it does English and Italian poetics with personal experience, expressed deictically, and a wealth of concealed intertextual reference.

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[11] As with Lydgate, the dates of the majority of Wyatt's poems cannot be ascertained, although certain biographical references occasionally allow for informed conjecture. I would suggest that this poem was written following Wyatt's reading of Petrarch (post-1526-7), as, although it has not yet been noted, the opening of Wyatt's poem bears a striking resemblance to the opening of *Triumphus Cupidinis* IV (the *Trionfi* were often printed with the *Rime sparse*): 'io, ch'era più salvatico che i cervi, | ratto domesticato fui con tutti | i miei infelici e miseri conservi' ('My libertie gone, and I in wofull paynes, | I that afore was wylde as any harte | Was made then tame for my parte', 4-6). The translation is that by Lord Morley, which appeared three years prior to *Tottel's Miscellany* (in 1554). See D. D. Carnicelli, ed., *Lord Morley's Tryumphes of Fraunces Petrarcke: The First English Translation of the Trionfi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 103. For the original Italian see F. Neri and others, eds, *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1951), p. 501. Anna Hume's 1644 translation is even closer to Wyatt's poem, and one suspects she may have had it in mind: 'I, who us'd before | To flee from Love (as fearefull Deere

Wyatt blends the restrained resentment of the passage from *The Squire's Tale* with the barely concealed chivalric violence which underpins Lydgate's stanza, and contains both within a posture of melancholy resignation which hovers between passivity and agency. The elegiac tone which sounds the passing of mastery directly echoes Chaucer, as Wyatt's 'fle' serves as a corollary to the predecessive 'spurne'. The remembered act of observation in Wyatt's poem, 'I have sene them gentill tame and meke' corresponds with Chaucer's caged bird, and the former's 'gentilnes' effectively opens the 'dore', allowing the bird to 'raunge'. Yet Wyatt does not adhere to Chaucer's mournful acceptance, and the potential violence of 'I would fain knowe what she hath deserved' is more in conjunction with the stanza from *The Temple of Glas*. Wyatt is not willing to let his 'corage ne ʒoure force fail', and although he admits that 'I have leve to goo', the 'But' which opens the final couplet is pre-empted by the reader. The 'I' of Wyatt's poem cannot but 'remembre', as to turn perfunctorily from love to indifference would be to basely seek 'with a continuell chaunge', and thereby mimic the actions of the fickle beloved(s). Wyatt's speaker would rather heed Lydgate's lesson, and not 'flitten or remeve | For vn-assaied men may no trouþe preue', because Truth, for Wyatt, is paramount, as he emphasizes in the letters to his son:

> I haue nothing to crye and cal apon you for but honestye, honestye. It may be diuersly namid, but alway it tendith to one end. [...] I meane not that honestye that the comen sort callith an honist man: Trust me that honist man is as comen a name as the name of a good felow, that is to say, a dronkerd, a tauerne hanter, a riotter, a gamer, a waster [...] Folow not therfor the comen reputation of honestye: if you wil seme honist, be honist, or els seame as you are. Seke not the name without the thing, nor let the name be the only mark you shote at.[12]

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abhorre | The following huntsman) suddenly became | (Like all my fellow servants) calme and tame'. Included in *Petrarch in English*, ed. by Thomas P. Roche Jr (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 22.

[12] '(2) Wyatt to his son', in Kenneth Muir, *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1963), pp. 41-3 (pp. 41-2). Future citations will be included in the body of the text (hereafter *LL*). It is worth recalling that Wyatt's 'most striking borrowings are from some of Chaucer's short moral poems, the *balades Truth* and *Fortune*'. Helen Cooper, 'Wyatt and Chaucer: A Re-Appraisal', *Leeds Studies in English*, 13 (1982), 104-23 (p. 107). Future citations will be included in the body of the text. Chaucer's *Truth* actually appears in *Tottel's Miscellany*, as 'Flee fro the prees'.

Yet Truth, like any other signifier, is subject to linguistic play, hence Wyatt's focus upon the signified: 'It may be diuersly namid'; 'the comen sort calleth'; 'Seke not the name without the thing'. Wyatt would later rely upon the slipperiness of Truth in his 'Defence', which, although it was not eventually submitted, was written with the intention of saving his life by expositing misprision.

'But all is torned through my gentilnes'; Wyatt is, as ever, saying more than we initially realize, cloaking semantic complexity beneath a mantle of simple 'honestye'. He turns Chaucer's and Lydgate's texts by masculating his speaker. The narrator in the passage from *The Squire's Tale* is a female peregrine falcon bemoaning the infidelity of a 'tercelet' (tiercel) she loved, whilst Lydgate's advisory stanza is spoken by Venus. This rôle-reversal of the traditional, sexually aggressive male lover and the passive female beloved (although Lydgate's goddess is perhaps more archetypically masculine than feminine in her exhortation), is encapsulated in the second stanza of Wyatt's poem: 'she me caught in her armes long and small | Therewithall swetely did me kysse'. Wyatt's 'gentilnes', which Chaucer associates with the female speaker, is his undoing, as Heale argues:

> Attendance at court could be for an aspiring gentleman an opportunity, and, potentially, a mark of favour, but it could also bring with it the threatening stigma of corruption and effeminacy. Through a discourse of misogyny, however, effeminacy could be wrested to assert a male solidarity of and scorn of women. [...] The male speaker's initial, effeminate, vulnerability is aggressively transformed into sexual potency: the supposedly helpless object of a female script imagines himself as the controlling subject.[13]

The act of poetic composition serves as a means of reasserting masculinity, although in the process it discloses the original lapse into 'effeminacy' and recognizes it as error. We must bear in mind that Wyatt's poems would have been performed before a mixed

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[13] Elizabeth Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 48-50. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

audience – although not necessarily to music, as C. S. Lewis claimed – within an environment which equates sexual and political success.[14] To lose in one sphere is to fail in the other, and so Wyatt's 'I' must be seen to save face, as Greenblatt argues:

> the gain of one party is inevitably the loss of the other [...] so that a failure in love is like the rupture of a treaty, while even an erotic triumph seems most often to be achieved at the expense of one or other of the lovers, as well as of a third party [...] Any expression of need or dependence or longing thus perceived as a significant defeat; the characteristic male as well as national dream is for an unshakable self-sufficiency that would render all relations with others superfluous. (p. 141)

It does not help Wyatt's self-division that this Stoic ideal, which he expounds in his translation of Plutarch's *Quyete of Mynde* (1527) and the letters to his son, is bound up in a conflation of amorous and political discourses inherited from Ovidian love elegy.[15] However, he is helped by Petrarchan precedent, by the pervasive sense of 'myself divided' ('me stesso diviso', *Rs* 292. 3). As in the *Rime sparse*, the act of composition, the retreat into the male sphere of "making", is a means of disempowering the beloved by rendering her silent. The voice which asks 'dere hert, how like you this?' is still that of the narrative 'I', just as the words spoken by Laura in certain of the *in morte* sonnets are sounded by Petrarch's speaker. Wyatt's 'remembre' here gains equivalency with the Petrarchan *rimembra*, an act of dismemberment and re-memberment which detracts from the potential division of the lover by the overwhelming, fragmenting power of the love idol. Yet this is not the 'Swete-Thought' of the *Roman de la Rose*, which recreates the image of the beloved.[16] Wyatt's *effictio* is, as in his sonnets, aborted after 'armes long and small',

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[14] 'This was not intended to be read. It has little meaning until it is sung in a room with many ladies present [...] We are having a little music after supper.' *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 222-71 (p. 230). John Stevens refutes Lewis's argument in *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969-1971), pp. 149-50.

[15] See Simpson, pp. 121-90.

[16] 'Whanne ony lover doth compleyne, | And lyveth in distresse and in peyne, | Thanne Swete-Thought shal come as blyve | Awey his anger for to dryve' (B 2797-2800). See *The Romaunt of the Rose* in Benson, pp. 685-767 (p. 716).

and the past objective catalogue is replaced by the present subjective experience of its memory.[17] And although 'It was no dreme' attempts to counter the statement made by Petrarch in the opening sonnet of the *Rime sparse* (that 'whatever pleases in this world is a passing dream', 'quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno', 14), the potentially dangerous novelty of the Petrarchan lover is nevertheless defused by its ability to speak the language of an experience familiar to Wyatt's 'I', and expressed by the Anglo-Italianate tradition which had passed from Chaucer's Troilus to Lydgate's Black Knight.

Wyatt's 'new fangilnes', therefore, carries a negative intertextual undertone; novelty is not to be praised but scorned for its associations with inconstancy. Continuity and stability, not 'continuell chaunge', are what Wyatt's 'I' seeks, and so the metonymic mode is the one he adopts. Although this is not to say that he is without fanglement. It would be negligent to ignore the differences between the Chaucerian-Lydgatean aureate tradition, which had dominated fifteenth-century poetics and which was continued by poets such as Stephen Hawes in the early-sixteenth century, and Wyatt's comparatively 'drab' verse, to use C. S. Lewis's term.[18] However, in addition to Douglas Peterson's distinction between 'the plain and eloquent traditions which had existed side by side since well before Chaucer',[19] and which exerts an huge influence upon the poetics of the first half of the sixteenth century, I would argue that the difference is partially explained by Greenblatt's assertion that Wyatt's poetry is subject to 'the shaping force of religious and political power [...] that has an absolute monarch as head of both church and state'.

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[17] Although Leonard E. Nathan's article, 'Tradition and Newfangleness in Wyatt's "They Fle from Me"', *ELH*, 32 (1965), 1-16, in which he connects Wyatt's poem to the tradition of the *Roman* via the Lydgatean aureation of a ballade by Charles d'Orleans is fascinating.
[18] 'Wyatt is not the father of the Golden, but of the Drab, Age' (Lewis, p. 225).
[19] There is no need to reiterate the development of the plain and aureate styles in the early sixteenth century once again here, and in any case no justice would be done to it via gloss. See D. L. Peterson, *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Eloquent Styles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), in particular his introduction and chapters 1-3, pp. 9-119 (p. 6).

I would also agree that 'Wyatt captures the authentic voice of early English Protestantism' (Greenblatt, p. 115), as opposed to the view of Alistair Fox, who can find no Protestant ethic in Wyatt whatsoever.[20] Although the aureate style had tarnished prior to the Reformation, the Act of Supremacy may be said to have completed its despoliation. It would be impossible for aureation to continue as the dominant style in Britain following Henry's break with Rome, especially when its leading exponent had been The Monk of Bury; rhetorical gilding would have become the poetic equivalent of popish idolatry, much to the detriment of Lydgate's lyrics.[21] Yet there are vestiges of Lydgate's style in Wyatt, as Heale argues:

> There is never an absolute break with the past [...] Much of what seems new in the balets of the 1520s and 1530s can be seen as a continuation and revitalizing of traditions of verse going back to the fifteenth century and earlier [...] One of Chaucer's ballades even found its way into *Tottel's Miscellany*. (p. 70)

We need only look to the number of polysyllabic and Romance words which Wyatt includes in 'They fle from me': 'Therewithall', 'gentilnes', 'goodenes', 'fangilnes'. However, it must be admitted that these are the exception rather than the rule in Wyatt's verse. He prefers to follow Peterson's plain tradition and to maintain his Protestant aesthetic, which is constituted by what Greene terms a 'willed asceticism of the poetic

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[20] See the chapter on Wyatt in *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997). Fox's comments here perhaps run contrary to to those made in his excellent earlier discussion of Wyatt, in which he argued that 'noble courtiers were required to proclaim the aesthetic style of the dynasty. From the outset, Tudor monarchs tried to foster an image of themselves as embodying the best qualities of medieval chivalry and romance' [my italics]. See *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), pp. 257-85 (p. 257).

[21] As John Watkins writes of the Tudor Chaucer: 'In producing a standardized Chaucer, Thynne supported the same Tudor drift toward centralization and autocracy that manifested itself in the suppression of feudal rights, the dissolution of the monasteries, the anathematization of the papacy, and other repudiations of the medieval past'. See '"Wrastling for this world": Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer', in Theresa M. Krier, ed., *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1998), pp. 21-39 (p. 22). Chaucer could weather post-Reformation revisionism, for Lydgate this was not possible, and although his reputation somehow survived (thanks to *The Fall of Princes*), the slide into obscurity had begun. See Alan Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 4; Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes: Narrative Tragedy in its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 8-9.

word' (p. 247). Yet it is worth recalling that Lydgate wrote in both traditions. Compare,

for example, *The Pain and Sorrow of Evil Marriage* with Wyatt's 'Ye Olde Mule'

(XXXV). Lydgate's *A Ballade on an Ale-Seller* might have been written by Wyatt

himself:

> Remembryng on the grete vnstabilnesse,
> The pleasaunt looke also, the countenaunce,
> The counterfett cheer, medlid with dowbilnesse,
> Of you in whom I put my affiaunce,
> I tooke my penne, thus stondying in a traunce,
> Experiens had, the trouthe I nyl denye,
> In you my-silf I nyll nomor affye. (1-7)[22]

Wyatt also follows Lydgate's suppression of *effictio*, but goes much further in his

intolerance for almost every form of *descriptio*. If Lydgate's style is analogous to a gothic

abbey, as Schirmer argued, then Wyatt is the same abbey, but post-dissolution: vestiges of

the former splendour remain, but only as fragments and ruins.[23] Interestingly, the imagistic

relationship between Wyatt and aureate, Lydgatean poetics is akin to that which Wyatt has

with Petrarch, and in both correspondences his Reformation aesthetic is exposed:

> This suppression of ornament and Petrarchan decorative richness, this imagistic asceticism
> is essential to Wyatt's language because it strips the word of its esthetic pretentiousness
> and leaves it as a naked gauge of integrity. He seems almost to have invested with value
> the impoverished formal poetic means available to him. When integrity is revealed as
> inauthentic, then the semiotic crisis is not infrequently thematized. (Greene, p. 256)

It is in terms of form and metre, rather than diction, that we witness continuity between

the aureate tradition and Wyatt. Wyatt was a master of the rhyme royal form, as poems

such as 'They fle from me' and 'Resound my voyse' (XXII) ably demonstrate. He is also,

as Thomson argues, an 'author of love lyrics in the main courtly tradition, and a professed

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[22] *Minor Poems*, pp. 429-32 (pp. 429-30).
[23] See previous chapter. There is certainly something Wyattic about Shakespeare's 'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang' (sonnet LXXIII. 4). See Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Arden Shakespeare 3rd series (London: Arden, 1997; repr. 2002), p. 257.

admirer of Chaucer' (p. 115), and in this sense he is a direct descendant of Lydgate. And as Helen Cooper points out, both

> Wyatt and Chaucer make the verse form work for them in a smoothly integrated syntactic unit with a climax of meaning clearly marked by the grammatical and rhythmic structure of the stanza. (p. 106)

Wyatt often writes lyrics composed of three rhyme royal stanzas, following the precedent set by both the *Canticus Troili* and the quarried lyrics of *The Temple of Glas*. On one occasion he writes a fourteen line poem composed of two rhyme royal stanzas (CCXXXV), although this, in all likelihood, does not determine the shape of his sonnet.

Yet the question of where Wyatt took his cue for the inclusion of the rhyming couplet in his sonnet form is one which need not be asked again here; it was probably the cumulative product of a collective influence.[24] That Wyatt understood the resemblance between the Chaucerian stanza and the *strambotto* cannot be denied, although whether he gauged the possibility that Chaucer might have created the rhyme royal following his reading of Boccaccio's *ottava rima* is another matter.[25] The evidence we have of Wyatt's sense of the *strambotto* / *ottava rima* / rhyme royal triangle lies in his frequent use of the single rhyme royal stanza as a kind of English *strambotto*, as in 'Ryght true it is, and said full yore ago' (XLIX) and 'O miserable sorrow withowten cure!' (CCIV). That Wyatt not only made links between the rhyme royal and the *strambotto*, but also between the *ottava rima* and the *strambotto* is suggested by the naming of stanzas from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* as potential sources for his *strambotti* 'The wandering gadlyng in the sommer tyde' (XLVI) and 'From thes hye hilles as when a spryng doth fall' (XCV).[26] However,

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[24] See Introduction, pp. 26-9, for a more detailed discussion of the formal evolution of Wyatt's sonnet.
[25] As Thomson posits, 'the strambotto certainly provided Wyatt with the easier and more familiar pattern. The distich unit is congenial to him, the interwoven rhyming and couplet already familiar. Metrically rhyme royal (ababbcc) is not unlike the strambotto, and this was not only a dominant form in the English tradition, but one in which Wyatt was particularly expert' (p. 212).
[26] See Muir's and Thomson's commentary in *Collected Poems*, pp. 304-5, 332-4.

even if we were to agree with Thomson and refute any relation between the identical forms, it remains to be seen that Wyatt had both the *strambotto* and the rhyme royal models before him as influences for his inclusion of the rhyming couplet within his sonnet. He may even be seen as constituting the essential link between the *strambotto* and *ottava rima* forms via his equation of the former with the Chaucerian stanza, which, as both Thomson and Wallace point out, was in all likelihood an English translation of the *ottava rima*. In his poetry the consanguinity hitherto suggested between the sonnet, rhyme royal and *strambotto* becomes all the more apparent, no less complex.

II

Whilst Wyatt inherits an Anglo-Italianate correspondence from Chaucer and the Chaucerian tradition – which, as Spearing reminds us, 'might be better called Lydgatean' (p. 120) – the *direct* influence of Petrarch cannot be ignored. Yet if Wyatt's translations and adaptations from Petrarch are entirely dependent upon, if not always faithful to, their source, we nevertheless repeatedly uncover that metonymic contiguity between them and accounts of the Henrician court by which they are received, for example in 'Caesar, when that the traytour of Egipt':

Caesar, when that the traytour of Egipt,	Cesare, poi che 'l traditor d'Egitto
With th'onourable hed did him present,	li fece il don de l'onorata testa,
Covering his gladness did represent	celando l'allegrezza manifesta,
Playnt with his teeres owteward, as it is writt:	pianse per gli occhi fuor, sì come è scritto;
And Hannyball eke, when fortune him shitt	et Anibàl, quando a l'imperio afflitto
Clene from his reign and from all his intent,	vide farsi Fortuna sì molesta,
Laught to his folke whome sorrowe did torment,	rise fra gente lagrimosa et mesta,
His cruell dispite for to disgorge and qwit.	per isfogare il suo acerbo despitto;
So chaunceth it oft that every passion	et così aven che l'animo ciascuna
The mynde hideth by colour contrary	sua passion sotto 'l contrario manto,
With fayned visage, now sad, now mery:	ricopre co la vista or chiara or bruna.
Whereby, if I laught, any tyme, or season,	Però s'alcuna volta io rido o canto,
It is for bicause I have nother way	facciol perch' i' non ò se non quest'una
To cloke my care but vnder spoort and play.	via da celare il mio angoscioso pianto.
(III)	(*Rs* 102)

Wyatt's translation exemplifies Petrarchan *translatio* in its balance of fidelity to its source and subtle, personalizing alteration, whilst the choice of sonnet is ideal in its equivocation of political and amorous discourses. Wyatt's paraphrasis, which includes such minor details as the imitation of Italian elision – *sinalefe* – to form a dipthong ('l' onorata', 'th'onourable') and the careful transposition of verbal inflections ('scritto' becomes 'writt' rather than written in an effort to preserve the stress but without ending on a feminine syllable), allows him to pontificate whilst maintaining 'what government spokesmen now call "deniability"' (Greenblatt, p. 121). This is remarkably akin to, and possibly inherited from, the lyrics of Lydgate, who, we will recall, 'inserts whatever unobtrusive statements might if necessary afford him a technical plea of not guilty [...] it is we, and not the poet, who are disregarding the teachings of the Church' (Renoir, pp. 84-5).

Also, Wyatt selects this sonnet because it discusses his favourite subject, Truth, and, by extension, dissimulation. As Greene posits, the word *trouth*, for Wyatt 'serves to illustrate the ways moral ambiguities turn out to be semiotic ambiguities' (p. 254). In fact, moral ambiguity is exposed via semiotic ambiguity in Wyatt's poetry, a process which allows him to criticize courtly ethics whilst ostensibly producing a harmless translation. Wyatt certainly understood that 'translations are all a kind of elaborate masking' (Greenblatt, p.120), however, he is introducing a gambit much more complex than oblique criticism – he is consciously practising that which he is covertly critiquing.

The central term is Petrarch's 'contrario manto', that 'contrary mantle' which Wyatt dons whilst refusing to do so.[27] Wyatt fashioned a public image of himself as a bluff,

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[27] Wyatt's turn of phrase also echoes Lydgate's 'Ful covertli to curen al hir smert | And shew the contrarie outward of her hert' (*TG*, 205-6). Lydgate's *Temple* was often printed as an addendum to Chaucer's *Collected Works* – it is not unthinkable that Wyatt would have read this popular poem in Pynson's or Thynne's editions.

prosaic son of a Yorkshireman, with whom one saw exactly what one got – 'if I laught, any tyme, or season, | It is for bicause I have nother way'. Yet such an image runs contrary to the Wyatt whom we know was a skilled ambassador, or "orator" as they were termed in the Henrician era; the Wyatt who subtly manipulates Petrarchan love lyrics into attacks on the court he was both repelled by and attracted to; who testifies in his 'Defence' to being an expert manipulator of semantic ambiguity:

> Reherse here the lawe of wordes. Declare, my lords, I beseke you, the meaninge thereof [...] yt is a smale thynge in alteringe of one syllable ether with penne or worde that may mayk in the conceavinge of the truthe myche matter or error. For in thys thynge 'I fere', or 'I truste', semethe but one smale syllable chaynged, and yet it makethe a great dyfferaunce, yea and the settinge of the wordes one in an others place may mayke greate dyfferaunce, tho were the wordes all one [...] I besyche you therfore examen the matter vnder this sorte. Confere theire [Wyatt's accusers] severall sayings togyther, confer th' examinations vpone the same matter and I dare warrante ye shall fynde mysreportinge and mysvnderstandinge. [...] But bringe me my garment as yt was. Yf I saide anye lyke thynge, reherse my tale, as I saide yt. No man can beleve you that I mente yt as you constere yt, or that I spake yt as you alledge yt, or that I vnderstonde Inglyshe so evell to speak so owte of purpose. Therfor the tyme, the place, and other mens sayings vpone the same matter bewraye your craft and your falsehoode. Yt well apperethe that you have a towarde will to lye, but that you lacked in the matter practise or wytt. For theie say he that will lye well muste have a good remembraunce that he agre in all poyntes with hym self, leste he be spied. (*LL*, pp. 196-9)

Wyatt certainly agrees 'in all poyntes with hym self, lest he be spied', and we must remember that the sonnets were written to be performed before an audience-readership alert to linguistic subtlety, who knew the importance of 'alteringe of one syllable ether with penne or worde that may mayk in the conceavinge of the truthe myche matter or error'. Yet his declaration of transparency is not self-reliant, but rather reinforced by both the metonymic and metaphoric modes, which are enabled by the form. The examples of the octave ('Caesar [...] And Hannyball eke') posit duplicity, falseness and 'fayned visage' as historical and political truths, whilst the sestet recognizes them as practices which continue in contemporary courtly behaviour, as the past tense of the octave concedes to the present participles of the sestet: 'So chaunceth it oft', 'The mynde hideth'.

This emphasis upon the presence of historical exemplar stabilizes the vacillation of 'now sad, now mery' by granting the repeated deictic the same level of import as the antitheses, or perhaps even greater. Were we to scan the line iambically the stress would fall on 'now' each time, whereas in the Italian 'or chiara or bruna' the stress falls on the adjectives.[28] The potential 'historical rupture' of the *volta* is averted by the contiguity between ancient and present practices, which allows for metonymic osmosis, or 'accretive *bricolage*'. However, whilst the objective observation of duplicity's metonymic history appears to prevent schism, a second rupture, between the subjective 'I' and the observed (Caesar, Hannibal, and Wyatt's contemporaries), is successfully inserted by the *volta*, thereby constituting the revolutionary metaphoric.

The speaker's presentation of himself as 'an honist man' is undermined by the 'fayned visage' of his examples: how are we to know that the 'I' does not *his* 'mynde hideth by colour contrary'? In this sense the speaker has assumed the 'contrario manto' of metaphor, but were we to 'bringe me my garment as yt was', it would be metonymic.[29] Wyatt's text creates a site of Barthesian bliss; semantic responsibility lies with the reader because the text's potential or implied meaning is concretized through *rezeptionästhetik,* as in Lydgatean love lyric. In this instance what may have been a 'drab' declaration of 'honestye' is recognized by the audience as a veiled recollection of the Cretan Paradox: the poet, effectively a public speaker, is telling his audience that all public speakers are duplicitous. Truth and falsehood shift from being antithetical extremes to being interchangeable theses, and become almost indistinguishable.

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[28] Although the line has a feminine ending, possibly in imitation of the Italian. The line is most likely to be read as broken-backed, with an inverted foot following the median caesura.

[29] As Greene argues for both Wyatt and Surrey: 'they must have seen the intertextual itineraries contained in their poems as crossings of a cultural rupture. To the extent that these crossings were effected, they did achieve at least a weak degree of heuristic creativity' (p. 245).

For Petrarch the revelation of the anguished self is the point towards which his sonnet has been moving, which signals both its end and its retrospective purpose – 'pianto' is one of his keywords, part of that Kristevan concatenation introduced in order to prevent or defer linguistic play from dissipating the sonnet's meaning. As Greene argues for Wyatt's translations, 'the etiological passage from the Italian text to the English can be described as an engagement of the closed system with its human surrounding' (p. 248). Ergo 'pianto', due to its previous use throughout the sequence, provides a provisional semantic stasis which arrests the poem and temporarily avoids an indeterminate ending in order to produce such a 'closed system'. Wyatt, on the other hand allows, depends upon, such indeterminacy, and so closes (reopens?) his poem with a final 'Covering' ('celando'): 'vnder spoort and play'. This is a delicate alteration, correspondent with the discussion of semantics in the 'Defence'; 'yt is a smale thing' which 'makethe a great dyfferaunce'. Indeed, Wyatt's 'dyfferaunce' in this instance pre-empts Derridean *différance*: we have the option of reading 'nother' as either "no other", as in the source, or "another", which maintains the theme of duplicity. Wyatt's text deliberately omits the specificity of Petrarch's 'this one way' ('quest'una | via'), opting instead to add the ludic ambiguity of 'spoort and play'.

The 'I' of 'They fle from me' is not so far removed from the 'I' of the 'Caesar' sonnet, as the solitary 'honist man' of the latter who critiques 'moral ambiguity' is also he who was its victim in the former, and in both cases the weapon of choice is 'semiotic ambiguity':

> This perpetual Petrarchan threat of collapsing reference yields in Wyatt to a different semiotic threat, the collapse of traditional, principled relationships on which a coherent society has depended and in which language has been grounded. In the satires as in the lyrics, the word is in danger of losing its *trouth*, its basis in common practice, and the poet regards the ungrounding of truth, a property of human relations that is also a property of language. [...] One of his solutions was to build his poems consciously around words whose meanings are pointedly eroded or debased. (Greene, pp. 255-6)

Both 'spoort and play' are 'eroded or debased' by ambiguity, and yet manage to encapsulate our received impression of the Henrician court. Whilst 'spoort' denotes jousting, hunting and hawking, it also has its debased sexual meaning; likewise 'play' suggests on the one hand frivolity, banter, and on the other Machiavellian duplicity and linguistic dissimulation. Wyatt's entire poem is an elegy for the passing of *'trouth'*, and yet at the same time it actively practises authenticity's 'ungrounding'.

Furthermore, 'spoort and play' taken in their debased forms of sex and dissimulation, form the core of the Ovidian love elegy which embraces and conflates the amorous and the political, and which, according to Simpson, lies not only at the heart of Wyatt's lyrics, but also links them to the Chaucerian-Lydgatean tradition.[30] Indeed, it may be said that there are, potentially, three Ovidian influences present in Wyatt's verse: the Latin Ovid of whom he may have had direct knowledge; the Ovid of the Chaucerian-Lydgatean tradition; and the Ovid refracted through the *Rime sparse*. In relation to the direct influence of Ovid we have only circumstantial evidence: Wyatt was writing at the tail-end of the *aetas Ovidiana*, during which Ovid's influence was ubiquitous. As Thomson says of Wyatt's being sent to St John's College, Cambridge in 1516 at the age of thirteen, the 'study of Latin may be taken for granted', and he was 'well placed to appreciate the value of all the new learning, classical and scriptural' (p. 7). We have no knowledge of Wyatt's pre-college education, although it may be helpful to consider that Ovid's *De Tristibus* and the *Metamorphoses* – although not the *Amores*, which is central to Simpson's argument – were being taught as part of the contemporary syllabus at Eton, which had been founded in 1440 in order to prepare scholars matriculating to King's College, Cambridge.[31]

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[30] See Introduction, pp. 2-3, and *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, pp. 121-2.
[31] See T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), I, 353-8.

The case for Wyatt's reading the Ovidiana of the English poetic tradition is less conjectural as he refers to Chaucer's works in 'Mine owne John Poyntz' (CV), for example when he refuses to 'Praysse Syr Thopas for a noble tale, │ And skorne the story the knight told' (50-1). Also, not only had the *Metamorphoses* been translated by Caxton in 1480, but the entire medieval courtly lyric tradition was dependent on the figure named 'Venus clerk', by Chaucer; or as Lydgate says, 'Rede Ouide and he kan telle'.[32] Furthermore, Wyatt was writing during the Tudor canonization of Chaucer, whereby the latter's works were collected by Pynson (1526) and Thynne (1532). Chaucer became the national poet, and of course a number of Lydgate's works, including *The Floure of Curtesye* and *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, were imputed to his 'maister' until well after Wyatt's death. Chaucer emphasized the Ovidian conflation of love and politics, or love and war, as we witness in works such as *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale*; both of which incidentally take works by Boccaccio as their source, *Il Filostrato* and *Teseida*, works which may have been influenced by their author's reading of an early circulated manuscript version of the *Rime sparse*.[33] Lydgate, who is not mentioned by Wyatt, but whose influence on early sixteenth-century poetics was so great that Wyatt's older contemporary Stephen Hawes placed him above Chaucer, also practises Ovidian discursive commingling.[34] A notable example is when he has the lovers in his *Temple of Glas*, which is decorated with scenes from the *Metamorphoses* (replacing the Virgilian

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[32] See *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. by William Caxton (New York: Braziller, 1968). See also *The House of Fame*, 1487; *Reson and Sensuallyte*, 4259. The latter is densely packed with Ovidian mythography, including a re-membering of the tale of Narcissus so essential to *The Complaint of the Black Knight*. See Ernest Sieper, ed., *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallyte*, EETS, ES 84, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1901).

[33] See chapter 3, p. 138.

[34] 'Nothynge I am experte in poetry │ As the monke of Bury, flour of eloquence' (26-7), *Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. by W. E. Mead, EETS, OS 173 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928). Hawes was court poet to both Henry VII and Henry VIII, and was once credited with having written the *Temple of Glas*. See Schick, pp. lxxv-lxxx.

influence found in the corresponding section of Chaucer's *House of Fame*), present legalistic 'bills' and suits to Venus. In any case, Wyatt's Chaucer is conflated with Lydgate due to Pynson's and Thynne's appension of key works by Lydgate to the Chaucer corpus.[35]

We have Wyatt's translations to prove his familiarity with the Petrarchan Ovid. And whilst he may have understood and seized upon the intermingling of amorous and political discourses, and to some extent the divided 'I' of the *Amores*, what Wyatt gains from Petrarch's Ovid is the fusion of the speaking voice from the *Amores* with the instability of the *Metamorphoses*' corporeal signifiers. The speaker of the 'Caesar' sonnet acknowledges the body's semiotics, the extent to which it may be used as an 'eroded or debased' signifier. Both Wyatt's 'Caesar [...] And Hannyball eke', and Petrarch's 'Cesare [...] et Anibàl', use their bodies as sign systems, substituting somatic actions, signifieds, for signifiers: 'did represent | Playnt with his teeres owteward'; 'Laught to his folke'. Wyatt reinforces this surrogacy by substituting Petrarch's 'mantle' ('manto'), which is implicitly rhetorical, for the explicitly rhetorical 'colour'.[36] The body colours and discolours in accordance with mood and emotion, for example when blushing. Wyatt implies, in accordance with the *artes rhetoricae* and the body-text function, that rhetorical and physical colourings are not only interdependent, but interchangeable. Yet he also reverses the process by substituting signifiers, that is his sonnet, where Caesar and

[35] See Francis W. Bonner, 'The Genesis of the Chaucer Apocrypha', *Studies in Philology*, 48 (1951), 461-81. Also Alice S. Miskimmin. 'Counterfeiting Chaucer: The Case of "Dido", Wyatt and the "Retraction"', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 10 (1997), 133-45: 'it is Pynson's Chaucer of 1526 which was Wyatt's true Chaucer companion' (p. 139). See also Theresa M. Krier, 'Introduction: Receiving Chaucer in Renaissance England', in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, pp. 1-20; and Watkins.
[36] Geoffrey of Vinsauf and Matthew of Vendôme both speak of dressing the body-text in rhetorical apparel. That such manifestoes influenced Wyatt may be seen clearly when he asks his prosecutors in his 'Defence' to 'bringe me my garment as yt was', that is, give me my words as they were spoken. Petrarch makes similar comments in *Fam.*, XXII, 2: 'I much prefer that my style be my own, uncultivated and rude, perhaps, but made to fit, as a garment, to the measure of my mind, rather than to someone else's, which may be more elegant, ambitious and adorned'.

Hannibal would have used their bodies to speak for them; and as their ostensible emotions were false, so may we distrust the 'colour' of Wyatt's claim to transparency. Wyatt, in this instance, puts his text in the space historically occupied by the body, at least according to his examples.

This concept of the body's "colours" is explored further in Wyatt's translation of one of Petrarch's most Ovidian sonnets, 'The longe love', which directly follows 'Caesar, when that the traytour of Egipt' in the Egerton manuscript, suggesting a perceived relation by the translator:[37]

The longe love, that in my thought doeth harbar	Amor, che nel penser mio vive et regna
And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence	e 'l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tene,
Into my face preseth with bold pretence,	talor armato ne la fronte vene;
And therein campeth, spreding his baner.	ivi si loca et ivi pon sua insegna.
She that me lerneth to love and suffre	Quella ch' amare et sofferir ne'nsegna
And will that my trust, and lustes negligence	e vol che'l gran desio, l'accesa spene
Be rayned by reason, shame and reverence	ragion, vergogna, et reverenza affrene,
With his hardines taketh displeasure.	di nostro ardir fra se stessa si sdegna.
Wherewithall, vnto the hertes forrest he fleith,	Onde Amor paventoso fugge al core,
Leaving his enterprise with payne and cry	lasciando ogni sua impresa, et piange et trema;
And there him hideth and not appereth.	ivi s'asconde et non appar più fore.
What may I do when my maister fereth,	Che poss'io far, temendo il mio signore,
But, in the felde, with him to lyve and dye?	se non star seco infin a l'ora estrema?
For goode is the liff, ending faithfully.	ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more.
(IV)	(Rs 140)

The influence of the Ovidian "love as war" trope from the *Amores* is unmistakable here, yet it would be wise to remind ourselves of the relevant section from Ovid's text in order to note first Petrarch's divergence, and Wyatt's subsequent paraphrase:

> Militat omnis amans et habet sua castra Cupido;
> Attice, crede mihi, militat omnis amans.
> [...]
> quid me, qui miles numquam tua signa reliqui,
> laedis, et in castris uulneror ipse meis?
> [...]
> me quoque, qui totiens merui sub amore puellae,
> defunctum placide uiuere tempus erat.
>
> (Lovers are soldiers, Atticus. Believe me,

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[37] This argument is reinforced by the poem which precedes the 'Caesar' sonnet, entitled 'What vaileth trouth?'

Lovers are soldiers, Cupid has his corps.
[...]
Why hurt *me*, when I've never left your [Cupid's] colours?
In my own camp I'm wounded – tell me why.
[...]
I too in Love's campaigns have done long service;
It's time to live in peace and end my toils.) (*Amores*, I. 9. 1-2 – II. 9. 3-24)

Whilst Petrarch extends the basic metaphor, Wyatt reforms it for the court, aligning it with 'Tudor ideals of service', wherein 'Service to God and service to the King are found in perfect harmony' (Thomson, p. 3). However, Wyatt's alterations to the Petrarchan original display a certain degree of tension; 'Amor' may be a divinity, but he is not a surrogate God, as we recall from Petrarch's distinction between 'signor' and 'Signor'.

Wyatt's opening phrase, 'The longe love' has no Petrarchan equivalent, although it may suggest his recognition of Ovidian tropes in Petrarch's poem through its echo of Ovid's 'Long love has shrunk me for this business' ('longus amor tales corpus tenuauit in usus', *Amores*, I. 6. 5). Wyatt's divergence from his source extends through the entire line, replacing the magisterial pomp of 'vivo et regna' with the more surreptitious 'harbar'. Surrey's translation of the same line, by contrast, is much more faithful to Petrarch: 'Love, that doth raine and liue within my thought' (4. 1).[38] Wyatt omits any reference in Petrarch's poem which may be misinterpreted as an implicit admission of faltering loyalty to his king, hence following the covert 'harbar', Petrarch's 'seggio maggior', the principal seat or throne, is replaced by the unobtrusive 'residence'. Rather than an explicit admission of allegiance, which we find in Petrarch, the overall impression is more akin to Sidney's later description of Cupid, 'Who like a thief in dark bush doth lie' (*Astrophil and Stella*, XX. 3).[39] Yet Wyatt appears to be complicit in Love's concealment, he is not

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[38] The numbering is that used by F. M. Padelford, ed., *The Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey*, rev. edn (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1928), p. 57. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

[39] See Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Sir Philip Sidney: The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; repr. 2002), pp. 153-211 (pp. 160-1).

ambushed so much as collusive in treason.

Why then do the remaining lines of the opening quatrain return to the Petrarchan image? It would appear that Wyatt did not want to elide Petrarch's imaginative use of Ovid's metaphor; the 'colours' of the *Amores* become the lover's blush upon seeing his beloved. However, Wyatt's possible awareness of the Ovidian referent complicates Petrarch's image. We saw in the 'Caesar' sonnet how the body-text may inveigle through such 'colours', and here Petrarch's 'armato' ('armoured', with a paronomasia upon *armare* and *amare, armato* and *amato*), becomes 'bold pretence'. The authenticity of Wyatt's 'longe love' therefore is dependent upon our reading of 'pretence', which can be either the assertion of a right, a display of ostentation, or equivalent to the 'play' of the previous sonnet. Again Wyatt allows linguistic play and *rezeptionästhetik* to settle the matter, creating a centre of meaning which is rendered impotent by the deliberate incorporation of terms whose meanings are 'pointedly eroded or debased'. Thus we leave the first quatrain upon that familiar critical issue which has yet to be resolved: the extent to which Wyatt's poems are autobiographical, and the extent to which they are literary posturing. The answer is most likely to be found at a median point upon which the two metonymic lines, of courtly context and poetic tradition, intersect. The further question of why Wyatt would undermine the authenticity of his blushes surely stems from Heale's assertion of the corrupting effeminacy of court. The poet is at pains to both display himself, spread his banner as it were, as an adept courtly lover whilst maintaining his masculinity, through his use of both martial imagery and the possibility that his physical colours are merely a 'bold pretence' practised by the body-text.

The second quatrain is almost uniformly faithful to its source, although Wyatt reasserts his masculinity through the addition of the scornful 'lustes negligence'. However, the

volta signals a rupture between original and translation, as Wyatt inserts the metaphor of 'the hertes forrest', whilst Petrarch's 'Amor' flees only to the heart ('fugge al core'). The image is synonymous with one of Wyatt's central thematic concerns:

> Forests were, in the sixteenth century, the special domain of the monarch, subject to laws which protected the deer (hart/heart) for royal use. They were also wild places, although not necessarily wooded, the refuge of the outlaw, not easily accessible, within the fiction of this sonnet, to the lady's or reason's authority. If Love's residence is the poet's 'heart's forest', is Love the monarch whose royal domain is the forest of the heart? Or is he an outlaw taking refuge in the fastness of the forest? Does his 'residence' there associate him with the hunted animal, the hart, or with the hunter? Is he a creature of the forest, belonging on the margins of civilized society, or an aristocratic predator? (Heale, pp. 95-6)

As we saw in 'They fle from me', and will see again in 'Who so list to hounte', Wyatt's poetry consistently focuses upon the binary opposition constituted by civilization and wilderness, which in turn causes him to vacillate between passivity and aggression. Wyatt's Love is not found in the well-organized garden, the *hortus conclusus* of the *Roman de la Rose*, but in the irrational, uncultivated lust symbolized by the 'forrest'. Yet Love's 'residence' proper is not the forest, but the battlefield; the forest is alien, and we can therefore refuse the understanding of Love as monarch of the 'forest' (although this ambiguous image does return in 'Who so list'). I would concur with Heale's second reading of Love as outlaw, hunter become hunted, who 'fleith' to the forest in which he is a trespasser. This would also reinforce the biographical reading of 'Who so list to hounte' by associating Love, and by extension Wyatt, with transgression against the king's property. The forest is not only the refuge of the hart/heart but also the dwelling place of the hind who 'nowe [is] wyld and do[es] not remembre' in 'They fle from me'; the flight has been reversed. Yet Love's flight is futile as he 'fleith' from the battlefield, from 'She that me lerneth to love and suffre', only to take refuge in a topography with which she is synonymous. In which case, trapped between two equally fatal extremes of civilization and wilderness, both the speaker and 'maister' must return to 'the felde', to court, and

therein face death: 'For goode is the liff, ending faithfully'. This last line is characteristically open-ended, and Wyatt's allegiance is offered up for interpretation. The debasement of 'maister' allows it to appear a pledge of fidelity to the monarch, yet the transgression of Love into the 'hertes forrest', that place of royal privilege, places him in direct opposition to the crown. To whom will Wyatt remain faithful? Petrarch's closing line is less ambiguous, although similarly left to the reader's discretion: 'For he makes a good end who dies loving well' ('ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more'). Wyatt omits the final reference to 'amando', as this perhaps would clarify his position more than he would like, or allow. It is worth recalling that Wyatt was sent to the Tower in 1536 when Anne Boleyn's suitors were arrested and executed, and whilst I am loath to resort to knee-jerk biographical inference, the threat of impending execution may have put Wyatt's – or rather Ovid's – axiom to the test: 'Happy the man who dies amid love's duels' ('felix, quem Veneris certamina mutua perdunt', *Amores*, II. 10. 29).

In 'The longe love', as in the 'Caesar' sonnet, Wyatt has again used the concept of his own body-text as a means of obfuscating his desire, reversing the methodology of Petrarch and Lydgate, which positions the body-text of the other as a means of soliciting Barthesian pleasure. However, the nature of Wyatt's desire is divided due to the discursive correlation between courtly love and courtly politics. As Heale argues, both desires 'and resentments aroused by the fickle favours of monarchs could be explored and expressed in ballets in terms of a feminized Dame Fortune, or fickle mistress' (p. 48). By extension, desire for the beloved sounds an harmonic desire for power, which is also expressed by the masculine duplicity of the courtly lover's body-text. Greenblatt gives an indication of this relationship between body and power in Wyatt's verse:

> The body itself must be reduced from the presumptuous independence of the perceiver to the status of an object in the world, gazed upon by the creator as a jailor. [...] The ruler's

social identity seems to be absorbed into his personal being; his power [...] seems to breathe forth from his body [...] this is perhaps why power and sexuality seem so closely intertwined, manifestations of the same energy of the body [...] The distinction between the speaker and the power he represents is worth emphasizing, for it is reproduced at the level of court poetry; that is, the poem itself is a kind of agent, sent forth to perform the bidding of its master [...] governed by its overarching purpose which is to enhance its creator's personal position, to manifest and augment his power. (pp. 124-42)

Wyatt's poetry then is an attempted manifestation or imitation of a power that emanates from the body, and which, like the poem, becomes not only 'an object in the world', a signified, but also a signifier, 'a kind of agent', which of course is also a double-agent. Such a use of the body-text is reinforced by the claim that Wyatt fashioned his poetic "manliness" 'as a flattering imitation of Henry VIII' (Greenblatt, p. 154).[40] Wyatt's self-fashioning, in both the social and literary spheres, is concerned with creating a body which presents itself as self-contained, solid, and yet which also has the ability to misrepresent itself via the use of 'colours'.[41] It is perhaps for this reason that Wyatt's verse often receives corporeal epithets such as "muscular", or "vigorous".[42] And of course for such a purpose the sonnet is ideal, not only because it a 'closed system', but also because the translations allow for 'deniablility', ambiguity and dissemblance.

Yet the synonymity of power and the body-text, whilst it may appear a metaphoric development – the product of a self-consciously discrete historical epoch – actually serves as a further metonymic development of the Chaucerian-Lydgatean tradition, as Seth Lerer

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[40] There is a similar process in Lydgate, as Maura Nolan argues: 'the form of sovereignty is imitated by, as well as constructed by, certain forms of cultural expression. And because those modes of expression are firmly linked to the ruling elite, because they are transmitted and reproduced by those with the power to do so, they acquire a certain durability and longevity', *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 29. See also Robert J. Meyer-Lee, 'Lydgate's Laureate Pose', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 36-60: 'The poet laureate – the site of intersection between politics and culture, the king's double in the realm of the aesthetic [...] an authoritative poet who embodies state power' (pp. 52-5).
[41] As Seth Lerer posits, 'This is as much a vocabulary of stagecraft as it is a language of the body'. *Courtly Letters in the age of Henry VIII: Literary culture and the arts of deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 110. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[42] See for example Gary Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1986), on Wyatt's 'plain, muscular line' (p. 115).

posits in his discussion of Henry VIII's *billets-doux* to Anne Boleyn:

> Henry's correspondence [...] transforms the corporeal poetics of the letter central to the Chaucerian tradition [...] the letter and the body stand as one, as both mark out the contours of the writer's power. Letters construct a subjectivity of the corporeal, and the love letter in particular always takes as its subject the human body, whether it be the body of the writer or the subject of his gaze. [...] For Henry it is not so much the rhetorical feignings of the lover that preoccupy him as it is a kind of dressing and undressing of the body that the letters help perform. [...] and throughout Henry's texts there lies a governing tension between the need for wholeness and the desire to dismember. (pp. 90-2)

Wyatt's use of the body-text as a dissimulating and divided instrument of power may stem, at least in part, from what might be termed Henrician corporeal poetics. The letters to Anne Boleyn were intercepted in 1528 and became public knowledge, as part of a 'Pandaric' courtly existence, as Lerer terms it, wherein all correspondence, even those of the monarch, become subject to secret scrutiny.[43] As such there is every chance that Wyatt knew of their content, if he did not peruse them first hand. Furthermore, it is not too great a leap of the imagination to suppose that Wyatt's 'flattering imitation of Henry VIII' extended to a certain degree of literary imitation, considering the Henrician conflation of power and *corpus*; although this would have been more in terms of matter than manner.[44] An example of this potential influence may be found in a letter sent by Henry to Anne which was accompanied by the gift of a buck:

> Et pur vous faire encorps plus sovant sovinire de moy, je vous envoye per ce porteur vng bouke tué her soire bien terde de ma main, esperant que quant vous en mangers, il vous

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[43] Lerer cites Nicholas Harpsfield's comment that the intercepted letters were '"tossed in every man's mouth, in all talks and at all tables, in all taverns, alehouses, and barbers' shops, yea, and in pulpits too."' (p. 112).

[44] Wyatt was of course the far superior man of letters. It was even suggested that one reason behind the execution of both Anne and her brother George Boleyn was because they scoffed at the king's poetry, which effectively is an undermining of his corporal power: 'Anne was believed to have thought Henry "inepte" with both the penis and the pen' (Lerer, p. 119). This is not Anne's only equation of the penis and the pen, whilst in the Tower in 1536 she spoke of the ability of poets at court: 'Soon afterwards she asked Lady Kingston whether the prisoners [who included Wyatt] had anybody to make their beds for them, "Nay, I warrant you", she replied. "They might make balettes well now", said Anne, quibbling on *pallets* [mattresses] and *ballets*, "but there is none but Rochford that can do it". "Yes", rejoined Lady Kingston, "Master Wyatt". "By my faith", said Anne, "thou hast said true"' (*LL*, pp. 29-30). Interestingly, Henry's focus upon the body-image in his letter appears to have been influenced by Lydgate's acolyte Hawes, who made explicit via *effictio* the body which Lydgate had left implicit in the self-reflexive form (see Lerer, p. 103).

sovendra du chaseur. Et ainsi, a fault de espace, je fray fin a ma letter. Escripte de la main de vostre serviteur, qui bien sovent vous souhait ou lieu de vostre frere.

(and to make you think of me more often, I send you by this bearer a buck killed late last night by my hand, hoping that when you eat it, it will remind you of the hunter; and thus, for lack of space, I will make an end of my letter. Written by the hand of your servant, who often wishes you were in your brother's place.) (Cited in Lerer, p. 104)

Remembering here takes on a Petrarchan corporeal resonance due to the substitution of *encore* (again) for 'encorps' (in body), and as Henry was Anne's 'chaseur', as the letter itself bears witness to, so does she become synonymous with the quarry to be dismembered, in an eerily symbolic foreshadowing of her own dismemberment at 'the hand of your servant' ('la main de vostre serviteur') in 1536. 'Escripte' here becomes inseparable from 'encorps', as the hand that writes is the same hand which kills, 'the power of the touch to heal or harm, the vision of a loving hand fresh from the bloody kill and rushing to the writing table' (Lerer, p. 107). The sexual nature of the gift is made explicit at the letter's close by Henry's wish that Anne replace her brother ('vostre frere'), who was appointed Esquire of the Royal Body in September 1528, a position which required that he be 'attendant upon the king's person, to array and unray him', and which was also held by Wyatt.[45]

We cannot help but find in Henry's letter a direct link to perhaps the most famous of Wyatt's sonnet translations, in which the poles of sexuality and power are effectively combined within the body-text:

Who so list to hounte I know where is an hynde;	Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
But as for me, helas, I may no more:	verde m'apparve con duo corna d'oro,
The vayne travaill hath weried me so sore,	fra due riviere all'ombra d'un alloro,
I ame of theim that farthest cometh behinde;	levando 'l sole a la stagione acerba.
Yet may I by no meanes my weried mynde	Era sua vista sì dolce superba
Drawe from the Diere: but as she fleeth afore	ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro,
Faynting I folowe; I leve of therefore,	come l'avaro che'n cercar tesoro

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[45] As specified in the *Liber Niger* (cited by Lerer, pp. 107-8). For Wyatt's appointment as Esquire of the Royal Body, see *LL*, p. 25.

Sithens in a nett I seke to hold the wynde.
Who list her hount I put him owte of dowbte,
As well as I may spend his tyme in vain:
And graven with Diamondes in letters plain
There is written her faier neck rounde abowte:
'Noli mi tangere for Cesars I ame,
And wylde for to hold though I seme tame'.

con diletto l'affanno disacerba.
'Nessun mi tocchi,' al bel collo d'intorno
scritto avea di diamanti et di topazi.
'Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve.'
Et era 'l sol già vòlto al mezzo giorno,
gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi,
quand'io caddi ne l'acqua et ella sparve.
(*Rs* 190)

The first thing we notice about Wyatt's translation is that it is not a translation, or rather it falls more within the parameters of paraphrase than it does metaphrase, taking Petrarch's translative method to its creative apogee and standing at a remove from Wyatt's own discussion of semantic subtlety in the 'Defence'. Wyatt is by no means 'alteringe of one syllable ether with penne or worde', but rather attacking the source as Petrarch did Boccaccio's tale; although the sonnet's subject in both cases is built around the negation of sexual-textual assault signified by its central phrase, 'Noli mi tangere', 'Nessun mi tocchi', 'Let no one touch me'.

It would be of little benefit to any discussion of either poem were we to trace every minor linear change made by Wyatt; the most direct route in to the adaptation is through its most obvious, metaphoric or revolutionary ruptures. Wyatt, as we know, either shuns, negates or undermines *descriptio*, and so immediately the pictorialism of Petrarch's allegorical landscape is forcefully removed by the shift in narrative tone from objectivity to subjectivity. Yet this is not to aver that Wyatt's opening is entirely subjective. In fact, the opening lines of the poem possess a narrative quality which promises a story of 'a hind' akin to that which is related to us by Petrarch – the unsettling, unsettled first line, one senses, could fall down on either side of the narrative / lyric divide. However, Wyatt's insistent 'I', which, try as it might, never can bring itself to linger over the act of re-

membering for any longer than is necessary,[46] forces us into the present subjective mode: 'I know', 'I may no more'; whilst Petrarch throughout his poem remains with the preterite: 'appeared to me' ('m'apparve'), 'I left' ('i' lasciai'), 'I fell into the water' ('io caddi ne l' acqua'). The only past participle Wyatt includes in the poem, 'weried', is not a remembrance but a direct comment upon his present condition. Petrarch's picturesque is enabled by *then*, by the verb 'was' ('Era'), and the scene artfully reconstructed as allegory in retrospect; Wyatt's potential picturesque of the first line is disabled by *now*, by the verb 'I ame', which has no time to construct such imagery.

Whilst Wyatt excises the majority of Petrarch's imagery, he maintains the 'cerva', and by extension the allegory, albeit an ascetic allegory which corresponds with Wyatt's Protestant poetic. 'Who so list to hounte' has been subjected to biographical exegesis so often that the poem's potential basis in Wyatt's relationship with Anne Boleyn is now taken as read, although this does not detract from the textuality of the related experience. The 'hind' is commonly interpreted as Anne metamorphosed, with Henry playing Caesar, the King who warns Wyatt off his intended.[47] This allegoresis works well as a means of unifying the poem. For example, we may read 'I ame of theim that farthest cometh behinde' as a reference to the fact that Wyatt would have had no chance of marrying Anne, as she was one of the mighty, ancient Howard family, whilst he was a "new man". Yet the real interest lies not in the biographical detail itself but in Wyatt's production of an 'eroded or debased' version of Petrarch's poem which may suggest such a potential background.

Although Wyatt does not translate the bathetic recollection of Petrarch's 'I fell'

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[46] The anticlimactic opening of the third stanza of 'They fle from me', 'It was no dreme', which cuts short the erotic reverie of the second stanza that the speaker had seemed to be so enjoying, comes to mind.
[47] For a detailed account of Wyatt's alleged relationship with Anne Boleyn see *LL*, chapter 2 (pp. 13-37).

('caddi'), his poem is very much a fallen version of its source, and, like Petrarch's original

it is focused around the moral descent into corporeal desire, which is characterized by

oscillation between both passivity and activity, lust and reason. Vitally, Wyatt appears to

apprehend the Ovidian subtext familiar to readers of the *Rime*, the recurrent tale of

Actaeon and Diana, and employs it as the source of his 'hounte'.[48] Petrarch's poem shifts

implicitly between impotence and agency, as does Actaeon, although Petrarch's

description of the 'candida cerva' – the object of the hunter's gaze which represents both

Diana and Laura – violates the goddess's words to Actaeon:

> quas habuit, sic hausit aquas vultumque virilem
> perfudit spargensque comas ultricibus undis
> addidit haec cladis praenuntia verba futurae:
> 'nunc tibi me posito visam velamine narres,
> si poteris narrare, licet.'
> [...]
> 'me miserum!' dicturus erat: vox nulla secuta est;
> ingemuit: vox illa fuit, lacrimaque per ora
> non sua fluxerunt; mens tantum pristina mansit
> [...]
> uerba animo desunt
>
> (all she had, the water,
> She seized and flung it in the young man's face,
> And as the avenging downpour drenched his hair
> She added words that warned of doom: 'Now tell
> You saw me here naked without my clothes
> If you can tell at all!'
> [...]
> He tried to say 'Alas!' – but no words came;
> He groaned – that was his voice; the tears rolled down
> On cheeks not his – all changed except his mind.
> [...]
> Words failed his will) (*Meta.*, III. 189-231)

Petrarch's octave does 'tell', but cloaks the naked Diana beneath the veil of allegory

wherein the Goddess of the Hunt becomes the prey, the 'candida cerva'.[49] The sonnet ends

'when I fell into the water, and she disappeared' ('quand'io caddi ne l'acqua et ella

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[48] See chapter 1, pp. 50-9.
[49] The Italian 'candida' connotes not only whiteness, but also purity, innocence, openness, and by extension nakedness.

sparve') because the allegory is *ut pictura poesis*. With the fall into the water – which is also the fall into desire – the speaker-Actaeon loses the power of speech, due to his lustful metamorphosis into a base animal, and therefore can no longer 'tell'. Greene's discussion of Petrarch's translation of Ovidian metamorphosis may in fact be applied to Wyatt's translation of Petrarch's poem:

> Physical details are not allowed to assume that full *enargeia* granted them by the *Metamorphoses*, but coexist darkly with a psyche that is neither in harmony with the body nor clearly distinct from it [...] Each transformation does truly represent a fall that is moral as well as sentimental and even finally ontological or theological, because the fall widens the division between soul and body, humiliates the soul by the descent into a prodigious brutishness that yet paradoxically seems impalpable. [...] We are led in other words to subread a text that is more secure, semiotically and metaphysically, than the surface text that evokes it. (pp. 130-1)

Petrarch's text is certainly 'more secure, semiotically and metaphysically' than Wyatt's, precisely due to the imagistic allegory he employs to cloak his referent, but Wyatt, in his removal of Petrarch's imagery, perhaps comes closer to the danger and despair of the Ovidian subtext. When we examine Wyatt's poem, we cannot help but be made aware of 'a psyche that is neither in harmony with the body nor clearly distinct from it', which cannot halt the descent 'into a prodigious brutishness'. Greene's language also reminds us of the Aristotelian tenor of Actaeon's allegoresis: the concept of the 'descent' is predicated upon the tripartite distinction of the soul, wherein the vegetable soul is the lowest form, followed by the animal soul (Actaeon the stag), and the rational soul (Actaeon the Man).

Wyatt's opening lines paradoxically give voice to the mute Actaeon's dual complaint that he can no longer hunt or 'tell'; Wyatt actually uses the word, 'helas', which Actaeon attempted ('He tried to say 'Alas!' – but no words came'), and in doing so admits sexual-textual defeat. The entire poem may even be read as an extension of Actaeon's internal utterance, 'me miserum!' A further intimation of Wyatt's possible recognition of

Petrarch's subtext is given in the opening lines of the second quatrain: 'Yet may I by no meanes my weried mynde | Drawe from the Diere', which echoes the Ovidian 'all changed except his mind' ('mens tantum pristine mansit'). For Wyatt, of course, 'all is torned thorough my gentilnes', as he tells us in 'They fle from me', and indeed, these two poems appear to share both theme and imagery; for example, the hart/heart paronomasia corresponds with the dear/deer blurring in 'Who so list', whilst both assume the discourse of the sexual hunt common to late medieval poetics.[50]

Yet the 'I' can neither take part in the hunt nor leave it, revealing the divided Petrarchan psyche which Greene describes; although the psychomachia is uncharacteristically absent from Petrarch's poem. In fact, in 'Una candida cerva', Petrarch is determinedly single-minded in his pursuit, as his analogy with the miser ('l'avaro') in the second quatrain shows: 'to follow her I left every task' ('i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro'). Petrarch does not 'leve of therefore' of his own volition, but because of an accident of fortune which causes his hind to disappear ('ella sparve').[51] The Petrarchan narrator's focus is made all the more apparent in contrast with Wyatt's indecision: 'I know where is an hynde' is negated by 'I may no more', which is in turn refuted by 'Yet may I by no meanes my weried mynde | Drawe from the Diere'. This series of antithetical movements, which provide an equivalent to the Petrarchan paradox absent from the source text, culminates in the juxtaposition of 'I folowe; I leve of'. The pursuit is finally curtailed by that instant – here indicated by the semi-colon – upon which pivots the speaker's realization that he is in fact attempting to produce that which he has hitherto avoided, the

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[50] See Marcelle Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974).
[51] However it may be argued that Petrarch's will displaces fortune, as it is his lustful metamorphosis which causes his expulsion from the linguistic sphere of the rational soul, and which causes the hind's disappearance.

effictio: 'Sithens in a nett I seke to hold the wynde'. Wyatt appropriates the proverb in order to manifest a self-evident 'trouthe' which is self-oriented in its refutation of *pictura poesis*. The 'wynde' in the *Rime sparse* signifies both the poet-lover's words, synonymous as it is with his *sospiri* (sighs), and the image of the beloved whom he attempts to re-member with those words – as the Italian term for the breeze is *l'aura*. Considering that Wyatt would have been familiar with the commentaries on the *Rime sparse*,[52] one presumes that he would have known not only of Laura, but also of Petrarch's continual paronomasia upon her name. Hence Wyatt's 'wynde' represents the beloved, as does Petrarch's 'l'aura'. The 'nett' then may be taken to signify the interwoven framework of the sonnet itself, within which one tries to capture the *effictio*, the re-membered linguistic *corpus* which is ultimately revealed to be made of 'wynde'. Petrarch himself expresses this self-reflexive phrase in *Rs* 239:

> In rete accolgo l'aura e 'n ghiaccio i fiori,
> e 'n versi tento sorda et rigida alma
> che né forza d'Amor prezza né note.
>
> (In a net I catch the breeze and on ice flowers,
> and in verses I woo a deaf and rigid soul
> who esteems neither the power of Love nor his notes.) (*Rs* 239. 37-9)

Petrarch explicitly links the proverb to the act of poetic composition and an unfeeling beloved, who is akin to the Dantean *donna* of the *rime petrose* (stony rhymes).[53] However, Wyatt's lady is by no means made of stone, but is as mobile and as subject to metamorphic inconstancy as the 'I', as we saw in the 'continuell chaunge' of 'They fle from me'.

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[52] See Thomson, pp. 190-200.
[53] See Durling's introduction to the *Rs* (pp. 29-33), and also his second appendix ('Dante's *Rime petrose* and *Canzone montanina*'), pp. 611-35.

Yet even as the octave concludes upon a self-reflexive refutation of the *effictio*, the sestet lapses into *descriptio*; a conscious, necessary lapse included for the sake of the potential hunter-reader, who is unmistakably male. The description of the hind is incorporated in order to 'put him owte of dowbte', in spite of the speaker's knowledge that such attempted description is as futile as attempting to catch the wind in a net, hence 'I may spend his tyme in vain'. But of course the *descriptio* of the hind is not a description, aside from the 'faier neck' there is no equivalent to Petrarch's 'candida' or 'duo corna d'oro', although the hind's *corpus* is nevertheless implied in the complex intertextual engraving which is 'written her faier neck rounde abowte'.

The closing lines' initial reference to the desired, *verboten* body is made only in comparison with the source text's 'diamonds and topazes' ('diamanti et di topazi'), which are 'emblems of steadfastness and chastity, respectively', whilst Wyatt includes only 'Diamondes'.[54] The deliberate omission of the 'topazi' and the chastity they signify puts one in mind of Nicholas Harpsfield's account of Wyatt's exhortation to Henry that he should not take Anne Boleyn as his wife precisely because she is unchaste:

> Sir, I pray your grace pardon me, both of my offence and my boldness. I am come to your grace of myself to discover and utter my own shame [...] she is not meet to be copled [*sic*] with your grace, her conversation hath been so loose and base; which thing I know not so much by hear-say as by my own experience as one that have had my carnal pleasure with her. At the hearing of this, the King for a while something astonyed, said to him, – Wyatt, thou hast done like an honest man, yet I charge thee to make no words of this matter to any man living. (*LL*, p. 20)

Harpsfield's anecdote fuses a number of elements evident in Wyatt's poetry. For example, the Petrarchan admission of shame which, in its echoing of the opening sonnet of the *Rime sparse*, suggests that Petrarchan language had been incorporated into courtly discourse

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[54] See Durling's note to *Rs* 190, p. 336. Although contemporary portraits of Anne show her wearing pearls, a diamond carcanet may well have been among the gifts Henry showered upon her – and even if it were not, Wyatt may easily have substituted diamonds for pearls as part of the 'deniability' process.

prior to the currency it received in the Elizabethan era.[55] There is also the correlation between a woman's silence and her chastity, and the characteristic epithet of Wyatt as the 'honest man', an image which he cultivated.[56] Most interestingly, in the light of 'Who so list', Henry's utterance, 'I charge thee to make no words of this matter to any man living', bears a striking resemblance to the words spoken by Diana to Actaeon in the *Metamorphoses*. If we are to credit Harpsfield's account as a reliable source, then Wyatt's implicit assumption of the Actaeon role in 'Who so list to hounte' serves to metonymically align a complex subtextual relationship with specific events at court, an alignment which is reinforced by the closing couplet.

The lady, as ever, remains silent as the role of Actaeon expands to incorporate both the 'I' and the beloved within an interchangeability reminiscent of the reflective mythopoeia of the Petrarchan metamorphoses. The emasculated male hunter who paradoxically voices his aphonia yet does not transform is mirrored by the beloved who does metamorphose but manages both to speak and be silent due to the collar which posits a 'me' that is not her. It may even be argued that the 'I' is in mid-metamorphosis, neither man nor stag, as throughout he vacillates between base animal desire and human reason (animal and rational souls), the one signified by 'I folowe', the other by 'I leve of therefore'. As a result the final words are spoken by both self and other – the 'I' reports to his reader the legend of the collar and thereby assumes a certain degree of responsibility, whilst the 'me' whose voice is transcribed is assigned to the 'hind' – and yet neither is the originator.

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[55] 'I am ashamed of myself within; and of my raving, shame is the fruit, and repentance' ('di me medesmo meco mi vergogno; | et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto, | e 'l pentersi', *Rs* 1. 11-3). For an account of Petrarchan discourse and its function in the Elizabethan court see chapter 3 of Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence* (Longman: London, 1995), pp. 116-54 (pp. 123-4). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.
[56] For the correspondence between female silence and chastity see the discussion of Galatea and the Propoetides in chapter 1, pp. 68-70.

The collar's legend, 'Noli mi tangere for Cesars I ame', is the product of a complex intertextuality which cites multiple sources and semantic refractions. The question of why Wyatt superseded Petrarch's 'nessun mi tocchi' by citing the Latin in all probability stems from his reading of the Petrarchan commentaries, as Thomson posits:

> All the commentators give virtually the same note on the inscriptions on the hind's collar. 'Noli mi tangere quia Caesaris sum', they say, was a well-known Latin motto. It had been inscribed on the collars of Caesar's hinds, which were then set free but which no man presumed to touch or harm. Wyatt's 'Noli mi tangere, for Cesars I ame' is translated not from Petrarch's text but from the motto in the margin of one of the editions. (p. 198)[57]

Yet, as Greenblatt points out, Wyatt would also have been aware of the Biblical resonance of the phrase, and the irony of using it to refer to his unchaste hind:

> it is impossible to take *noli mi tangere* in its original religious context. That context is evoked only to be violated, so that the reader experiences the wrenching transformation of the sacred to the profane which is the essence of Wyatt's treatment of Petrarch. Petrarch's *nessun mi tocchi* clearly recalls not only Caesar's protected hinds but John 20:15-17, the apparition of Jesus to Mary Magdalene at the sepulcher [...] This is the quintessential moment of suspension, of poise between states of being, evoked by Petrarch as the key to his own moment of vision, with its wondrous sense of presence and distance, joy and loss. (p. 148)

Wyatt's violation of the sacred text provides his poem with a far greater depth than it would have were we to investigate no further than the now somewhat perfunctory equation of Caesar and Henry VIII; it is both references inferred together which provide the couplet with its resonance. The 'travaill' is 'vayne' because ultimately it signifies the courtier's quest for a power which can never be possessed, as it lies with Caesar, and yet the hunt recommences regardless of its futility. The speaker's weariness is revealed only in the closing couplet by our discovery that the hunter 'I' has previously trapped the prey, has been close enough to read the engraving. The reference to Christ's Glorified Body is present in order to declare that the beloved's body is by contrast, impure, unchaste,

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[57] See for example the commentary on 'Una candida cerva', in *Le volgari opera del Petrarcha con la espositione di Alessandro Vellutello da Lucca* (Venice: Sabbio, 1525), pp. 149-50. This edition appeared two years prior to Wyatt's Italian embassy.

polluted, whilst the wider context of the scriptural reference cannot but remind the reader-audience of Mary Magdalene's profession prior to her redemption.[58]

The 'quintessential moment of suspension, of poise between states of being' is maintained by Wyatt's text through the Petrarchan interchangeability of self and other. It is the 'I' who finds himself in a median state, but he is moving from a higher to a lower modality, from rational being to animal desire, as opposed to Christ's progress from the human to the spiritual sphere in the Ascension. Furthermore, in this 'pointed erosion' of the gospel Wyatt follows (or influences?) Henry's scriptural defilement in the letter to Anne, in which he requests that when she eats the buck he has sent to her, she think of the hunter ('sovendra du chaseur'). The phrase, consciously or unconsciously, echoes the Eucharist: 'This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me' ('Hoc est corpus meum, quod pro vobis datur; hoc facite in meam commemorationem', Luke 22. 19). When Anne dismembers and eats the body which Henry has given her, she must remember him, as he re-members her both through the quarry and in the eroticized 'libra della mia memoria' ('book of my memory'), as Dante termed it.[59]

The body on display in 'Who so list to hounte' is the re-membered product of a variety of textual *corpora*, which interact through the reformist process of 'accretive *bricolage*' in order to stress the wearying physical desire of the 'I' for the intangible body of the beloved; a body previously within the speaker's grasp, and which remains tantalizingly on view.[60] The desire for the body of the beloved ultimately belies a desire for the power

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[58] See Lerer, p. 107.

[59] *VN*, I. 1. For an account of Dante's (and Chaucer's) *ars memorativa* see Mary J. Carruthers, 'Italy, *Ars Memorativa*, and Fame's House', *SAC*, Proceedings No. 2 (1987), 179-88.

[60] To add insult to injury Wyatt had to stand in for his father as Chief Ewer at Anne's coronation in 1533. See *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. by J. S. Brewer and others, 21 vols (London: Longman, 1862-1910), VI, 313: 'Sir Hen. Wyatt, chief ewer, supplied by his son Thos. Wyatt' (no. 701).

which, as Greenblatt argues, emanates from the body of the king-Caesar; who has equated

the body with which Wyatt may or may not 'have had my carnal pleasure', with the purity

of Christ's body after the Resurrection – a public lie which only an absolute monarch can

render into a known truth. The physical desire for the hind has become conflated with the

desire for the power to have access to the hind's *corpus*. However, neither desire is

presented as *effictio*, not only because such descriptions are insufficient in order to convey

a genuine apprehension of the body (which is something that must be inwardly felt), but

also because 'I' must be seen to conquer the body, to conquer desire and therefore present

his own body-text to the court as a self-contained entity in thrall to the mind. As

Greenblatt's maxim would have it, *'power over sexuality produces inwardness'* (p. 125);

yet Schoenfeldt reminds us that 'the mysteries of psychological inwardness [...] are folded

into the stories of the body' for the pre-Cartesian, Galenic subject.[61]

Wyatt's poetics are undoubtedly based on interiority, yet this is not to say he has

achieved dominion over sexuality, rather the 'I' in his poetry attempts to appear as if it has

done so, whilst in reality the *psychomachia* rages on before our eyes.[62] The image of the

body in Wyatt's sonnets may be found not only in the concept of the body-text and the

colours it wears, but it also, as in both Petrarch and Lydgate, reveals itself *in absentia*:

> If in the *Canzoniere* the poetic consciousness repeatedly fails to make authentic contact
> with an external presence, if it constitutes a closed, circular system, in Wyatt our sense of
> an external presence in any given poem, an object of desire and trust, is very strong, even
> though paradoxically this presence lacks *enargeia*, descriptive vividness. The poetic
> consciousness as system is no longer closed. We are aware of the woman through the
> mediating mind of the speaker, but we know that she is there. (Greene, p. 248)

Wyatt's object of desire, like Petrarch's Laura and Lydgate's Lady, hovers over the

blurred edges of our vision. Yet whereas both Petrarch and Lydgate rely upon the self-

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[61] Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 2.
[62] See chapter 2, p. 100, *n*. 43, for Petrarch's definition of the concept of *pscyhomachia*.

reflexive nature of the poetic form to create a site of sexual-textual desire or bliss (*jouissance*), Wyatt does so only to aver that the construction of *effictio* is akin to holding the 'wynde' in a net. In Wyatt, the body of the other is manifest in its effect upon the body-text of the 'I', which increases 'our sense of an external presence' through the sonnet form's carefully configured attempt to bring sexuality under its control. I would thus disagree with Kirkpatrick's assertion that Wyatt's poetry lacks self-reflexivity, but rather would extend his own description of Petrarchan poetics to Wyatt:

> For Petrarch, the writing of poetry seems able at times to fill as well as reveal the inner space, and even to establish outwardly – through the fame it may bring to a crowned poet – some alternative to the disconcerting gaze of an ungraspable truth. Wyatt does not share (as Sidney will) Petrarch's self-consciousness about the act of writing. (p. 134)

Wyatt's self-fashioning in the sonnets is dependent upon 'self-consciousness about the act of writing', as he is deliberately constructing a literary 'I' which will extend beyond the page and into the social sphere, and in doing so is attempting to posit an alternative 'truth' to that which he sees feigned at court – although Wyatt's *trouthe* is no more prehensible than that which he rails against. The fulfilment and revelation of the 'inner space' is captured by the sonnet's formal equivalent as Wyatt attempts to create a contained body-text which holds desire in thrall.

III

The potential pitfalls of Wyatt's metonymic deixis ensure that the reader is put to work in each poem, made to complete an action which goes far beyond the process of concretization necessary to the aesthetic completion of the Lydgatean lyric. Not only does the poem depend upon the subtext, and the reader's awareness of that subtext, but it requires us to be *au fait* with the topoi of the Petrarchan *psychomachia*, and a mind attuned both to courtly cloaking and a metaphysical style which would later be found in

Donne.[63] Occasionally, however, all this may have proved too much for the casual reader-listener, as the poem 'Me list no more to sing' (CCX) explains:

> Me list no more to sing
> Of love nor of suche thing.
> Howe sore that it me wring;
> For what I song or spake
> Men dede my songis mistake.
>
> My songes ware to defuse,
> Theye made folke to muse;
> Therefore, me to excuse,
> Theye shall be song more plaine,
> Nother of joye nor paine.
>
> [...]
>
> Yf this be undre miste
> And not well playnlye wyste,
> Vnderstonde me who lyste;
> For I reke not a bene,
> I wott what I doo meane. (1-10, 40ff.)

Although Wyatt was keen to be known as a plain speaker, this is not to be confused with a transparent speaker, as his gently scornful tone and his use of the simplistic, provincial stanza form imply. There is perhaps a greater sense of plainness evident in Wyatt's original sonnets, yet the same obfuscated clarity that we find in the translations remains, as does the attempted construction of the controlled body-text. Wyatt's plain 'trouthe' is on display for all to see, but not all can 'Vnderstonde'.

We see this dichotomy between plainness and clarity in a sonnet such as 'Ffarewell, Love, and all thy lawes for ever' (XIII):

> Ffarewell, Love, and all thy lawes for ever;
> Thy bayted hookes shall tangill me no more;
> Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
> To perfaict welth my wit for to endever.
> In blynde errour when I did perseuer,
> Thy sharpe repulce that pricketh ay so sore
> Hath taught me to sett in tryfels no store

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[63] As Thomson posits, 'the affinity [of Wyatt's art] with Donne's is no figment of the critic's imagination [...] With the study of Petrarch, Wyatt did acquire the "conceptual", metaphysical technique of handling imagery' (p. 144).

And scape fourth syns libertie is lever.
Therefore, farewell; goo trouble yonger hertes
And in me clayme no more authoritie;
With idill yeuth goo vse thy propertie
And thereon spend thy many britill dertes:
For hetherto though I have lost all my tyme,
Me lusteth no lenger rotten boughes to clyme.

Whilst Wyatt's message appears clear enough, his 'Ffarewell' is not only to the 'idill yeuth' who, to borrow Othello's words, 'loved not wisely, but too well' (V. 2. 340), but also to the conventions of love poetry.[64] Yet in this valediction Wyatt not only relates certain love tropes, but also the very act of bidding *adieu* is itself embedded within the Petrarchan tradition. The proemical sonnet of the *Rime sparse*, for example, voices similar sentiments: Wyatt's 'idill yeuth' and 'blynde errour' recall Petrarch's 'primo giovenile errore', and both poems are tinged with 'shame [...] and repentance' ('vergogna [...] e l' pentersi', *Rs* 1. 12-3).

The 'lawes' of the opening line not only refer to the *principia* of *libri amoris*, such as those set out (facetiously) by Andreas Capellanus, but also to the literary codes, postures and devices of the Ovidian tradition. And yet such a melodramatic statement as 'Ffarewell, Love, and all thy lawes for ever', with its capitalized reference to Eros, could just as feasibly be spoken by Troilus or the Petrarchan poet-lover. Wyatt is, in other words, adopting the posture of the unrequited or betrayed lover in order to refute that very same posture. Furthermore, following the stock image of Love's 'bayted hookes',[65] the speaker declares that one set of *corpora* will simply be replaced by another, that of 'Senec and Plato'. The discourse of the heart is to be ousted by the discourse of 'wit', of reason.

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[64] See Kenneth Muir, ed., *Othello* (London: Penguin, 1968; repr. 1996), p. 179.

[65] 'In *De arte honeste amandi*, partly following the etymology canonized by Isidore of Seville, Andreas [Capellanus] derives the word *amor* from *hamus* [Lat. hook] because by it man is "hooked," chained by desire' (Mazzotta, p. 62). The relevant section in Isidore is *Etymologies*, X. 4-5. See W. M. Lindsay, ed. *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi: Etymologiarvm sive originvm, libri XX*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911; repr. 1962), [n.p.].

However, both Seneca and Plato are essential to the Petrarchan tradition. The Petrarchan 'I' consistently aims towards Stoic reason and self-control, yet cannot reach or sustain it, and therein lays the *psychomachia*. Unlike in *La Vita Nuova*, there is no transcendent resolution to the *Rime sparse*; the final hymn to the 'Vergine bella' (*Rs* 366. 1) serves rather as a displacement of desire for *madonna Laura*. And although Petrarch had read comparatively little Plato, with the publication in 1525 of Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*, Petrarch and Plato became inseparable.[66] We cannot say whether or not Wyatt read Bembo's text, or if he met Bembo in Venice in 1527, or even if he read a version of Castiglione's neoplatonic *Il Cortegiano*, which had been circulated prior to its publication in 1528. Overall, I would agree with Thomson's position that Wyatt 'never mounts the platonic ladder', and would rather 'kick it away in disgust' (p. 148). Wyatt's stance here, at least with regards to Plato, is of one who has no intention of bidding farewell to the body just yet.

Yet as the second quatrain indicates, Wyatt did not 'spend his tyme in vain'. The 'blynde errour', 'sharpe repulce' and 'tryfels' stress the importance of experience and the realization that 'libertie is lever'— what Petrarch terms 'the clear knowledge' ("l conoscer chiaramente', *Rs* 1. 13) of hindsight. Of course Wyatt already knew this, and writes the quatrain for the same reason that he composes many of his verse explorations, 'with a view more to confirming or denying what is already known' (Thomson, p. 144). It is not until the sestet that the speaker makes explicit the interdependence of love's 'lawes' and the literary, earlier signified by 'lore'. The line 'And in me clayme no more authoritie' appears to relinquish the pen as it bids farewell to the author of the love poems, who is 'in

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[66] He possessed the Latin translations of the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedo*, and although he also possessed Greek manuscripts he fell out with his Greek teacher. The main source of Platonism in Petrarch's work is filtered through Augustine and Cicero.

me'. Furthermore, just as 'authoritie' moves ambiguously between dominion and authorship, so may the 'britill dertes' signify both Cupid's arrows and the poet's quills.

This implicit conflation of actual and literary love, of 'lawes' and 'lore', is continued in the couplet with the admission that the sonnet, although it was intended to say 'Ffarewell' to love, has in fact devoted itself to it. Hence 'hetherto though I have lost all my tyme'; the sonnet is spent, leaving only the final line. Yet that final line eloquently distinguishes between the textual and the extratextual: 'Me lusteth no lenger rotten boughs to clyme'. Wyatt would have been familiar with Petrarch's metamorphosis of Laura into Daphne, the former's limbs duly becoming the 'eternally green boughs', the 'sempre verdi rami' (Rs 5. 13), of the latter. The declaration that 'Me lusteth ne lenger' is enabled by the fallen Laura/Daphne, the speaker's beloved whose boughs are not evergreen but 'rotten'. Daphne, we recall, was chased, but not caught, by Apollo, and therefore not despoiled of her virginal purity, which is why the laurel tree retains its symbolic verdancy; the 'rotten boughs' of Wyatt's beloved, by contrast, suggest that she was caught, but not chaste. Petrarch's equivalence between the 'rami' of the laurel and the body of Laura renders Wyatt's final line a farewell to both sexual and textual desire, which we nevertheless must refute due to the fact that the poem ends not with a farewell but with a re-membering eroticized by the deliberate inclusion of 'lusteth'.

When we compare the metaphrastic complexity of 'Who so list to hounte', with the relatively 'plaine' poetic of 'Ffarewell, Love, and all thy lawes for ever', we find that in both cases we are nowhere nearer to a stable sense of 'trouthe' due to Wyatt's strategic use of shifting signifiers. And yet the poems correspond through their use of the body-text, from the 'hynde' of the former to the 'boughs' of the latter; the textualized body, whether it be desiring or desired, remains a central point of reference, which for Wyatt signals

defeat:

> This centrality of the body, a given of modern consciousness, is seen as unbearable, at once vulnerable to mutability and presumptuously independent: the senses must be checked, the body not permitted to be our central human expression in the world. [...] The body itself must be reduced from the presumptuous independence of the perceiver to the status of an object in the world, gazed upon by the creator as by a jailor. (Greenblatt, pp. 123-4)

Wyatt constantly attempts to objectify the body in his lyrics, yet his adoption of a Petrarchan poetic which maintains equivalence between body and text ensures that this can never be possible. Also, writing is the central means of self-fashioning the 'I' in relation to a power which itself emanates from the corporeal. The body cannot be denied as long as one writes, and although the text can give the impression of self-control – as in the 'Caesar' sonnet – scrutiny reveals 'the centrality of the body'.

Wyatt, then, or the 'I' of his lyric, must find another way of achieving or at least of giving the impression of self-possession at 'libertie' from the demands of the sensual:

> Eche man me telleth I chaunge moost my devise.
> And on my faith me thinck it goode reason
> To chaunge propose like after the season,
> Ffor in every cas to kepe still oon gyse
> Ys mytt for theim that would be taken wyse,
> And I am not of suche maner condition,
> But treted after a dyvers fasshion,
> And thereupon my dyvernes doeth rise.
> But you that blame this dyvernes moost,
> Chaunge you no more, but still after oon rate
> Trete ye me well, and kepe ye in the same state;
> And while with me doeth dwell this weried goost,
> My word nor I shall not be variable,
> But alwaies oon, your owne boeth ferme and stable. (X)

Self-fashioning in flux provides a possible solution to the problem of ostensible self-possession: the contained 'I' may change his 'devise' at will whilst maintaining a 'ferme and stable' core self. The poem's basic argument is that the speaker has been criticized for duplicity, which he justifies by citing the inconstancy, the 'dyvers fasshion' of others towards him, which necessitated his 'dyvernes'. The sestet's answer to the octave's

dilemma proposes that others arrest their mutability, 'Change you no more', so that the speaker may do likewise, 'My word nor I shal not be variable'. The simplicity of the underlying theme – you are false so I am false, when you cease to be so shall I – refracted through the complexity of its expression constitutes a further example of Wyatt's separation of plainness and clarity. As Helen Cooper explains, this bifurcation is constituted by 'profundity that is expressed through an at times extreme linguistic simplicity, and simplicity that is never naïve' (p. 104). In this instance simplicity is not only linguistic but also dependent upon the form's accommodation of Wyatt's logic. The self-contained opening line posits the subject for discussion: 'Eche man me telleth I change moost my devise.' The remainder of the octave explains *why* 'I change moost my devise', whilst the sestet proffers a potential resolution. Yet the formal, logical simplicity is undermined by its linguistic equivalent, which inevitably masks 'profundity'. 'Plaine' language is more accommodating of ambiguity than specialized discourse or poetic 'devise', as it does not direct the reader towards specific semantic precedent. In other words, plain language is more dependent upon *rezeptionästhetik* and concretization, as Waller argues, 'the court poems are deliberately designed to be as indeterminate as possible [...] It is we – the successive "I"s of the poem's readings – who make the poem's meanings'.[67] Despite the fact that the reception theories of Iser and Jauss may be applied to any text, we know that Wyatt was deliberately exploiting deixis and metonymy for a circumscribed audience who would normally be familiarized with the context to his Empsonian ambiguities.

Yet in this instance plainness appears to place clarity 'undre miste'. For example, the opening thesis is by no means as transparent as it may appear. 'Eche man', whilst it may

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[67] Waller, p. 108.

point to a self-contained yet indistinct persona, is undermined by its juxtaposition with 'me': it is 'Eche man me telleth', not 'Eche man telleth me'. As such the speaker is implicated as Everyman, which is later reinforced by the reasoning behind the mutability of the 'I'; 'I' dissemble because everyone else does, therefore 'I' am everyone, 'Eche man me'. This plurality is enabled by 'dyvernes'; because no 'I' is stable, 'I' is fragmented into multiple personae. 'I' is everyone and no-one. However, it is not the 'I' which changes, but 'my devise': the speaker is not being criticized for the instability of the "true" self, but for the mutability of the fashioned self. The 'devise' here is the body-text, the apparent 'I' written as imitation of power. The term 'devise' emphasizes the discursive conflation of the social and literary spheres, alluding as it does to will, or 'propose' (purpose) as it is termed in line 3, and the tropical device – as in the 'Caesar' sonnet, the body, the stance, is textualized. Yet there is permanence in flux, a constant inconstancy which Wyatt termed 'continuell chaunge' in 'They fle from me'. This apparent mutability reflects the essential instability of the Petrarchan 'I' with which Wyatt found such affinity. To revive a Platonic analogy, the speaker's fluctuant 'devise' exists in a state of Becoming, compared to the Being of the divided inner self. Yet we may be too willing to insist upon a false external 'gyse' and a true internal self. The fixed 'I' who stands at an 'internal distance' may be no less meretricious than the fashioned self, a dilemma which Wyatt inherits from the Petrarchan ego:

> Petrarch is profoundly concerned with questions of moral sincerity. Yet this has a particular centrality in his writings because simultaneously he understands that the moral self may be no more than a verbal or social construct [...] In [Wyatt] a self, seeking sovereignty over its own inner nature, enters a social world where self-hood lies in the regard that *others* confer or withhold. (Kirkpatrick, pp. 124-5)

I would extend the judgement that Petrarch's moral, or inner, self 'may be no more than a verbal or social construct' to Wyatt, although I doubt that the responsibility for 'self-hood' lies entirely 'in the regard that *others* confer or withhold'. No doubt '*others*' or the Other

play an essential role in the formation of the 'I' in a Lacanian sense, but a poem such as 'Eche man me telleth I chaunge moost my devise', emphasizes others' inability to perceive the speaker's identity.[68] Greenblatt rightly argues that, although there is 'no more insistent expression of the "I" in Tudor literature', it is worth remembering that 'the self manifested so urgently has all the instability of egotism, at once threatening to swallow up the whole world and terribly vulnerable' (p. 155). The Wyattic ego thus reveals itself, even in the original sonnets, to be the divided Petrarchan ego. The 'I' of the *Rime sparse* locates itself in fragmentation; disjection is not only a defining feature but the source of the self. The Petrarchan 'io' is constituted by tessellating shards of selfhood, as is the 'I' of Wyatt's sonnets. The difference is that Petrarch's scattered psychosomatic ego expresses itself in the Orphic *corps morcelé*, whilst Wyatt uses his body-text in order to fashion a public, external image of an internal totality which is absent. And we need to remember, because of the implicit Everyman status of 'Eche man me', that the sonnet is both directed to the reader-audience and self-oriented. The exhortations 'Change you no more' and 'Trete ye me well' become the words of the internal 'I' addressed to the external 'I', in an attempt to bring to an end the 'continuell chaunge', the Petrarchan (Ovidian) state of constant metamorphosis – the endless shifting between body-signifiers which results in 'this weried goost'.

The closing couplet encapsulates, and to some extent resolves through its containment,

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[68] According to Lacan's principle of the 'Mirror-Stage' the formation of the 'I' is dependent upon the acknowledgement of the Other: 'We only have to understand the mirror stage as *an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image [...] The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insuffiency to anticipation and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.' 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), pp. 1-7 (pp. 2-4).

the tensions revealed by the main body of the sonnet: between self and others; internal and external 'I'; mutability and stasis. The external self, the body-text which is constantly being rewritten as the speaker shifts between discursive fields – amorous, ambassadorial, bluff and proverbial – is signified here by 'My word'. This is both separated from the internal 'I' and reunited with it through the use of the conjunction which suggests that the interior may indeed be, as Kirkpatrick said of Petrarch, 'no more than a verbal or social construct'. The binary modalities of interiority and exteriority glimpse the possibility of further resolution in the closing line's promise of becoming 'alwaies oon, your owne boeth ferme and stable'. Yet whilst 'your owne' signifies self-possession, the provisional preposition with which the couplet begins undermines it: 'But' metonymically points towards a conditional context that signals the sonnet's dependence. The textual and the social are again revealed to be contiguous as the poet's ambiguity, his 'devise', will only cease to be 'undre miste' once the social environment becomes more amenable. Without such an environment the dichotomy between plainness and clarity must stand.

Wyatt does not solve the problem of semantic slipperiness which is a necessary accoutrement of the Petrarchan sonnet, at least not in this instance, and so must continue his search for the 'ferme and stable'. One possible solution lies in the further integration of the newly canonized Chaucer and the Chaucerian-Lydgatean tradition, which represents the solidity of the familiar, with the Petrarchan form:

> You that in love finde lucke and habundaunce
> And live in lust and joyful jolitie,
> Arrise for shame! do away your sluggardie!
> Arise, I say, do May some obseruance!
> Let me in bed lye dreming in mischaunce;
> Let me remembre the happs most vnhappy
> That me betide in May most commonly,
> As oon whome love list litil to avaunce.
> Sephame saide true that my natiuitie
> Mischaunced was with the ruler of the May:
> He gest I prove of that the veritie.

In May my welth and eke my liff I say
Have stoude so oft in such perplexitie:
Reioyse! lete me dreme of your felicitie. (XCII)

The poem is formed around a series of Chaucerian referents and a diction which are

impossible to ignore:

Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,
Withouten any woo as thoughte me,
Bounte parfyt, wel armed and richely,
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte.
(*The Complaint Unto Pity*, 36-39)

Till it fil ones, in a morwe of May,
That Emelye, that fairer was to sene
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe –
For with the rose colour stryf hire hewe
I noot which was the fyner of hem two –
Er it were day, as was hir wone to do,
She was arisen and al ready dight,
For May wole have no slugardie anyght.
The sesoun pricketh every gentil herte,
And maketh it out of his slep to sterte,
And seith 'Arys, and do thyn observaunce'.
This maked Emelye have remembraunce
To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
Yclothed was she fresh, for to devyse:
Hir yellow heer was broyded in a tresse
Behynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.
And in the gardyn, at the sonne upriste,
She walketh up and doun, and as hire liste
She gadereth floures, party white and rede,
To make a subtil gerland for hir hede;
And as an aungell hevenysshly she soong.
(*KT*, I A 1034-55)

quando la bella Emilia giovinetta,
a ciò tirata da propria natura
non che d'amore alcun fosse constretta,
ogni mattina, venuta l'aurora,
in un giardin se n'entrava soletta
ch'allato alla sua camera dimora
faceva, e'n giubba e scalza gia cantando
amorose canzon, sé diportando.

E questa vita più giorni tenendo
la giovinetta semplicetta e bella,
con la candida man talor cogliendo
d' in su la spina la rosa novella,
e poi con quella più fior congiugnendo
al biondo capo fando ghirlandella,
avvenne nova cosa una mattina
per la belezza di questa fantina.

Un bel mattin ch'ella si fu levata
e biondi crin ravolti all sua testa,
discese nel giardin, com'era usata:
quivi cantando e faccendosi festa,
con molti fior, su l'erbetta assettata,
faceva sua ghirlanda lieta e presta,
sempre cantando be' versi d' amore
con angelica voce e lieto core.
(*Teseida*, III. 8-10)[69]

Do wey youre book, rys up, and lat us daunce
And lat us don to May som observaunce.
(*TC*, II. 111-2)

Now, thanked God, he may gon in the daunce
Of hem that Love list febly for to avaunce.

[...] ora è venuto
dove noi siamo; Amor ne sia lodato

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[69] See *Teseida delle Nozze d' Emilia*, ed. by Alberto Limentani, in Vittore Branca, ed., *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, 12 vols (Verona: Mondadori, 1964 –), II, 229-664 (pp. 330-1). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

(*TC*, I. 517-8)   ch'a tal partito l'ha ora recato.
                                                            (*Fil.*, I. 51)[70]

It is interesting to see that Wyatt cites poems with an Italian inflection. *The Complaint*

Unto Pity is (arguably) Chaucer's first use of the *ottava rima*-influenced rhyme royal

stanza, whilst both *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, the latter of which is also

written in rhyme royal, have Boccaccian source texts. However, we can only speculate as

to Wyatt's knowledge of their genealogy. What can be ascertained is that Wyatt is

deliberately attempting to subvert the Chaucerian context through comparison with his

own actual misfortune, thereby obfuscating further the distinction between lyric posturing

and biography. Thomson points out that the quadruple repetition of May in Wyatt's

sonnet, twice in the octave and twice in the sestet, may be seen to correspond with key

events in his life:

> Wyatt writes retrospectively of some or all of the following occurences: his return to
> England in May 1527, to find Catherine of Aragon's divorce under way and Anne Boleyn
> earmarked as her successor; his imprisonment in May 1534, and again at the fall of Anne's
> 'lovers' in May 1536; and, finally, his return from Flanders in May 1540, when he found
> his master Cromwell's fall imminent. (p. 275)

Thus the declaration that 'In May my welth and eke my liff I say | Have stoude so oft in

such perplexitie' resounds with a series of extratextual metonymies with which the

contemporary audience are assumed to be familiar. We will also recall from the

differential repetition of 'may' in 'Who so list to hounte' – wherein it appears thrice, four

were we to translate '*noli mi tangere*' as "none may touch me" – that the word signifies

the potentiality of Fortune. It is no accident that Wyatt refers to 'lucke' in the opening line

here as 'May' the month carries with it the harmonic of 'may' the verb, which pertains to

Fortune, 'mischaunce', and in particular 'the happs most vnhappy'.

However, intertextual contiguity is as essential as its extratextual and intratextual

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[70] Ibid., II, 15-228 (p. 39). Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

counterpoints as a means of revealing the poem's conjunctive status.[71] For example, the context of the reference to *The Complaint Unto Pity* may have suggested the validity of its incorporation into a Petrarchan sonnet. Chaucer's poem is written, as the closing section of the *Rime sparse, in morte,* for a dead beloved who still inspires desire.[72] Yet the unhappy textual memories of May as they relate to the *Complaint* also refer to the misery born of the first glimpse of the beloved in the other Chaucerian referents. The simultaneous reference to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde* in lines 3 and 4 creates a complex link between the two texts which in turn make possible a further similarity, perceived by Wyatt, between the English and Italian traditions. The first glimpse of Emelye carries with it a seasonal description similar to that which accompanies Troilus's first sight of Criseyde:

And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme	Per che, venuto il vago tempo il quale
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede	riveste i prati d'erbette e di fiori,
With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,	e che gaio diviene ogni animale
And swote smellen floures white and rede,	e 'n diversi atti mostra suoi amori,
In sondry wises shewed, as I rede,	li Troian padri al Palladio fatale
The folk of Troie hire observaunces olde,	fer preparare li consueti onori;
Palladiones feste for to holde.	alla qual festa donne e cavalieri
(*TC*, I. 155-61)	fur parimente, e tutti volentieri.
	(*Fil.*, I. 18)

The 'newe grene' of 'Aperil' is equivalent to the 'floures newe' of May, whilst the 'white and rede' flowers of Emelye's 'gerland' are those which flower in Troy. The blossoming of spring, for the reader familiar with both texts, becomes synonymous with desire for the blossoming body of the beloved, as in Petrarch's sequence.[73] Also, Wyatt, as a careful

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[71] By intratextual here I do not only mean within the poem, but its references to Wyatt's entire lyric *corpus*.

[72] 'Syth she is ded, to whom shul we compleyne? | My peyne is this, that what so I desire | That have I not, ne nothing lyk therto; | And ever setteth Desir myn hert on fire' (28, 99-101).

[73] See G. L. Kitteridge, 'Chaucer's Lollius', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 28 (1917), 47-133, and Robert A. Pratt, 'Chaucer's Use of the *Teseida*', *PMLA*, 62 (1947), 598-621, for examinations of the influence of Boccaccio's *Teseida* upon this *descriptio*. For a wider view of the relationship between Chaucer and Boccaccio see Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio* (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 1977); Robert R. Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002).

reader of the *Rime sparse* – but not of Boccaccio – surely must have noticed correspondences between such *descriptio* and passages in Petrarch such as 'Zefiro torna e 'l bel tempo rimena | e i fiori et l' erbe [...] et Primavera candida et vermiglia' ('Zephyr returns and leads back the fine weather and the flowers and the grass [...] and Spring, all white and vermillion', *Rs* 310. 1-4), which may have influenced Chaucer's source. Furthermore, Emelye bears more than a passing resemblance to Petrarch's *donna angelicata* whose body is scattered throughout the landscape of the sequence. We may compare for example 'Hir yellow heer was broyded in a tresse' with 'cappelli in bionda treccia attorse' ('[her] hair in blonde tresses twisted', *Rs* 29. 3, my translation); her 'subtil garland' with Laura's 'ghirlande' (*Rs* 249. 10); or 'And as an aungell hevenysshly she soong' with 'l'angelico canto' (*Rs* 133. 12), in addition to the Boccaccian equivalents. It remains to be seen that these are stock phrases, and I am not suggesting that Chaucer had a wider understanding of Petrarchan descriptive strategies outside of those he encountered in *Rs* 132 and the Latin Griselda story.[74] Yet the similarities between the tags and *descriptio* which Wyatt read in Chaucer's Boccaccian works – he seemed to share with Lydgate a particular fondness for *The Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde* – and those which he encountered in the *Rime sparse*, would have validated his construction of what is essentially a Chaucerian sonnet.

However, in the second quatrain Wyatt subverts the references of the first by placing himself in contradistinction to lovers such as Troilus who 'doun upon his beddes feet hem sette' (*TC*, I. 359) and recite Petrarchan sonnets about burning with desire. Wyatt's speaker is perhaps more Pandaric, the voice of experience 'whome love list litil to

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[74] However he may have received certain strategies unconsciously via his translations of Boccaccio's potential Petrarchan inflections. The passage from *Filostrato* I. 18 is remarkably similar to Petrarch's 'Zefiro torna'. See also *Rs* 9, discussed in the previous chapter (p. 188).

avaunce'. Also like Pandarus, Wyatt's 'I' appears to derive a vicarious sexual thrill by exhorting others to do what he cannot, which is 'Arise' and 'do May some observaunce'. There is a somewhat Skeltonic paronomasia in the repetition of 'Arise' which only becomes evident with the reading of the second quatrain. Wyatt is speaking to those who 'in love find lucke and habundaunce', and yet waste their time in bed sleeping ('do away your sluggardie!'). Wyatt's method of doing 'May some observaunce' appears to be a corporeal thanksgiving, with 'Arise [...] Arise' symbolizing erection. As the second quatrain says, 'Let me in bed lye dreming in mischaunce | Let me remembre the happs most vnhappy'. Wyatt can only re-member the body suggested by May's fecundity, those who are in 'lucke' have it available to them, and therefore should 'Arise' before 'lucke' turns to 'mischaunce'. Criseyde herself certainly knew what Pandarus had in mind when he exhorted her to 'don to May som observaunce' in book II of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as her shocked response suggests: '"I! God forbede!" quod she. "Be ye mad? | Is that a widewes lif, so God yow save?' (II. 113-4). At such instances it is worth bearing in mind Thomson's words:

> The polite words, though presumably better understood between Chaucer and Wyatt than now, often muffle the basically erotic ideas of courtly love lyric. [...] this poetry is not, as sometimes maintained, entirely occupied with remote adoration, passive mistresses, or chaste ideals. [...] Its worship is generally bodily worship and it has nothing to say of the marriage of minds. (pp. 114-21)

Wyatt adopts the Chaucerian *corpus* in the octave, a body of work which through its canonization at the hands of Pynson and Thynne, came to symbolize Tudor power, and which involves those 'creaturely' experiences that are based around 'bodily worship'.

The sestet, however, shifts from the stabilizing *corpus* of another to the unstable body of the 'I', opening as it does with 'my nativitie' and the textual analogue of the speaker's birth. 'Sephame' most likely refers to Edward Sepham, who later also cast an horoscope for Edward VI. According to Thomson's reading, at Wyatt's birth 'Venus (the astrological

ruler of Taurus, and hence of May) was afflicted', which would impair his success in love: 'Mischaunced was with the ruler of the May' (p. 275).[75] The poem concludes by returning to that vicarious tone which closed the octave: 'Reioyse! let me dreme of your felicitie'. Wyatt is re-membering his own 'felicitie', imagining himself in the position of the lovers 'that in love finde lucke and habundaunce'. We too must 'remembre', must recall the erotic physicality of the word 'dreme' in Wyatt's poetic. When he declares in 'They fle from me' that 'It was no dreme: I lay brode waking' he has previously been re-membering the naked body of his lover: 'her lose gowne from her shoulders did fall, | And she me caught in her armes long and small'. Wyatt's 'I' may 'dreme of your felicitie' by re-membering his own 'no dreme', and thereby grants the dream state a corporeality which is the reverse of Petrarch's reduction of the physical world to a 'breve sogno' ('passing dream') in the closing line of his retractional proem. Yet in both Petrarch's sonnets and Chaucer's courtly love poetry the body remains central to the 'I' who attempts to overcome it, and it is this aspect which allows Wyatt to posit valid equivalence between the two.

IV

What we find then in this sonnet, and in Wyatt's sonnets as a whole, is a commingling of *corpora*: that of Petrarch; that of Chaucer; Lydgate's *corpus in absentia*; the rhetorical body of the dissembling 'I'; the body of the king which emanates power; and the lost, re-membered or intangible body of the beloved. It is this multiplicity of body-texts, this ability to create metonymic contiguity out of the apparently discrete, which is the key to

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[75] W. H. Wiatt has argued 'that Wyatt was slyly suggesting to his friends that Sepham, like many a fortune-teller since, proved wise after the fact'. See 'Sir Thomas Wyatt's Astrologer', *ELN*, 4 (1966), 89-92 (p. 91). Wiatt had made the case for Sepham fourteen years earlier, in 'Sir Thomas Wyatt and "Sephame"', *N&Q*, 197 (1952), 244.

the successful reception of the sonnet at the Henrician court. More than anything it is Wyatt's conjunction of English and Italian poetic traditions which ensures the naturalization of the sonnet. It is for this reason that I do not think we ought to apply Paula Johnson's concept of 'terminal heightening' to the Wyattic sonnet.[76] The rhyming couplet which concludes Wyatt's sonnets is not only perfectly acceptable in accordance with Italian sonnet composition,[77] but is essential to the form's acceptance by an English audience raised on the rhyme royal, and in particular the 'small group of rhyme royal stanzas, often without the ballade's refrain' which became following the Canticus Troili, 'a medieval equivalent to the Renaissance sonnet', as Lydgate's 'quarry' poem, The Temple of Glas, shows.[78] Far from being terminal, the rhyming couplet of the Wyattic sonnet is what guarantees its life. If Wyatt was a novice 'newly crept out' of the Italian school, to use Puttenham's words, then he also guaranteed that the sonnet crept in to the Henrician court through his knowledge of the English school instituted by Chaucer, and presided over by Lydgate.

There are no 'contrasted periodic schemata' in Wyatt's sonnets, which Simpson posits as the defining characteristic of the 'revolutionary model'. Rather he reforms English poetics by means of their Italian counterpoint, and vice versa. Wyatt's diction is Chaucerian, but not aureate, whilst his use of the Petrarchan form as 'a surrogate physicality' (Lerer, p. 96), stems not only from Petrarch himself but also from an English

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[76] See the opening chapter (p. 54) for a brief discussion of Johnson's term in relation to the Wyattic sonnet: 'the last segment will function as a reversal by means of a striking alteration in confluent factors such as tempo, dynamics, texture, allusion, diction. In reference to the function of the last segment we may call this model terminal heightening' (Form and Transformation, p. 66).
[77] See Thomson, p. 175.
[78] Ibid., p. 116. See for example Sharon L. Jansen and Kathleen H. Jordan, eds, The Welles Anthology, MS. Rawlinson C. 813: A Critical Edition, Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 75 (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), which provides an indication of courtly taste. The presence of the Lydgatean Hawes looms large, but there are also excerpts from Lydgate himself included; see nos 34 and 45 (pp. 188-9, 209-10).

tradition of formal self-reflexivity which finds its source both in Chaucerian irony and Lydgate's absent *effictio*. The tendency to posit a revolutionary, or metaphoric, rupture as having taken place between the *Canticus Troili* and Wyatt's sonnets ought to be revised. Chaucer's translation of Petrarch's sonnet into three self-contained stanzas of rhyme royal instigated a tradition of smaller lyric poems with a tendency towards apothegmic conclusion, which created an audience who would be ready to embrace the Wyattic *quatorzain* upon its arrival. The experience of reading those first fourteen-line sonnets would have been akin to a sense of *déjà vu*, which would extend the limits of the reader-audience's 'horizon of expectations' without breaking through them.[79] The Wyattic sonnet is the known-unknown, and not only because of its metonymic contiguities with familiar poetic *corpora*, or due to its deictic orientation towards a social sphere immediately recognizable to the audience, but also because it takes as its central reference point that most universal of signifiers, the body. In Wyatt's sonnets we do not only witness the concatenation of Italian and English poetics which began with Chaucer, but also, as Surrey's emblazoned elegy for Wyatt declares, the production of a 'valiant corps where force and bewty met [...] manhodes shape' (46. 29-32).

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[79] For an explanation of the term see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti (Brighton: Harvester, 1982), p. 44.

Conclusion: The Body as Literary Discourse

the most individual parts of [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, [the poet's] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously.

(T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', p. 38)[1]

the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations.

(Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 5)[2]

The word and, by extension, the classical concept of the *corpus* are tainted by their relationship with the modern conception of corpse as *cadaver*, in that the Ovidian correspondence between the poet's body and the text's status 'as a material or corporeal substitute' faces an obvious dilemma in the form of the poet's death.[3] Yet the correlation between the body and its written analogue is directed towards this juncture, as Jaeger argues, the 'text answers the body: "If you give me life and life-likeness, I will make you immortal"'.[4] Ovid himself hints at the continuity of his textual *corpus* beyond his biological corpse in the epilogue to the *Metamorphoses*:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignes
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.
cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi:
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis
astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum,
quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
siquid habent ueri uatum praesagia, uiuam.

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[1] 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), pp. 37-44.
[2] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1972).
[3] Joseph Farrell, 'The Ovidian Corpus', in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on Ovid's Metamorphoses and its Reception*, ed. by Philip Hardie and others (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), pp. 127-41 (p. 128). The fact that Latin distinguishes between *cadaver* and *corpus* highlights the conceptual distinction between itself and the English *corpse*, which may refer to both the living and the dead body – although the former usage is now exceedingly rare.
[4] C. Stephen Jaeger, 'Charismatic Body – Charismatic Text', *Exemplaria*, 9 (1997), 117-37 (p. 128).

(Now stands my task accomplished, such a work
As not the wrath of Jove, nor fire nor sword
Nor the devouring ages can destroy.
Let, when it will, that day, that has no claim
But to my mortal body, end the span
Of my uncertain years. Yet I'll be borne,
The finer part of me, above the stars,
Immortal, and my name shall never die.
Wherever through the lands beneath her sway
The might of Rome extends, my words shall be
Upon the lips of men. If truth at all
Is stablished by poetic prophecy,
My fame shall live to all eternity.) (*Meta.*, XV. 871-9)

Farrell interprets the epilogue as referring not only to the continuity of the poem following the death of the author's body, but also as it continues beyond the textual *corpus*:

> In contrast to this image of the poem as a bookish body – which, like the poet's actual body, is material and therefore perishable – stands the image of the poem as an oral artefact [...] imagined as continuous *viva voce* performance of his work. (pp. 131-2)

However, I would argue that the emphasis upon *this body* ('corporis huius') stands in relation to *that body*, namely the *corpus* which maintains beyond the span of the poet. This is not entirely removed from Farrell's explanation of textual metensomatosis, whereby 'the literary *corpus* is likened to a dead body from which spirit is released either to live in performance or, perhaps, to animate new poetic *corpora* through intertextual means' (p. 132). The *corpus* thus never quite becomes corpse, but is consistently refigured.[5] Yet, as I argued in my introduction, the body-text function in Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt is not uniform; it is not the same *corpus* which continues through a reconstituted half-life. Rather the anterior *corpus* enables the production of its

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[5] Lomperis and Stanbury have argued against the misconception of 'a medieval text, itself conceived of as a dead body, a lifeless, unintelligent *corpus* from the past'. See the Introduction to *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. vii-xiii (pp. xii-xiii). Their argument highlights the 'orientation of medieval culture towards the body [...] what we might call an incarnational aesthetic' (pp. viii-ix).

successor through interaction, discourse, and in doing so reanimates itself. To maintain

the Ovidian analogy, just as biological bodies create other biological bodies, so do their

textual counterparts.[6]

The immortality of Eliot's 'dead poets' stems from this equation of *corpus* with

corpse; the antecedent poets live through their textual *corpora*, and give life to those

which follow. An obvious example of this process is Chaucer's envoy to *Troilus and*

Criseyde:

> Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
> Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
> So sende myght to make in som comedye!
> But litel book, no making thow n'envie,
> But subgit be to alle poesye;
> And kis the steps where as thow seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace. (*TC*, V. 1786-92)

Chaucer here, following Ovid, not only confirms his 'litel bok' as a corporeal substitute,

which has lips to 'kis' and eyes that 'seest', but also posits the corporeality of all other

texts, which continue to live and 'pace' even when their authors' vital spark has long

since departed. Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan and Statius proceed as body-texts, and that

'finer part' ('parte tamen meliore') lives on in the text as an animating principle. Texts, by

their nature, are metamorphic, 'mutatas [...] formas | corpora' (*Meta.*, I. 1-2), as they are

bodies which have transformed into words, and in turn these 'transformations [...] serve

as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations'. The image of the text as body, and the

image of the body within the text, fills the perceived lacuna between Eliot's tradition,

which posits totality and continuity, and Foucault's sense of historical rupture, which

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[6] The seminal work on this form of genetic textual production is Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Bloom actually uses a similar phrase in his description of textual influence: 'the meaning of one copulation is only another copulation' (p. 55). See also Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 155-64.

decrees that 'literature seems to be seeking, and discovering, more and more discontinuities' (p. 6).[7] For example, Chaucer's 'litel myn tragedye' is both continuous and discontinuous, it communes with antecedent *corpora*, is formed through interaction with them, and yet is itself, and other from them. In fact, Foucault (like Petrarch) suggests a subjunctive gestalt maintained by discontinuity:

> perhaps one might discover a discursive unity if one sought it not in the coherence of concepts, but in their simultaneous or successive emergence, in the distance that separates them and even in their incompatibility [...] a discipline in a constant state of renewal, subject to constant discoveries, criticisms, and corrected errors; the system of formation that we have defined remains stable. But let there be no misunderstanding: it is not the objects that remain constant, nor the domain that they form; it is not even their point of emergence or their mode of characterization; but the relation between the surfaces on which they appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analysed and specified. (pp. 35-47)

It is this self-awareness of contiguity and differentiation, of 'discursive unity' and 'incompatability' which enables Petrarch to write his letters to Cicero and Homer; which allows the Clerk to posit that his tale was 'Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk, | As preved by his wordes and his werk', although 'He is now deed and nayled in his cheste' (IV E 27-9); and which permits Lydgate to rewrite Chaucer whilst declaring that 'Chaucer is deed, that had suche a name [...] We may assay for to countrefete | His gay[e] style, but it wyl not be' (*The Floure of Curtesye*, 236-40).[8] It is this same contiguity and differentiation which enables the very different body-text forms and functions of Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt to cumulatively contribute to the creation of the English sonnet form and its descriptive strategies, in the process which Simpson terms 'accretive *bricolage*', whereby

> artists build on to artefacts from the past accretively rather than beginning afresh. Textual practice in such a society is not at all embarrassed about locating the presence of the

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[7] Foucault does not posit the eradication of concepts such as tradition and influence, but rather claims that 'the tranquility with which they are accepted must be disturbed' (p. 25).
[8] See *The Minor Poems* II, 410-8 (p. 417).

writer receiving an old text, and about marking the bits that he or she adds to the source text. Writers in such a textual culture often represent themselves as readers, whose rereading of old texts produces a rewriting. This rewriting reveals a complex of layering of textuality, where texts from different sources are juxtaposed to form a composite yet heterogeneous whole [...] where the self can only be expressed through a complex textual collage. (pp. 62-4)

In addition to this concept of cumulative textual production one must add Nolan's discussion of formal inheritance:

One of the most important features of form – including ritual form, dramatic form, and literary form [...] is its resistance to linear chronology, its tendency to persist over time in relatively stable fashion, and to forge links between radically different historical moments. Form itself, then, is always already anachronistic by its very nature, investing it with a paradoxical freedom; it escapes the straitjacket of strict topicality and one-to-one causality. Of course, at the same time an essential feature of form is precisely its confining quality, the way in which it limits the range of possible actions and interpretations in relation to history and experience. As a result, those moments at which forms are altered, invested with new content and thereby reshaped, become extremely significant.[9]

However, in order to address Simpson's accretive (reformist) continuity, as it relates to Nolan's concepts of 'emergent forms lurking beneath the medieval conventions of which [the text] is comprised' (p. 13), or 'the unique deployment of residual forms with surprisingly new contents' (p. 26), it is first necessary to explain what is meant by 'the body as literary discourse'.

Discourse, as it features in the current critical idiom, is bound up with New Historicism's appropriation of its Foulcauldian conception. Foucault defines discourse as 'the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse' (pp. 107-8). Discourse, or a discursive formation, is that upon which knowledge, and by extension power, is predicated via categorization; it enables the fragmentary or discrete to be unified within an organized epistemological system, by

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[9] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 8. Future citations will be included in the body of the text.

which a given subject may understand, and be informed about, his or her ontology. The literary discourse of the body – as distinct from other discourses of the body such as one finds in the formational system of biology – in the pre-Cartesian period, entails a (perceived) knowledge of the self. Yet, congruent with Foucault's emphasis upon 'the proliferation of discontinuities in the history of ideas' (p. 7), we have encountered literary discourses which, although related through their overall field (the body), are repeatedly differentiated: 'it is not the objects that remain constant [...] but the relation between the surfaces on which they appear, on which they can be delimited'. It is thus worth recalling these body-text objects not only in order to exposit their discretion, but also in order to understand their formational correspondences. This recapitulation will also allow for an explanation of why I have avoided the dominant critical methodology of what Helen Cooper has termed 'these days of "Only historicize!"', in my analysis of the respective *corpora* of Petrarch, Chaucer, Lydgate and Wyatt. [10]

What this thesis has attempted to relate is the extent to which the imagery and the discourse of the body reveal not only key characteristics of each poet's work, but also their ability to conduct a discourse (in the traditional, non-Foucauldian sense) with antecedent *corpora*. As such I would agree with Larry Scanlon's refutation of the ideology which believes that 'Poetry of the past can teach us about the past, but, paradoxically, it can't teach us about poetry – or at least it can't teach us anything we don't already know'. [11] For example, Petrarch's presentation of the body in the *Rime*

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[10] Helen Cooper, 'The Presidential Address: After Chaucer', *SAC*, 25 (2003), 3-24 (p. 15).
[11] See 'Lydgate's Poetics: Laureation and Domesticity in the *Temple of Glass*', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 61-97 (p. 63).

sparse discloses a self divided, a *corps morcelé*.[12] The recurrent imagery of the poet-lover's *disjecta membra* emphasizes not only 'scattered rhymes', through the body/text displacement, but also a scattered 'I'. Yet this dispersed self is grounded in the previous *corpora*; the *io* of the *Rime sparse* is realized through the precursory textual Other, which takes different forms, but always with the same result. The Other discussed in chapter one is Ovid, whose shifting forms, rather than instituting a process of stabilization, as Greene terms it, whereby we are led 'to subread a text that is more secure, semiotically and metaphysically, than the surface text that evokes it', only reinforces the instability of a psychosomatic, linguistic existence.[13] Furthermore, the Ovidian *corpora*, which serve as signifiers, highlight the fact that discourse does not provide a genuine knowledge but one which is based upon signs. Rather than discovering the "true" self through an examination of the body which dictates its passions, Petrarch finds a body-text which involves him in Kristeva's 'infinite concatenation of loops' (p. 56); an endless cycle of desire, pleasure and frustration. For this reason Petrarch looks towards scriptural *corpora* as a means of arresting or validating the desire central to physical, verbal existence, towards the achievement of subject and object as 'one flesh' (*duo in carne una*). Yet 'one flesh' is also displaced by text, as it attempts to imitate the unity of the Word made flesh (*verbum caro factum est*), which for Petrarch tends to revert; as Nancy Vickers posits

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[12] The term is that employed by Jacques Lacan in his essay, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1977; repr. 1995), pp. 1-8: 'This fragmented body [...] usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs' (p. 4).

[13] See Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 131.

when she discusses Laura as being 'the word made flesh (made word)'.[14] The scriptural

subtext looks towards a *telos* which is unachievable during corporeal existence, towards

what Freccero called 'the silence [of God] that subtends the system'.[15]

The body on display in Chaucer's *Canticus Troili* displays the inextricability of form

and matter, and in doing so pre-empts the sonnet. The psychosomatic *confusum* of

Troilus, which leads him to declare that 'I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte' (*TC*, I. 410)

is reflected in the respiratory expansion and contraction of Chaucer's translative method.

The Petrarchan body-text which is buffeted between physical extremes of burning and

freezing, although the direct source of Chaucer's three stanzas of rhyme royal, is

transformed in accordance with *translatio*'s dependence upon 'mutatas [...]

formas | corpora', and thereby reinforces Foucault's 'transformations that serve as new

foundations, the rebuilding of foundations'. Chaucer's metamorphosis of Petrarch's

sonnet constitutes one of Nolan's significant moments when 'forms are altered', yet its

significance – insofar as this thesis is concerned – lies more in its effect upon literary

history than in its reflection upon political history.[16] The discourse of the body in the

Canticus is not only pertinent to the lyric 'I' and its questioning of love, which represents

the chaos of psychosomatic existence, but also addresses the 'I' in metamorphosis; the

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[14] Nancy J. Vickers, 'The Body Re-membered: Petrarchan Lyric and the Strategies of Description', in *Mimesis: From Mirror to Method, Augustine to Descartes*, ed. by John D. Lyons and Stephen G. Nichols Jr (London: University Press of New England, 1982), pp. 100-9 (p. 109).
[15] John Freccero, 'The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics', *Diacritics*, 5 (1975), 34-40 (p. 35).
[16] This is not to deny the possibility of the politicized reading – see for example David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997) – rather it is to question the politico-historical interpretation as constituting the only valid reception.

corporeal extremes in Petrarch become the points of departure and reception between source text and translation in Chaucer.[17]

In Lydgate's lyrics we witness both the institution of Chaucer's 'medieval equivalent to the sonnet' (Thomson, p. 116) and the textual body as the site of both pleasure and pain. Underpinning both of these elements is an autoreflexivity which echoes the desire for language in Petrarch. However, this is not to say that Lydgate read Petrarch's vernacular works, but rather that both are informed by a poetics of self-reflexion which may be found even in the earliest sonnets. As Paul Oppenheimer says of Giacomo da Lentino:

> The love problem may thus be seen as immediately capable of solution once it achieves the sonnet form which Giacomo is inventing, and the persona of the poem, realizing this, addresses himself not to any outsider but to the form itself. The form of the poem will solve the problem, and render superfluous the need, found in more conventional songs, to split into rival personae. This is a new and, I would maintain, perhaps even profound development in the 'modern' poetry of the West, suggestive of those tendencies toward introspection in search of form, which, it is fair to say, have guided many of the best poets ever since.[18]

Desire for corporeal form transforms into desire for the poetic form which Lydgate inherited from Chaucer's Italianate poetics and mass-produced, unconsciously contributing to the *rezeptionästhetik* which would embrace the sonnet. Lydgate's 'texts [which] proclaim their own status as self-conscious literary artefacts over and over'

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[17] For the classical concept of love symbolizing the human tendency towards the chaotic see John M. Fyler, *Chaucer and Ovid* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979): 'love becomes, for Ovid as for Vergil, a metonymy for the irrational impulses in the human mind' (p. 14).

[18] Paul Oppenheimer, *The Birth of the Modern Mind: Self, Consciousness, and the Invention of the Sonnet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 184. Although I agree with Oppenheimer's comments on the inherent autoreflexivity of the sonnet, I disagree with certain of his other arguments. For example the position that the dimensions of the sonnet stem from the discussion of ratio in the *Timaeus*, on the grounds that Giacomo 'must have come to know intimately this most luminous of Plato's dialogues [...] Indeed, one may imagine that the ratio presented in the *Timaeus* made so deep an impression on the still young poet-lawyer-*notaro* [...] that they sprang naturally to mind, in the manner of inspiration, as he wrote the first sonnet' (p. 22). Fyler highlights the Ovidian counterargument to poetic resolution of emotional dilemma: '[Ovid] views skeptically the possibility of controlling passion in a rational framework. This tension between passion and the generic framework designed to restrain occurs at the deepest level of Ovid's poetic technique' (p. 14). Petrarch inherits this skepticism, although it must be borne in mind that Oppenheimer is talking of formal framework, rather than generic.

(Nolan, p. 13) confirm the literary discourse of the body as an ostensible means of self-knowledge. This form of *nosce te ipsum* may appear absent from Lydgatean lyric due to his avoidance of *descriptio feminae pulchritudine* or *blasons anatomique*, yet the body's conspicuous absence reinforces its centrality; we are made to understand that the abstract virtues in themselves are not alone what constitutes the human, and as Thomson posits, the 'polite words, though presumably better understood between Chaucer and Wyatt than now, often muffle the basically erotic ideas of courtly love lyric' (p. 114).

And just as the discourse of the biological body produces an information of the 'I', in accordance with the Galenic system of humours which posited direct psychosomatic interrelation, so does the discourse of the textual body produce an attempted knowledge of the lyric 'I' which is constituted in part by it. Furthermore, Lydgate's avoidance of the traditional *effictio* or catalogue of physical virtues expounded by medieval *artes rhetoricae* – which is akin to Petrarch's refusal to supply a totalizing description of Laura – not only places greater emphasis upon the lyric subject (via the cloaking of the object), but it also leaves corporeal *descriptio* to the reader, who is required to 'Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts' (*Henry V*, Prol., 23), as it were.[19]

The cumulative effect of these various formal and figurative strategies – Simpson's *'accretive bricolage'* – is the English sonnet as introduced by Wyatt, who personalizes his body-text and the form which contains it just as his predecessors had done. The lineage of the English sonnet, in other words, is a tradition marked by disjunction and digression at every point; again, a series of 'transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations'. Wyatt's sonnet possesses the Petrarchan use

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[19] William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. by Andrew Gurr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 70.

of the body as a means of displaying the self's variations, and the concomitant nagging possibility that 'the moral self may be no more than a verbal or social construct'.[20] He incorporates Chaucerian *translatio*, whereby formal alteration produces a semantic autograph, and yet cloaks any intention with a deictic Lydgatean 'deniability', as Greenblatt terms it.[21] As David Lawton has said of fifteenth-century texts which profess "dullness":

> these are open texts: their readers participate in the construction of their meaning; but, as I will show, they are addressed to a specific group of readers who will participate in a predictable, conventional manner [...] the dullness of the fifteenth century is a willed, self-conscious and ostensible dullness. It is the social mask of a Renaissance poet.[22]

Wyatt's body-text leaves his audience to concretize, to decide whether or not it is an accurate projection of the self or a means of masking that self, or even to question the possibility that any 'oon [...] boeth ferme and stable' (X. 14) exists beneath his discourse of the body, whether it is a knowledge which bars, rather than provides, access to the "real".[23]

What is 'ferme and stable' in each poet's *corpus* is the reliance upon and differentiation from antecedent textual *corpora* – what Bloom terms *tessera* (completion) and *clinamen* (separation) – and it is because of this that I have avoided the historical approach of which Cooper spoke.[24] I would cite Foucault in order to justify the decision

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[20] Robin Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare: A Study of Source, Analogue and Divergence* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 124.

[21] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; repr. 1984), p. 121.

[22] David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH*, 54 (1987), 761-99 (pp. 790-1).

[23] See Kenneth Muir and Patricia Thomson, eds, *Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1969), p. 11.

[24] 'For the poet is condemned to learn his profoundest yearnings through an awareness of *other selves*. The poem is *within* him, yet he experiences the shame and splendor of *being found* by poems – great poems – *outside* him' (*The Anxiety of Influence*, p. 26). Bloom's asseveration that every poet 'is a being caught up in a dialectical relationship (transference, repetition, error, communication) with another poet or poets' (p. 91), clearly recalls Eliot's 'dead poets'. Yet the focus upon 'error' (including deliberate error, or *misprision*) is also akin to Foucault's concept of discourse as being 'in a constant state of renewal, subject

to focus upon a literary history rather than a politicized, historicist exegesis, despite the

fact that he has been appropriated by such interpretation:

> we must renounce two linked, but opposite themes. The first involves a wish that it should never be possible to assign, in the order of discourse, the irruption of a real event; that beyond any apparent beginning, there is always a secret origin – so secret and fundamental that it can never be quite grasped in itself. [...] To this theme is connected another according to which all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'; and that this 'already-said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never said', an incorporeal discourse [...] The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said. [...] We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books. (p. 25)

The body-text function is the negation of a 'secret origin', it is based upon what is

manifest in the present text – even if what is manifest is a refusal to disclose, as in

Lydgate – and in its antecedent, 'in the dust of books'; it is the antithesis of 'an

incorporeal discourse'. The *corpora* of the 'dead poets' are referenced with the

understanding that the reader will recognize and re-member them. The 'tranquility', as

Foucault termed it, of tradition, must be 'disturbed' by the refusal to grant an ultimate

origin.[25] However, this does not refute the existence of influence, as Foucault argues,

from a clear Structuralist perspective, '[the book] is caught up in a system of references

to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network' (p. 23). We

may trace in Wyatt his relationship with Petrarch and Chaucer; in Lydgate we may find

Chaucer; in Chaucer we may find Petrarch; in Petrarch we locate Ovid. Yet this is not

leading back to a single *terminus a quo*, nor is it an unchanging continuum; rather the

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to constant discoveries, criticisms, and corrected errors'. See Spearing for an application of Bloom's model to medieval poetics. See also R. Donald Howard, 'Fiction and Religion in Boccaccio and Chaucer', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 47 (1979), 307-28.

[25] As Barthes argues, '[the text is] woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text' ('From Work to Text', p. 160).

discourse, or intercourse, between these *corpora* is punctuated by transformation and 'irruption'. The form and the matter of the body are remade anew by each poet, as Foucault's 'discursive unity' is found 'in a constant state of renewal'.

And although they appear to be entirely antonymic, Foucault's conception here of what is 'to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books' tallies with Lewis's — admittedly overstated — exposition of the *auctour*:

> If their culture is regarded as a response to environment, then the elements in that environment to which it responded most vigorously were manuscripts. Every writer, if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an *auctour* [...] Though literacy was of course far rarer than now, reading was in one way a more important ingredient in the total culture.[26]

Even Wyatt, who cannot avoid being discussed in relation to the power struggles of the Henrician court, finds his politico-historical concerns refracted through texts — not only Petrarch and Chaucer, but also the letters written to Anne Boleyn, or the accounts recorded by Harpsfield. This is not to deny the politico-historical element in the works which I have considered, but it is to question the perspective which sees it as being the only relevant or interesting one.[27] Despite a critical methodology reliant upon the text's historicity and history's textuality, the first half of the chiasmus is often privileged over the latter. A pertinent example is evident in the current rehabilitation of Lydgate, wherein it has become undesirable to discuss his work 'as a reflex of Chaucer' (Simpson, p. 43),

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[26] C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964; repr. 2005), p. 5. See also Scanlon: 'To understand the artwork as transformative, as a working-through, and as mediating processes in which it is itself embedded is necessarily to understand its effect as occurring across time. The aesthetic no longer originates in pure resistance. Founded on loss, across the fissures of the broken middle, the artwork necessarily enacts continuity by speaking to the loss that founds it. Indeed, without such continuity, the artwork could never offer up its loss for recognition' (p. 67).

[27] I would not go as far as Bloom in his *Preface* to the second edition of *The Anxiety of Influence* — 'Politicizing literary study has destroyed literary study, and may yet destroy learning itself' (p. xvi) — but can apprehend the origin of his frustration.

yet entirely acceptable to configure him as a reflex of what has been termed the 'Lancastrian Thesis'.[28] Again, I am not privileging one element over another, but rather suggesting that one is as valid as the other: if the text is considered as a discursive matrix, then surely literary discourse is no less relevant than political or historical discourse?[29] Foucault himself discourages reading the 'manifest discourse' as being 'really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say', rejecting an hermeneutics which is dependent upon what he terms a 'sub-discourse':

> we are not dealing with a silent content that has remained implicit, that has been said and yet not said, and which constitutes beneath manifest statements a sort of sub-discourse that is more fundamental, and which is now at last emerging into the light of day. (p. 67)

Nevertheless, it remains *possible* to read Wyatt's poetry as silently voicing the repression of the Henrician court (a sub-discourse);[30] it is just as possible to read it as embodying the divided Petrarchan self (a surface discourse); and perhaps more illuminating in order to see how one may enable the other and emerge as an 'irruption' of a tradition characterized by entropy to which it nevertheless contributes. In brief, one need not 'Only historicize'.[31]

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[28] See Nolan, pp. 10-14.

[29] 'To reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed is not to undertake to re-establish it in an isolation that nothing could overcome; it is not to close it upon itself; it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it' (Foucault, p. 29). This interplay appears to have received less attention, or been granted less import, in recent years – it is worth recalling the extent to which the Lancastrian, Henrician and the Elizabethan courts were in many ways based upon ideals received from literary texts. Policy affects poetry, and *vice versa*; influence is not unilateral. Critics such as Kirkpatrick (1995), Lerer (1997) and Nolan (2005) have reinforced the validity of this perspective. See also Larry D. Benson, 'Courtly Love and Chivalry in the Later Middle Ages', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. by Robert F. Yeager (Hamden: Archon, 1984), pp. 237-57.

[30] 'Each discourse contains *the power to* say something other than what it actually says, and thus to embrace a plurality of meanings [...] however, we are not linking these "exclusions" to a repression; we do not presuppose that beneath manifest statements something remains hidden and subjacent' (Foucault, pp. 118-9 [my italics]).

[31] Kenelm Foster has provided a similar methodology in relation to his study of Petrarch: 'Faced with an actual poem, the critic cannot, of course, afford to ignore history and biography, especially in the case of a poet remote in time; if he does he is likely to miss seeing what the poem is about. And certainly the question "what is it about?" is the first that a reader of a poem has to put; but only as preliminary to the more searching, because more properly critical question "how is it made" – how does the maker bring

The textual representation of the physical form in Petrarch's sequence, in the *Canticus Troili*, in Lydgate's courtly lyrics and Wyatt's sonnets serves to embody core characteristics of each poet's differentiated, yet in some ways contiguous, formal and descriptive strategies. The early English sonnet and its figurative methodology are the product of an entropic tradition of 'transformations that serve as new foundations', of bodies of work which interact with and thereby distinguish one another; the antecedent or 'dead poets' that Eliot spoke of do not leave behind corpses, but *corpora*, which 'thow seest pace'. The body, when it is inscribed upon the text, and within the form, becomes analogous of spatiotemporal existence within a history distinguished by multiple discursive 'irruptions', and the textual *corpus* which continues beyond the poet also carries within itself an account of the corporeal ontology which it transcends, which may 'pace' and converse with those *corpora* which follow. It is with this in mind that I will conclude with Mazzotta's account of Petrarch's corporeal, rather than political, model of being and history in his *Epistle to Posterity*:

> This emphasis upon the body, at present suddenly ravaged by old age and sickness, finally draws attention to the irreducible individuality of Petrarch's values: for all its limitations, the now absent body is the visible expression of his will, the foundation of his private and public existence, and more generally, of his unique viewpoint on history. And because the body is the very incarnation, as it were, of time's discontinuities, it reveals individuality as a discontinuous succession of moments, each 'now' both continuous with and yet separate from all the others. (pp. 184-5)

The body-text function, *id est* the displacement of the body through textual representation, is 'the now absent body', and so 'the visible expression of [the poet's] will'. It becomes readily apparent as to why the sonnet, and by extension the sonnet

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about these particular effects? Or again – granted we allow the term beauty into the discussion – what makes this arrangement beautiful (or not, as the case may be)? The analysis, that is, has to proceed from effects to causes *within the poem itself*. From this literary-critical point of view questions of biography, once that preliminary question has been sufficiently answered, become for the time being irrelevant'. *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1984), p. x.

sequence, becomes the dominant poetic form for the expression of 'individuality' in the early modern period following Wyatt's "introduction" of the form into English poetics. The *Rime sparse* signify the 'discontinuous succession of moments, each "now" both continuous with and yet separate from all the others', and the sonnet sequence as a whole may be described as a discrete series of temporally suspended moments which together convey temporal progression. What the body makes incarnate, the text inscribes, and the sonnet with its brief, circumscribed, spatiotemporal existence cannot but help signify the corporeal experience of *chronos*. Yet that 'discontinuous succession of moments' which the body experiences and represents also describes the sonnet form's passage from Petrarch to Wyatt via the Chaucerian *digressio*, if we are to adhere to Nolan's account of those 'moments at which forms are altered, invested with new content and thereby reshaped, [which] become extremely significant'. The form's metamorphic progress from Petrarch to Wyatt, constituted by 'transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations', or 'a discontinuous succession of moments, each "now" both continuous with and yet separate from all the others', or even 'mutatas [...] formas | corpora', may be described as the first English sonnet sequence. The sonnet form itself *is* the body as literary discourse.

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