

Boccaccio's Biographical Tributes to Petrarch*

The preparation of the new critical edition of Petrarch's epistle *Ad posteritatem*, broadly known to be an unfinished autobiographical letter addressed to posterity, has led me to reconsider the numerous and wide-ranging (and not only philological) problems that it presents.¹ Within the framework of this analysis I have investigated Boccaccio's biography of Petrarch, the *De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petracchi de Florentia*,² with the aim of evaluating the validity of a theory that sees *Ad posteritatem* and *De vita* as closely connected.³ I subsequently extended my study by undertaking a comparative analysis in order to chart the similarities and differences of content and structure in these two texts relative to the other two biographical sketches dedicated to Petrarch by Boccaccio: the writings that appear in the entry for "Sorgia" in the *De montibus, silvis, fontibus, lacubus*,

* For the Italian version of this article see Refe 2014b.

¹ See Refe 2014 for insightful comments on all of the issues concerning the letter as well, including the choice of expressing the recipient with *ad* and the accusative, *Ad posteritatem*, instead of the dative, *posteritati*, a heading that was derived from the opening greeting formula and by which the epistle is best known.

² The *De vita* was first published and translated by Rossetti 1828, 316–24 and 327–36 (digitized and readable on the Web with Google eBook; anastatic reprint Nabu Press, 16 April 2012). Subsequent editions were produced by Massèra in Boccaccio 1928, 238–44 and 363–67; Solerti 1904, 253–64; Fabbri in Boccaccio 1992b, 881–911, 945–46, and 949–55; and most recently by Villani in Boccaccio 2004, 11–104. Villani called his edition entirely new (8), as a result of a review of the previous works, which are judged inadequate because of a hyper-corrective tendency noticed in Massèra and of the distortion of many readings that he found in Fabbri (192). See also: Velli 1987; Enenkel 1998; Bartuschat 2007, in particular 31–44 (ch. 2.1, *Boccace biographe de Pétrarque*, with remarks drawn from a previous article: Bartuschat 2000, 81–93); Tonelli 2003. For an outline of all of the issues concerning the biography by Boccaccio see Bellieni 2013, 215–26.

³ Billanovich 1995, 135–40.

fluminibus, stagnis seu paludibus et de nominibus maris liber,⁴ and in the *Genealogie deorum gentilium* 15.6.11.⁵

Characteristics of Petrarch's Ad posteritatem

Petrarch began writing an epistle in prose addressed to posterity in the 1350s, looking for inspiration to Ovid who, in *Tristia* 4.10, appealed to posterity with an autobiographical letter structured in verse. Despite having worked on the letter for a great deal of time, the author never completed it.

Structurally speaking, the *Ad posteritatem* is divided into two distinct parts: a moral section, in which Petrarch illustrates the nature of his physical appearance and character (*Post.* 1–25), and a biographical section, in which he gives an account of relevant episodes of his own life following a geographical rather than chronological ordering (*Post.* 26–61). This narrative choice is motivated by the fact that the poet travelled almost continuously and is further reinforced by the conceit – which was very dear to him – that life is like a journey. In the introduction, the author dedicates a few brief paragraphs to his origins, family, disposition, and physical appearance (*Post.* 1–6). In the following paragraphs, he carries out an analysis of himself with respect to some of the cardinal sins: wealth, greed, lust, pride and anger (*Post.* 8–15). He then looks to his relationship with the powerful figures of the time (*Post.* 16–19), and in conclusion examines his natural capacity (*ingenium*) and intellectual interests, which were oriented towards moral philosophy, poetry, sacred and profane literature and history (*Post.* 21–23).

This section is followed by the story of his life, which is marked by several incongruences with respect to the information that is found within other Petrarchan writings, in particular the 1367 autobiographical epistle

⁴ For this title, which differs in the final section relative to the more commonly used *de diversis nominibus maris*, see Monti 2013, 181.

⁵ The transcribed passages within this article are taken from Fabbri's edition of the *De vita* (Boccaccio 1992b), Pastore Stocchi's edition for the *De montibus* (Boccaccio 1998b), and Zaccaria's edition for the *Genealogie* (Boccaccio 1998). I reproduce the editorial choices and diacritical marks used in these editions (in some cases a modification of the punctuation was necessary; I would like to thank Silvia Rizzo for the identification of a Virgilian quotation within the *De montibus*). The references to the paragraph numbers for the *Ad posteritatem* are to my edition and for the *De vita* to Fabbri's edition (note that the text of Villani's edition follows Fabbri's paragraph numbers). The entry for "Sorgia" in the *De montibus* is not paragraphed: to assist the reader I divided the text into numbered sections corresponding to conceptual nuclei, in order to facilitate the retrieval of the passages for comparison with the *De vita*. For the *Genealogie*, I further subdivided the paragraphs from Zaccaria's edition into subparagraphs.

Seniles 10.2 to Guido Sette *de mutatione temporum*. In an initial and fairly compact block, Petrarch briefly references the first years of his life, his childhood and early education, and law studies, which are the most fundamental milestones in the years which he spent in Arezzo, Incisa, Pisa, Avignon, Carpentras, Montpellier, and Bologna between 1304–23 (*Post.* 26–34). He then speaks of the decisive meeting with the Colonna family and his time in Avignon, of the discovery of Vacluse, of the composition of some of his works, suggested by the *locorum facies*: *Bucolicum carmen*, *De vita solitaria*, *Africa* (*Post.* 35–45). There follows a section that is dedicated to his *laurea poetica*, which occupies a notable space within the work (*Post.* 46–55). The story then becomes rather desultory and the phrasing seems to have been left in draft form. Petrarch dedicates only a couple of paragraphs to his meeting with the Correggio family in Parma, to Selvapiana, to the resumption of the *Africa*, to his third residence in Vacluse, to the trips between Parma and Verona, to the acquaintance of Jacopo da Carrara il Giovane in Padua and finally to his return in France in 1351 (*Post.* 56–61).

The chronological narration, which constitutes a reasonably compact section, ends in early 1351. This suggests that the first draft of the epistle dates to the 1350s,⁶ as I have argued in detail elsewhere on the basis of additional evidence.⁷ Nevertheless, from comments, references and digressions that often interrupt the flow of speech, it is possible to extricate other dates that allow us to place successive phases of work on the text approximately between the years 1364 and 1371.⁸

⁶ All of the dates derived from Petrarch's digressions "in the margins" of the chronological account are from before 1350: the reference to Laura's death, which occurred on 6 April 1348 (*Post.* 11); the renunciation of lust at around forty years of age, therefore around 1344 (*Post.* 13); the mourning of Stefano Colonna (*Post.* 40), who died between the years 1348 and 1350; the allusion to the purchase of the Parma house (*Post.* 57), that points to the end of 1343; and the reference to the tragic destiny of the Colonna family, plagued by numerous deaths (*Post.* 58) between the years 1347 and 1348.

⁷ See Refe 2014, xi–xxxvii.

⁸ In *Post.* 5, Petrarch, speaking of his eyesight, indicates that he started using glasses in his sixties and refers to the frequent illnesses to which he succumbed in old age. These affirmations must be from after the year 1364. In *Post.* 26, the poet makes reference to the exile of the Church in Avignon as a disaster in progress ("ubi romanus pontifex turpi in exilio Cristi tenet ecclesiam"), and in *Post.* 27 he writes of the failed attempt of the late Urban V to return the papacy to Rome ("et tenuit diu, licet ante paucos annos Urbanus Quintus eam reduxisset videretur in suam sedem. Sed res, ut patet, in nichilum rediit ipso, quod gravius fero, tunc etiam superstite et quasi boni operis penitente; qui, si modicum plus vixisset, haud dubie sensisset quid michi de eius habitu videretur. Iam calamus erat

The Alleged Relationship between Boccaccio's De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petracchi de Florentia and Petrarch's Ad posteritatem

In 1947 Billanovich proposed that Petrarch's redaction of his autobiographical epistle was a response to the portrait that Boccaccio had painted of him in the *De vita et moribus* in the 1340s, after Petrarch was crowned Poet Laureate in 1341. As is well known, the *De vita* presents complex chronological issues that are closely connected to both the determination of its relationship with the *Notamentum laureationis*, the celebrated "*inscriptio*" on Petrarch's *laurea* penned by Boccaccio at c. 73^r in Laurenziano Plut. 29.8,⁹ and the analysis of a number of elements within the text. These elements include: the citation of the Petrarchan eclogue *Argus* (*Bucolicum carmen* 2), composed in the final months of 1346¹⁰; the indication regarding the residence of the poet in Parma; the reference to Benedict XII who appears to be still alive in the *De vita* and was Pope from 20 December 1334 until his death on 25 April 1342; and Boccaccio's use of the term *iubileum* with the intended meaning of "century," which would only have been understood in such terms prior to 1350, the year of the jubilee called by Pope Clement VI who, on this occasion, established that the following jubilees

in manibus, sed ipse confestim gloriosum principium, ipsum et vita destituit"). The *terminus post quem* for *Post.* 26 is 1367, the year in which the Pope decided to move from France to Italy; the *terminus ante quem* for *Post.* 27 is 19 December 1370, the date Urban V died beyond the Alps, after having definitively left Rome, a fact mentioned in the paragraph above. In *Post.* 44, Petrarch recalls Philippe de Cabassole as the dedicatee of his *De vita solitaria* and adds the detail of the pastoral duties that he carried out at the time of his first meeting with the poet (Bishop of Cavaillon, a role he held from 1334), and those that he later undertook (Cardinal, from 1368, and Prelate of the suburbicarian diocese of Sabina, from 1370 or 1371, according to different sources: see Refe 2014, xiv n. 3). The use of a verb in the present tense referring to Cabassole shows that at the time that this passage was written Philippe was still alive and therefore the phrase must have been written by Petrarch no later than 22 August 1371, the day in which he learned of the false news of the death of his friend, which actually occurred five days later, on 27 August. See Petrarca 2006, 1:189 no. x and nn. 14–15.

⁹ In this manuscript, the *Notamentum* precedes the transcription of the following Petrarchan texts: *Epyst.* 1.14 γ; 1.4 γ; 1.13 γ; 1.12 γ; epigram *Lelius antiquis*; *Disp.* 7 (= Var. 49); eclogue *Argo* (*Bucolicum carmen* 2), of which the cited *Disp.*, addressed to Barbato da Sulmona, is an allegorical interpretation. On the famous Plut. 29.8, commonly called "Zibaldone Laurenziano," see Feo 1991, 342–47; more recently, Petoletti 2013 and Zamponi 2013 (with additional bibliography). On the relationship between the *De vita* and the *Notamentum*, see: Wilkins 1963, 80–85; Feo 1991, 346; Usher 2007, 18–30; Rico 2012d. Excellent photographic reproductions of the *inscriptio* are provided by Feo 1991, pl. xix; Zamponi 2013, 302; Usher 2007, 20.

¹⁰ Mann 1977, 131.

should occur every fifty years and no longer every hundred.¹¹ It is worth recalling at this point that the dating of the *De vita* proposed by scholars varies from 1341–42 (Billanovich, Feo, Velli),¹² 1347 (Wilkins)¹³ and 1348–49 (Massèra, Fabbri).¹⁴ An intermediate solution is adopted by Villani, who puts 1344 as the *terminus post quem* for the first fundamental draft of the text, and 1349–50 as the *terminus ante quem* for any addition or correction. Rico believes that the *De vita* as we know it postdates 1347 but, like the *Notamentum*, that the phases of its elaboration were discontinuous.¹⁵

According to Billanovich, during one of Petrarch's two trips through Florence in 1350, Boccaccio gave him, together with a ring mentioned in the signature of *Fam.* 11.1 γ, a transcription of his *De vita*,¹⁶ and Petrarch had taken this biography into account in writing his own autobiography. After comparing the two works (in his contribution the texts are placed side-by-side in columns, and the key words are spaced out), Billanovich concludes that the structure of the *Ad posteritatem* is a precise response to what Boccaccio had affirmed in the *De vita* "in an evident parallel, or, on the contrary, at times in an intentional contrast."¹⁷

In the two works, there is in fact a partial overlap of subjects treated and terms used. Both consider: physical attributes, skin and eye colour (*De vita* 20; *Post.* 5); the patrimonial situation of Petrarch's family (*De vita* 1–2; *Post.* 6); eating habits (*De vita* 24; *Post.* 8); *libido* (*De vita* 26; *Post.* 11–13); anger (*De vita* 25; *Post.* 15); friendships with the most powerful figures of the time (*De vita* 12; *Post.* 17–18); *ingenium* (*De vita* 23; *Post.* 21); the preference for poets and moral philosophers (*De vita* 6–9; *Post.* 21); *eloquium* (*De vita* 21; *Post.* 24); the childhood spent in Avignon; the learning of the first rudiments of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (*De vita* 2; *Post.* 28–29); law studies in Bologna (*De vita* 3; *Post.* 30); the switch from law to literary studies (*De vita* 4–6; *Post.* 31); Vacluse as preferred residence and source of inspiration (*De vita* 10–11; *Post.* 41–42); the composition of the *Africa*

¹¹ For a summary of the discussions surrounding the dating with retrospective bibliographic indications see Villani, introduction to Boccaccio 2004, 14ff., and Fabbri, introduction to Boccaccio 1992b, 881–85.

¹² Billanovich 1995, 74 and 135 n. 1; Billanovich 1994, 42; Feo 1991, 346–47; Velli 1987, 32.

¹³ Wilkins 1963, 85.

¹⁴ Boccaccio 1928, 365–67; Boccaccio 1992b, 885.

¹⁵ Boccaccio 2004, 30; Rico 2012d, 133–34 (with observations that complete the ideas previously affirmed in Rico 1992–93, 223–25).

¹⁶ Billanovich 1995, 135; in their reconstructions of the Petrarchan biography neither Wilkins 2003, 115, nor Dotti 2004, 223, mention the copy of the *De vita*.

¹⁷ Billanovich 1995, 137: "in un parallelo evidente, anzi talora in un deciso contrasto."

(*De vita* 11 and 28; *Post.* 45); the joy of the Romans who witnessed the crowning as Poet Laureate (*De vita* 16; *Post.* 55); Petrarchan epistles that bear witness to the coronation (*De vita* 17; *Post.* 55); and the time spent in Parma with the Correggio family (*De vita* 17; *Post.* 56). In spite of the overlapping of themes treated, Boccaccio's *De vita* presents imprecise information,¹⁸ probably the result of an oral tradition, which confirms that the two authors had not yet met each other in person.¹⁹ This observation allows us to set, with certainty, the *terminus ante quem* for the composition of Boccaccio's work as 1350, and more precisely before the autumn of that year, the season in which the first meeting between the two poets occurred in Florence.²⁰

The inaccuracy of Boccaccio's affirmations concern Petrarch's substantial family property, the permanence of the new-born poet in Florence before his exile to Avignon, an exile described by Boccaccio as voluntary ("proscriptio voluntaria," *De vita* 1–2), his earlier studies in Bologna with respect to the ones carried out in Montpellier (*De vita* 3–4) and the reference to Pietro, not Giovanni, Colonna as the acquaintance and admirer of Petrarch (*De vita* 12). In his work, Boccaccio then remarks on two particularly delicate issues, namely the *libido* of the poet and his love for Laura, judged to be an allegory for the *laurea poetica* (*De vita* 26).²¹

¹⁸ For a careful analysis of some of the Boccaccian "deformations" present in the *Notamentum* see Rico 2012b, 47ff.

¹⁹ For the Poet Laureate crowning ceremony at the Campidoglio, the principal nucleus of the *De vita*, information was probably deduced from the *Privilegium* and from the *Collatio laureationis*. See: Billanovich 1995, 77–78; Billanovich 1994, 45–47; Fabbri, introduction to Boccaccio 1992b, 887–88 and 952 n. 21; Villani, introduction to Boccaccio 2004, 98 n. 31 and 32. According to Billanovich (1994, 42, and 1995, 80–81), an additional source for the episode is *Epyst.* 2.1. Other possible texts in which Boccaccio could have found elements that made up for the scarcity of biographical information on Petrarch are indicated by Rico 2012d, 141. On the basis of *Genealogie* 14.22, Billanovich (1945, 62, and 1995, 70) claims that Boccaccio was an eyewitness to the exam carried out by Petrarch in the presence of King Robert in Naples; Rico (2012, 14–15) expresses doubts regarding this belief.

²⁰ Wilkins 2003, 114–15; Dotti 2004, 222–23.

²¹ "Libidine sola aliquantulum non victus in totum, sed multo potius molestatus; sed si quando ipsum contigit succumbere, iuxta mandatum Apostoli, quod caste nequivit explere, caute peragendo complevit. Et quamvis in suis quampluribus vulgaribus poematibus in quibus perlucide decantavit, se Laurettam quandam ardentissime demonstrarit amasse, non obstat: nam, prout ipsemet et bene puto, Laurettam illam allegorice pro laurea corona quam postmodum est adeptus accipiendam existimo." On this passage, see the observations in Rico 2012c, 63–72.

The identification of these errors in Boccaccio's narration, and the inaccuracy of some of his personal considerations, led Billanovich to affirm that the *Ad posteritatem* had been written along the same lines as the work of the Certaldese, with the additional aim of rectifying his errors. Despite several doubts expressed by Carrara and Wilkins,²² this belief was shared by many scholars, in particular by Enenkel, one of the editors of the Petrarchan letter, and by Villani,²³ the author of one of the three most recent Italian translations published before my bilingual edition.

We cannot be sure, however, that things occurred exactly as Billanovich reconstructed them. Boccaccio's gift of the *De vita* to Petrarch is merely a hypothesis, as there is no supporting documentation. Petrarch could have read Boccaccio's biography, but this is impossible to verify. One must consider the limited circulation of the work, which was possibly set aside by the author at a certain point, particularly when the two first became friends and Boccaccio realised the mistakes in his account.²⁴ Moreover, the information

²² Carrara 1950, 345; Wilkins 1963, 86–87.

²³ Enenkel 1998, 31; McLaughlin 2002, 56–58; Villani in Boccaccio 2004, 23; cautiously Pacca 2005, 220; Bartuschat 2007, 167 (ch. 5.3, *Vergerio et la Posteritati*); Rico 2012b, 47–61.

²⁴ The *De vita* survives in a single codex (now held in Venice at the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Lat. XIV 223 [= 4340], cc. 42^v–44^v), which was once attributed to the hand of Giovanni Dondi dell'Orologio but is now thought to belong more generally to his milieu. See, with retrospective bibliographic references: Fabbri, introduction to Boccaccio 1992b, 881 and note to the text 945–46; Villani 2003, 163; Mezzetti 2013. An indirect witness of the work is the *Francisci Petrarche [...] vita* by the Augustinian friar Pietro da Castelletto (extant in the manuscripts Wrocław, Biblioteka Uniwersytecka, cod. IV F 61, and Fiecht bei Schwaz, Stiftsbibliothek der Benediktinerabtei St. Georgenberg-Fiecht, 183), which, though almost wholly reproducing the *De vita*, also tacitly includes passages from the sermon given by Bonaventura Badoer at Petrarch's funeral (24 July 1374) and excerpts of an early-1380s letter from Lombardo della Seta to an anonymous recipient, probably Giovanni Dondi (see Malanca 2009). According to Malanca, there were two ways in which Dondi could have obtained the *De vita* that he brought to Pavia where Pietro da Castelletto had then been able to read and make use of it: "Giovanni poteva essersi procurato il *De vita et moribus* attingendo all'originale che nel 1350–1351 il Boccaccio stesso aveva presentato al Petrarca e che dopo la morte del poeta era rimasto a Padova presso Francesco; oppure egli avrebbe reperito il testo durante il suo soggiorno fiorentino nel 1368, quando conobbe personalmente il Boccaccio" (2009, 66). For the first option, Malanca refers to Billanovich (1995, 345, where he reasserts his theory that Boccaccio presented the *De vita* to Petrarch in the year 1350 or 1351, an idea, as already mentioned, for which there is no supporting evidence). Billanovich believed that the Marciano codex was written in Dondi's hand, and had therefore been copied directly

that, according to Billanovich, Petrarch would have intentionally corrected contained elements that would normally be included in a biography: his birth in exile in Arezzo to middle class parents of Florentine origin who had been driven out of their homeland and were in decline (*Post.* 1 and 26); his education first in Montpellier and then in Bologna (*Post.* 30); and his friendship with the Cardinal Giovanni Colonna (*Post.* 36). Nor can what Petrarch writes in relation to the heartbreak of young love, to the temptations of the flesh and to the renunciation of *libido* around his fortieth year in *Post.* 11 and 12 be justified as a response to Boccaccio's affirmations in the *De vita* 26.²⁵ In fact, an idea circulated amongst Petrarch's acquaintances that Laura was only a product of fiction²⁶ and, from a certain point onward, the renunciation of lust is a recurring theme in Petrarchan writings. With respect to the verbal coincidences noted by Billanovich, they do not signal the dependence of the Petrarchan text on Boccaccio's work but rather underline their adherence to a common biographical model in terms of a physical and moral portrait.²⁷ The "shared" terms that Billanovich identifies

from the original given to Petrarch by Boccaccio. Malanca claims that the Venetian manuscript, transcribed not directly by Dondi but by someone else in his circle, and the one used by Pietro da Castelletto share a common antigraph.

²⁵ See above, n. 21.

²⁶ As an example, see *Fam.* 2.9.18–19 (from 21 December 1335 or 1336), a passage in which Petrarch accuses Giacomo Colonna of making the same insinuation: "Quid ergo ais? Finxisse me michi speciosum Lauree nomen, ut esset et de qua ego loquerer et propter quam de me multi loquerentur; re autem vera in animo meo Lauream nichil esse, nisi illam forte poeticam, ad quam aspirare me longum et indefessum studium testatur; de hac autem spirante Laurea, cuius forma captus videor, manufacta esse omnia, ficta carmina, simulata suspiria. In hoc uno vere utinam iocareris; simulatio esset utinam et non furor! Sed, crede michi, nemo sine magno labore diu simulat; laborare autem gratis, ut insanus videaris, insania summa est. Adde quod egritudinem gestibus imitari bene valentes possumus, verum pallorem simulare non possumus. Tibi pallor, tibi labor meus notus est" (citation taken from Petrarca 1933–42). In *Secretum* 3 (Petrarca 1992, 226), the character of St Augustine reverses Giacomo Colonna's idea, maintaining that Francesco had loved the *laurea cesarea* and the *laurea poetica* only because the word *laurea* echoed the name of his lover.

²⁷ For an analysis of the relationship of Boccaccio's *De vita* with the examples provided by the *vidas et razos*, by the *accessus ad auctores*, and by the scheme in San Girolamo's *De viris illustribus*, see Bartuschat 2000, 81–93. Petrarch knew the biography of Augustus by Suetonius at the moment in which he wrote his letter, considering that he cited anecdotes from this work in two instances (*Post.* 3 and 24); moreover, in *Post.* 5 and 9 there are references to Suetonius, *Aug.* 76 and 79; and in *Post.* 16 there are points of contact with *Aug.* 66. McLaughlin (2002, 59–60) claims that Petrarch's autobiography contained within the *Ad posteritatem* is closely linked with Suetonius' life of Augustus.

are simply “obligatory words” used to speak about specific subjects: *forma*, *color*, *fortuna*, *ingenium*, *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, *iuris civilis corpus*, *Vallis Clausa*, *opuscula*, *heroicum carmen*, *Africa*, *clericalis vita*. In light of these clarifications I believe that there is no link between the *De vita* and the *Ad posteritatem*, contrary to Billanovich’s suggestion.

The Boccaccian Profiles of Petrarch: the De vita et moribus, De montibus and Genealogie compared

Boccaccio’s attempt to draw up a biographical sketch of Petrarch went beyond the *De vita*.²⁸ Boccaccio undertook the task several more times, both in the *De montibus*, a work whose first composition can be dated from just after 1350 to beyond the mid-1360s,²⁹ and in the *Genealogie*, for which the

²⁸ It is worth recalling that as early as around 1339 Boccaccio had composed a *dictamen*, the *Ep. 2, Mavortis miles*, presumably addressed to Petrarch, of whom he had written a brief encomiastic portrait. It is at some points comparable to the later *De vita*, not with regard so much to the biographical data (that in the *Mavortis miles* are essentially absent, besides the reference to the recipient’s residence in Avignon) as to several verbal expressions and its laudatory tone. I must point out that in the heading of the epistle I accept the correction of *milex* to *miles* made by Feo (1999, 316). The *dictamen* can be read in Boccaccio 1992, 510–17 (text and translation) and 754–62 (notes). Compare *Ep. 2.9* with *De vita* 1–3, 5, 18–19, 22–23. In particular, some expressions from the *Mavortis miles*, such as “Avinioni Musarum alvo iuvenem Iovis manibus alupnatum, lacte phylosophyco educatum [...] cognovi,” “ipse enim est quem fama pennata gerulonum ore notificat, exornant mores et virtutes quempiam circumspectant” and “lucidus et regalis et affabilis universis” are reflected in: *De vita* 1, “a Musarum [...] fuit uberibus educatus,” “gloriosissima fama per orbem floruit universum”; *De vita* 5, “Pyeridum corus egregius illum indissolubilibus amplexibus circumdavit, egregue ferens <quem> ab infantia educarat, et cui per ipsum fama candidior servabatur”; *De vita* 23, “nonnulli probissimi [...] firmarunt nichil de hoc homine [...] famam per orbem gerulonum oribus reportare”; *De vita* 18, “fuit [...] et est homo moribus civilis et <e>loquentia, et unicuique iuxta sui conditionem amicabilis, placabilis et communis”; and *De vita* 22, “in tantum aliis sua prevallet affabilitas inter cunctos.” Considering these expressions separately, even in the presence of some comparable motifs, one can note the tendency in the *De vita* to use a *variatio* of the *Mavortis miles* rather than a direct citation, like what occurs for the *De fontibus* with respect to the *De vita*. Boccaccio had been looking for a better way to present Petrarch, and that approach led him to try new formulae each time. On the differing presentation of Petrarch in the *Mavortis miles* and in the *De vita*, see also Bartuschat 2007, 35–37.

²⁹ Pastore Stocchi, introduction to Boccaccio 1998b, 1822–23; it would be reasonable to think that the original nucleus of the work dates to 1355–60, but entries from Homer and Pseudo-Aristotle, which Boccaccio read in their translation from Greek by Leontius Pilatus, date back to 1360–62. See Monti 2013.

chronology is uncertain, although it was definitely written after the author's meeting with Petrarch.³⁰

In Chapter 3 of the *De montibus*, dedicated to springs (*De fontibus*), the biographical note on Petrarch that is found under the entry for "Sorgia" occupies a prominent position. Boccaccio introduces Petrarch at this point as his visits had effectively ennobled the spring of the Sorgue, in much the same way that Virgil had brought fame to the banks of the river Mincio.³¹ The passage is essentially a pretext for the praise of his illustrious friend, as the extension of the entry, for which there are no parallels in the chapter *De fontibus*, shows.³²

In the *Genealogie* 15.6.11 Petrarch's figure is inserted within the list of some of the illustrious men of his time and is described in great detail.³³

It is interesting to compare the three texts:

De vita

De fontibus

Genealogie 15.6.11

³⁰ Some internal clues, including the announcement of the imminent publication of Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortune* (1366) and the reference to Leontius Pilatus, who died in the summer of 1365, as still living, suggest that the composition of the *Genealogie* was carried out by the first half of 1365, followed in the years 1365–70 by a first transcription. For a summary of the questions regarding the dating of the *Genealogie*, see Fiaschi 2013, which also contributes to the debate regarding changing the title of the work (*Genealogie* v. *Genealogia*). I use here the title chosen by Zaccaria, the most recent editor.

³¹ See Pastore Stocchi 1964, 61 n. 59: "Sorgia ... fons': esperimento di descrizione paesistica fra i più notevoli del Boccaccio. E si avverta che in quella cornice di luoghi amenissimi la figura del Petrarca assume il valore di un paradigma: è il tipo del poeta colto nell'ambiente più adatto all'esercizio della poesia, cfr. *Geneal. deorum* XIV 11. Anche si noterà come il Petrarca sia idealmente accostato a Virgilio"; cf. Boccaccio 1998b, 1952 (*De fluminibus* §591): "MINCIUS Venetiarum fluvius est ex Benaco lacu prodiens, qui exundans usque Mantuam labitur. Ibi autem in circuitu civitatis altero lacu facto, cum ex eo progreditur Mincii nomen assumit et brevi cursu in Padum mergitur. Et cum de se tenuis sit, adeo imbribus augetur ut asserant nullum esse tam modici cursus qui tantum usquam suscipiat incrementi. Equidem memorabilis Maronis Virgilii divino carmine decantatus et eius origine. Nam in Ando villa eius in marginibus sita natum aiunt, haud plus .II. mil. passuum a Mantua: vocant tamen hodie Pictola et gloriatur tanti vatis incolatu; ad cuius servandam memoriam parvo tumulo eis contiguo Virgilii montis imposuere nomen, asserentes ibidem agros fuisse suos."

³² Note that in the *De montibus* Petrarch also appears in the epilogue, but the passage is not useful towards the present comparison.

³³ I do not indicate here all of the passages from the *Genealogie* in which Petrarch is cited and I consider only this chapter, which – on account of its structure – is the only one that can be compared to the other two texts at hand.

1 Franciscus Petracchi poeta, vir illustris ac vita moribusque et sciencia clarus [...] 10 Sed hic vates dulciloquus, suum post hec cupiens ingenium exercitare et operibus eciam experiri, dum adhuc iuveniles anni fervescerent, humana vitans consortia cepit solitudine delectari, petiitque inter montes arduos umbrisque arborum perpetuis occupatos, vallem quandam quam incole nec immerito Vallem Clausam nominant ab antiquo, que non hominum artificio sed nature magisterio multis est delectabilibus exornata, quod ipsemet heroyco carmine caliopeo modulamine mensurato fratri Dyonisio de Burgo theologie magistro describit pulcerrime politeque; ibique a fonte perpetuo limpida undis fluens amplissime Sorgia fluvius summit originem emanando. 11 Hoc igitur loco hic poeta egregius, ne de infossi talenti culpa redargueretur a posteris, plura opuscula tam metrica quam prosaica eleganter ac floridissime decantavit, et inter alia memoratu dignissima opus suum illud magnum et mirabile cui *Affrica* nomen imposuit, eo quod maioris Affricani gesta in eodem heroyco metro monstrentur, ingenio divino potius quam humano, creditur compilasse. 12 Attamen ne hominum notitia solitudine nimia privaretur, determinatis temporibus se

1 sorgia a surgendo dictus in Narbonensi provincia, loco qui dicitur Vallis Clausa, fons nobilissimus est. Nam e specu quodam abditissimo saxei montis tanta aquarum erumpit abundantia ut abyssi putes aperiri fontes, mitius tamen anni tempestate quadam exundans; et, cum clarissima aqua sit et amena gustui, illico facta fluvius optimorum piscium ferax est, producens in fundo sui herbam adeo bobus sapida ut demersis ad illam carpendam sub undis capitibus assidue pascentes fere ad suffocationem usque detineant. 2 Inde inter asperimas cautes effluens parvo contenta cursu in Rhodanum mergitur. Celebris quidem et antiquorum preconio et aquarum copia et piscium atque herbarum fertilitate est, sed longe celebrior in posterum factus novi hospitis carmine et incolatu. 3 Apud hunc quidem nostro evo solitudinis avidus, eo quod a frequentia hominum omnino semotus videretur locus, vir inclitus Franciscus Petrarca, poeta clarissimus, concivis atque preceptor meus, secessit nova Babilone postposita et parvo sibi comparato domicilio et agello, agricultoris sui contentos obsequio, abdicatis lasciviis omnibus cum honestate atque sanctitate mirabili ibidem iuventutis florem omnem fere consump-

1 Quid tandem? Et Franciscum Petrarcam florentinum, venerandissimum preceptorem, patrem et dominum meum, nuper Rome ex senatus consulto, approbante Roberto, Ierusalem et Sycilie rege inclito, ab ipsis senatoribus laurea insignitum, inter veteres illustres viros, numerandum potius quam inter modernos induco. 2 Quem non dicam Ytali omnes, quorum singulare et perenne decus est, sed et Gallia omnis atque Germania, et remotissimus orbis angulus, Anglia Grecique plures poetam novere precipuum; nec dubito quin usque Cyprum et ad aures usque tue sublimitatis nomen eius inclita fama detulerit. 3 Huius enim iam multa patent opera et metrica et prosaica, memoratu dignissima, certum de celesti eius ingenio testimonium hinc inde ferentia. Stat enim, exitum cupiens, adhuc sub conclavi clausa, divina *Affrica*, heroyco carmine scripta, primi Affricani narrans magnalia; stat *Bucolicum carmen*, iam ubique sua celebritate cognitum; stat et *Liber epistularum* ad amicos metrico scriptarum stilo; stant preterea ingentia duo *Epistularum prosaicarum volumina*, tanta sententiarum, tanta rerum gestarum copia, tanto ornato artificio splendentium, ut in nullo ciceronianis postponendas eas censeat lector equus;

ad romanam curiam conferebat, in qua amicitia summorum pontificum, regum atque procerum tam Gallorum quameciam Ytalorum aliorumque quamplurium usus est, et potissime Benedicti pape XII, Petri de Columna cardinalis et Roberti Ierusalem et Sicilie regis, et Azonis de Corigio militis. [...] 14 [...] ad inclitam Romam citato venit itinere, quo a senatu populoque romano gloriosissime iam receptus, non minus sua operante virtute, quam hoc preces pro eodem rege exponente, in poetam egregium a senatoribus est assumptus. [...] 28 Gloriosus iste poeta usque in hodiernum diem plura composuit opera memoratu dignissima. Nam primo et principaliter opus illud egregium compilavit, in quo heroyco carmine ac oratione arte multiplici admiranda Scipionis primi gesta in Cartaginienses potissime et Annibalem eorum ducem Penosque reliquos mira cum virtute tam animi quam corporis operando tractavit, cui eo nomen imposuit *Affrica*, quia de Affricani[s] et in Affrica rebus gestis loquatur ut plurimum, intitulavitque illud Roberto regi amico suo de quo supra iam diximus; et quamvis predicti libri adhuc ab eo nemini copia concedatur, tamen, a multis visus, homericus reputatur. 29 Insuper edidit *Dialogum* quendam prosaice

sit. 4 Etsi solitudinis amenitate plurimum teneretur, non tamen detestabili aut vacuo ocio tempus trivit, quin imo sacris et assiduis vacans studiis inter scopulos montium umbrasque nemorum teste sonoro fonte, *Affricam* librum egregium heroico carmine gesta primi Scipionis Affricani cantans arte mira composuit, sic et *Buccolicum carmen* conspicuum, sic *Metricas epistolas* plures, sic et prosaice *Invectivas in medicum* et epistolas multas et laudabiles ad amicos; ac insuper ad Philippum Cavalicensem episcopum *De vita solitaria* librum tam exquisito atque sublimi stilo ut divino potius quam humano editus videatur ingenio. 5 Quam ob rem, quasi obsoleto veteri aquarum miraculo, post eius discessum, etatis fervore superato, tanquam sacrarium quoddam et quodam numine plenum eius hospitium visitant incole, ostendentes locum miraculi ignaris et peregrinis. Nec dubium quin adhuc filii, nepotes 'et qui nascentur ab illis' [Verg., *Aen.* 3.98] ampliori cum honore tantivatis admiratione vestigia venerentur.

stant *In medicum Invective*; stat *Solitarie vite liber*, et, qui paucis post diebus in lucem novissimus venturus est, *De remediis ad utramque fortunam*. 4 Sunt preterea et in officina plures, quos cito, eo vivente, fabrefactos legemus in publico. Quis ergo hunc in testem renuat? Quis dicitis eius fidem prestare de neget? O nisi paulo ante tenui calamo scripsissem, quot et quas eius possem superaddere laudes, quibus dictorum ab eo fides amplior deveniret! Sed ad presens dicta sufficiant.

tam mira ac artificiosa sermonum pulcritudine decoratum, ut appareat liquido nil eum quod Tullius Arpinas noverit latuisse. Demum eglogam quandam composuit cui nomen est *Argus*, in qua mortem predicti regis amici sui deflet, illum Argum et se Silvium nominando, tangendo etiam veras regis laudes sub figmento, ostendendo non solum Virgilium in *Bucolicis* ymitasse, sed potius cum eodem stilum syragusani Theocriti assumpsisse. 30 Ultra etiam scripsit pulcherrimam comediam, cui titulum imposuit *Philostratus*.

The observable differences can be categorised into two groups: substantial variations and formal variations.

On the substantial level, the first important change regards the *cognomen* of the poet. The “Petracchi” of the opening of the *De vita* is in fact replaced, in the *De fontibus* (§3) and in the *Genealogie* (§1), with “Petrarca,” the Latinization and ennoblement of the family name carried out by Petrarch himself³⁴ because of the illustrious consonance with the word “arca,” according to one hypothesis.³⁵ It is also worth observing the epithets dedicated to him: in the *De vita* he is called “poeta, vir illustris ac vita moribusque et sciencia clarus,” “vates dulciloquus,”³⁶ “poeta egregius,” “gloriosus [...] poeta” (§§1, 10, 11, 28); in the *De fontibus* “vir inclitus [...], poeta clarissimus” (§3). The insertion beside “Petrarca” of the labels “conclivis atque preceptor meus” in the *De fontibus* (§3), and “florentinus, venerandissimus preceptor, pater et dominus meus” in the *Genealogie* (§1), is also significant given their increasing familiarity.³⁷ This reveals the extent of the

³⁴ Wilkins 2003, 33, who dates the Latinization to the 1340s.

³⁵ Bologna 2003, 387–91.

³⁶ See Apuleius, *Apol.* 9.14 (“dulciloquo calamo”); Cassiodorus, *Hist.* 1.1 (“dulciloquus Homerus”).

³⁷ As confirmation of what is claimed above in n. 28 regarding Boccaccio’s use of ever differing formulae, none of these expressions can be found in the *Mavortis miles* in which

intimate relationship that gradually developed between the two and that Boccaccio had a great interest in emphasizing (just as he took pains to stress their shared Florentine heritage, which is not otherwise referenced beyond the title in the *De vita*).³⁸

Secondly, it should be observed how the numerous sections of the *De vita* that were not transcribed in the table, due to their irrelevance with respect to this comparison, testify to the massive elimination of the minute details of Petrarch's biography in a process that can only partially be justified by the diverse nature of the three texts. As has been seen, these sections presented errors and inaccuracies.

It can be noted, thirdly, that the Petrarchan works cited by Boccaccio together with the *Africa* are the same as in the *De fontibus* (§5) and the *Genealogie* (§1), except for the *De remediis utriusque fortune*. The works recalled by Boccaccio are not, in fact, those of the *De vita* (the *Dialogus* in prose in which the editors identify the *Secretum*,³⁹ the eclogue *Argus* and the comedy *Philostratus*), but rather the *Bucolicum carmen*, the *Epystole metrice* and the letters in prose written to friends, the *Invective contra medicum* and the *De vita solitaria*. Indeed, there is a near complete overlap with those cited by Petrarch in the *Ad posteritatem*, namely *Africa*, *De vita*

the recipient of the letter, "Musarum alvo iuvenis Iovis manibus alupnatus, lacte phylosophyco educatus, ac divinis scientiis roboratus," is defined as "ingeniosissimus," "dives placabilis," "preliabilis contra vitia que perneat," "lucidus et regalis et affabilis universis," "iocundissimus," "mathematicus et formalis," "humillimus et honestus," and finally "in artibus per excellentiam hiis monarcha," hyperbolically relatable to some authors or figures from antiquity: Aristarchus, William of Ockham, Cicero, Ulysses, Jordanus Nemorarius, Euclid, Archimedes, Boethius, Ptolemy, Seneca, Socrates and Peter Comestor (*Ep.* 2.9); lastly, he is indicated as a "magister" (*Ep.* 2.11). For Boccaccio's use of the term *preceptor meus* to indicate Petrarch see Monti 2013b, 34–35.

³⁸ But in the opening of the *De vita*, Boccaccio, after having placed the birth of Petrarch in Arezzo, speaks of Florence as the city in which the poet was educated in the bosom of the muses: "[...] sed postmodum apud Florentiam [...] a Musarum, ut puto, fuit uberius educatus" (§1).

³⁹ Boccaccio 1992b, 954 n. 36; Boccaccio 2004, 103 n. 44. The interpretation is generally accepted, but Rico disagrees (1992–93, 224–25 and 2012d, 138–39) and Fenzi also expresses some doubts (in Petrarca 1992, 6–7 n. 3 and 48). It is interesting to note that, in his previously cited *Francisci Petrarche [...] vita*, Pietro da Castelletto took from Boccaccio the reference to the *dialogus* ("insuper-latuisse," *De vita* 29), completing it with a title and explanatory note: "hunc intitulavit *De conflictu curarum suarum* Augustino interrogante ipsoque respondente, media inter ipsos Veritate." As Malanca notes (2009, 89), perhaps Pietro had got his information from the letter of Lombardo della Seta, where the following can be read: "*Liber de secreto conflictu curarum suarum*: hic theologicus est more dialogi utitur cum Augustino."

solitaria, Bucolicum carmen (*Post.* 44), *Epistole familiares*, and *Metrice* (*Post.* 47 and 55, where the poet alludes to *Fam.* 4.4, 4.5, 4.7 and 4.8, as well as to *Epyst.* 2.1).

Excluding the *Genealogie* which makes no reference to Vaucluse, we can compare the two ways the location is introduced. In the *De vita* it is called “*vallis quedam quam incole, nec immerito, Vallem Clausam nominant ab antiquo*” (§10),⁴⁰ and in the *De fontibus* “*locus qui dicitur Vallis Clausa*” (§1). The latter phrase represents a surpassing of the more ancient formulation, with a suppression of the repetition of “*vallem*” and a substitution of “*incole [...] nominant*” with a more generic “*dicitur.*”

The images of the Sorgue are also presented differently in the two texts. In the *De vita*, the description is succinct. Boccaccio speaks briefly of the river Sorgue, which flows abundantly with limpid waters, and then states its origin: “*ibique a fonte perpetuo limpidis undis fluens amplissime Sorgia fluvius summit originem emanando*” (§10). In the *De fontibus*, in keeping with the nature of the work, the Sorgue is described in great detail. Borrowing from Pliny, Boccaccio situates it in Gallia Narbonensis and describes its point of origin in the innermost recesses of the Vaucluse hills, its great abundance of water, and its transition into a river: “*Sorgia [...] fons nobilissimus est. Nam e specu quodam abditissimo saxei montis tanta aquarum erumpit abundantia ut abyssi pute aperiri fontes, mitius tamen anni tempestate quadam exundans; et, cum clarissima aqua sit et amena gustui, illico facta fluvius*” (§1). The author continues, using the same terms of the *Naturalis historia*, citing the savoury herbs that can be found there, which were sought after by the oxen, who would immerse their heads in the water where

⁴⁰ As can be noted in the transcribed passage, there is a reference in the *De vita* to *Epyst.* 1.4, sent to the Augustinian Dionigi da Borgo Sansepolcro. With these hexameters Petrarch describes the beauty of Vaucluse to his friend, inviting him to stop there during his trip between Paris and Monopoli in 1339. The reference to the letter is absent in the *De fontibus*.

the plants grew⁴¹ (typically Boccaccian, instead, is the specification that the cattle keep their heads under water until nearly suffocating).⁴²

Boccaccio introduces the poet in conjunction with the description of the location in both the *De fontibus* and the *De vita*, connecting him to the river Sorgue as an appropriate setting for Petrarch, the great lover of solitude. The concepts expressed and the images offered in the two texts are essentially the same, although the *variatio* in the formulation is not coincidental. No expression is repeated, and the synonyms used are accurate. In the *De vita*, the poet “humana vitans consortia cepit solitudine delectari” (§10); in the *De fontibus* “solitudinis avidus, eo quod a frequentia hominum omnino semotus videretur locus, [...] secessit nova Babilone postposita” (§3). We can conclude by noting that in the entry for “Sorgia” there is not only a tendency towards the *amplificatio* of the images already present in the *De vita*, but towards their *variatio* as well.

The most substantial changes relate to Boccaccio’s treatment of Petrarch’s works, and it is in them that his efforts are most evident. To introduce these texts in the *Genealogie* (“huius enim iam multa patent opera et metrica et prosaica, memoratu dignissima, certum de celesti eius ingenio testimonium hinc inde ferentia,” §3), the Certaldese reuses and readapts the formulations of the *De vita* (“plura opuscula tam metrica quam prosaica eleganter ac floridissime decantavit, et inter alia memoratu dignissima” §11; “composuit opera memoratu dignissima” §28).⁴³ The most evident difference in the *De fontibus* and the *Genealogie* with respect to the *De vita* is the

⁴¹ See Plin., *Nat. hist.* 18.190: “Est in Narbonensi provincia nobilis fons Orgae nomine. In eo herbae nascuntur in tantum expetitae bubus, ut mersis capitibus totis eas quaerant, sed illas in aqua nascentes certum est non nisi imbribus ali, ergo suam quisque terram aquamque noverit.” As noted by Fiorilla 2005, 55–56, and confirmed by Perucchi 2013, 169 n. 49, the Boccaccian description of the Sorgue does not derive from the text passed down by the manuscript of Pliny that belonged to Petrarch, Par. lat. 6802, to which the Certaldese had access. Rico 2010, 1170–80, cites the entry of the *De montibus* dedicated to the Sorgue as the most noticeable example of the fact that, in his opinion, Boccaccio does not admit any debt to Petrarch in the work because the Certaldese places the birth of the source in the province of Gallia Narbonensis. Boccaccio therefore follows the *Naturalis historia* and not Petrarch, who maintained that Pliny should have said *Arelatensis*. I do not believe, however, that Rico’s notation affects the reasoning that I provide here regarding a change in Boccaccio’s presentation of Petrarch in his biographical sketches in light of his personal knowledge of the poet.

⁴² Fiorilla 2005, 56 and n. 139.

⁴³ Note the slavish use from the *De vita* (§§11, 28) of the expression “memoratu dignissima” and the reuse with *variatio* of “plura opuscula tam metrica quam prosaica” (§11).

abbreviation of the section on the *Africa* in favour of the other works. Reduced to a generic expression in the *De vita* (§11), they are listed in detail in the *De fontibus* and in the *Genealogie* and also briefly described, as in the case of the *De vita solitaria*. The *Africa* is defined in the *De vita* as “opus suum illud magnum et mirabile,” in which the deeds of the protagonist are depicted “heroyco metro” (§11) and, later, “opus illud egregium,” which is written “heroyco carmine ac oratione arte multiplici admiranda” (§28). In the *De fontibus* it is a “liber egregius” (§4) that Petrarch “heroico carmine [...] arte mira composuit” (§4); in the *Genealogie* it is simply “divina *Africa*, heroyco carmine scripta” (§3).⁴⁴ The expression “ingenio divino potius quam humano creditur compilasse,” which in the *De vita* referred to the manner in which Petrarch had composed the *Africa* (§11), is recycled in the *De fontibus* and expanded for the description of his work on the *De vita solitaria*: “tam exquisito atque sublimi stilo ut divino potius quam humano editus videatur ingenio” (§4). The protagonist and subject matter of the work are described in the *De vita* as “maioris *Affricani* gesta” (§11) and “*Scipionis primi gesta*” (§28), in the *De fontibus* “gesta primi *Scipionis Affricani*” (§4), in the *Genealogie* “*primi Affricani* [...] *magnalia*” (§3).⁴⁵ The Petrarchan works recalled in the *Genealogie* with respect to the *De fontibus* are presented not only with a slight variation in terms of appearance, but also with several substantial changes. In the *De fontibus*, after the *Africa*, Boccaccio references the “*Bucolicum carmen conspicuum*,” the “*Metrice epistole plures*,” the “*prosaice Invective in medicum et epistole multe et laudabiles ad amicos*” and finally the “*De vita solitaria liber*” dedicated “ad *Philippum Cavalicensem episcopum*” (§4). In the *Genealogie*, he mentions the “*Bucolicum carmen*,” “*Liber epistularum ad amicos metrico scriptarum stilo*,” “*ingentia duo Epistularum prosaicarum volumina*,”⁴⁶ “*In medicum Invective*,” “*Solitarie vite liber*” and “*De remediis ad utramque fortunam*” (§3). The citation of Philippe de Cabassole as the dedicatee of the *De vita solitaria* is missing, while the distribution of the epistles in two large collec-

⁴⁴ To indicate the act of composing the *Africa*, Boccaccio uses different terms in the three works: “*compilare*” in the *De vita* (§§11, 28); “*componere*” in the *De fontibus* (§4); and “*scribere*” in the *Genealogie* (§3).

⁴⁵ In the three works, the phrases in which this information is found are structured differently and the verbs used are again always different. In the *De vita*, the actions of the African are the subject of the sentence and the verb used is “*monstrare*” in the passive tense (§11). In the other texts, the deeds act as the direct object of two present participles, “*cantare*” in the *De fontibus* (§4) and “*narrare*” in the *Genealogie* (§3).

⁴⁶ Boccaccio obviously alludes here to the *Familiares* and the *Seniles*.

tions is mentioned together with the *De remediis*, whose conclusion is announced as imminent (“qui paucis post diebus in lucem novissimus venturus est,” §3).⁴⁷ Finally, in both the *De vita* and the *Genealogie*, Boccaccio offers a Petrarch-Cicero parallel. Nevertheless, while in the biography Boccaccio compared the *Dialogus* to Ciceronian works (“tam mira ac artificiosa sermonum pulcritudine decoratum, ut appareat liquido nil eum quod Tullius Arpinas noverit latuisse” §29), it is the two collections of epistles that are deemed worthy of this comparison in the *Genealogie* (“tanta sententiarum, tanta rerum gestarum copia, tanto ornato artificio splendentium, ut in nullo ciceronianis postponendas eas censeat lector equus” §3).⁴⁸

In conclusion, I would like to summarise my observations. I believe that the relationship between *Ad posteritatem* and *De vita* proposed by Billanovich should be re-evaluated. Apart from the fact that no proof exists to uphold the belief that Boccaccio gave Petrarch a copy of the *De vita*, there exists no strong consonance in content and form between the two texts, as the parallel data in the two writings are a consequence of their shared subject matter, the life of Petrarch, and the words that appear in both are simply “obligatory.”

A careful comparison between the *De vita* and the entry for “Sorgia” in Boccaccio’s *De fontibus* alongside *Genealogie* 15.6.11 reveals new perspectives on Boccaccio’s choices in relation to his biographical writing concerning his friend Petrarch. His revisions in the two accounts act as true palinodes. It appears evident that Boccaccio desired to pass down to posterity an image of Petrarch that was truthful and that directly responded to his personal knowledge of his biographical subject. To this end, the Certaldese did not go back to revise the old biography, apart for some rare borrowings, but instead created two new, more rapid, direct and exact ones *ex novo*, paying careful attention to the *variatio* and the insertion of news and details

⁴⁷ The citation of the *De remediis* provides a tool for dating the *Genealogie*. See above, n. 30. In *Sen.* 5.4.2 to Donato Albanzani, dated 1 September 1366, Petrarch writes that he is near the end of the redaction of the work, which was finished on 4 October of that year, as proven by the signature of one of the two witnesses, the cod. Marc. Zanetti Lat. 475 (Petarca 2009, 76–77).

⁴⁸ The parallel between Petrarch and Cicero found in the *Genealogie* and the citation of the letters was probably more appropriate, at this point, in Boccaccio’s eyes, for he knew the degree to which Petrarch’s discovery of the letters of the Roman orator in Verona in 1345 had influenced the decision of his friend to compile his correspondence in a large collection based on the Ciceronian model. This was a piece of information that the Certaldese was able to use only after having learned more about the life and cultural perspectives of Petrarch.

that, if not directly approved by Petrarch, would still have pleased him.⁴⁹ Finally, the passages analysed in the *De fontibus* and the *Genealogie* appear to be devoid of the medieval structures that characterised the *De vita* (where, for example, a marked usage of *cursus* clauses can be noted), and seem to be influenced on a stylistic level by Petrarch. Indeed, even the expression “nova Babilone postposita” in the *De fontibus* (§3) echoes Petrarchan words.

The *De fontibus* and the *Genealogie* do not lend themselves to a comparison with the *Ad posteritatem* and we do not know if Boccaccio had ever read this unfinished autobiographical letter. However, this should not diminish the fact that, with his later portraits, the Certaldese successfully composed an account that dovetailed with what Petrarch had wanted to see written about himself. By then Giovanni knew his friend Francesco quite well.

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⁴⁹ Note also the passages from the *De fontibus* “abdicatis lasciviis omnibus cum honestate atque sanctitate mirabili ibidem iuventutis florem omnem fere consumpsit” (§3), in which Boccaccio almost seems to deny what he had affirmed in the *De vita* 26, and “etatis fervore superato” (§5), where Petrarch is a hermit who overcomes the temptations of the flesh in his solitude in Vacluse, having defeated the fervour of youth. In these two passages Boccaccio demonstrates his complete adherence to the Petrarchan theory of renouncing lust.

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