

Placing Petrarch's Legacy: The Politics of Petrarch's Tomb and Boccaccio's Last Letter

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In readings of orations, letters, and poems about Petrarch's death composed in Paduan and Florentine intellectual circles, this article shows that the well-known praise of Petrarch in these texts is a function of a political competition over Petrarch's remains and, with them, over the rightful location of his legacy. Boccaccio's last letter, which stands out for its rhetorical sophistication and cultural sensitivity, intervenes in this largely provincial debate with farsighted theoretical coherence and cosmopolitan political ambition. Animated by a familiar vernacular poetics, Boccaccio theorizes an intellectual entombment of Petrarch in Florence that is consonant with Boccaccio's ongoing cultural project.

INTRODUCTION

AFTER FRANCESCO PETRARCH (b. 1304) died in Arquà on the night of 19 July 1374, there was a flurry of reactions from all over the Italic Peninsula and beyond.¹ Various forms of consolatory and eulogistic rhetoric in prose and verse continued his public fashioning as the preeminent intellectual and poet of his age, equal or superior to his classical forebears. Yet the works written in the aftermath of his death often go beyond merely praising Petrarch and canonizing his works, inasmuch as they lay claim to civic ownership of his legacy. The problem that arose after his death was not only the grief of his admirers at the loss of their teacher or their concern about gaining access to his undistributed and unfinished works, but also the location of the city that would own and

I would like to thank those who helped me improve this article, especially Sabrina Ferri, James Kriesel, Jason Houston, Lorenzo Dell'Oso, and the two anonymous readers at *RQ*.

¹For a list of the mourners of Petrarch, see Kohl, 351–52. The only work missing from Kohl is Giovanni de Bonis's undated eclogue *Parnassus*, for which see Vinchesi. Translations are the author's except where English editions are cited. Minor changes made to cited translations are noted as modified. Jason Houston generously shared draft versions of his and Samuel Huskey's unpublished translations of Boccaccio's *Epistola* 24 and *Carmen* 9, which will soon be published in Harvard's I Tatti Renaissance Library in a volume of Boccaccio's minor Latin works. This gave me the opportunity to challenge and correct my own understanding of these texts.

Renaissance Quarterly 70 (2017): 435–73 © 2017 Renaissance Society of America.

propagate his glory in the future.² The interment of Petrarch's body in the tiny village of Arquà assured that the birthplace of his legacy would be the Paduan court of Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara (1325–93) and the university and intellectual culture that his rule fostered. Petrarch's Paduan cohort established its claim to honor Petrarch's body in Arquà and even argued internally about whether his remains should be moved to Padua. The placement of his legacy in Paduan territory, however, caused anxiety, especially among those of his friends associated with Florence.

During Petrarch's life, Florence's relationship with the poet was strained. Born in Arezzo to a Florentine family that had been banished for perpetuity in 1302 during the same purge that led to the exile of Dante, Petrarch visited Florence only twice in his life, on a trip to and from Rome during the Jubilee of 1350. At Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313–75) encouragement, the city offered him a place in its *studium* in 1351 along with the land lost by his family in exile. Boccaccio's quasi-hagiographic biography of Petrarch, *De Vita et Moribus Francisci Petracchi de Florentia* (On the life and customs of Francesco Petrarch of Florence), was written on this occasion in order to help convince the local government of Petrarch's importance for the city.³ Boccaccio's effort to bring Petrarch to Florence during this period was closely linked to his recuperation of Dante's reputation in the city. The two poets were, for Boccaccio, the foundation of the cultural heritage that he sought to ground in Florence, despite their political alienation from the city.⁴ When Petrarch summarily refused the first offer to live in Florence, moving instead to the Visconti court in Milan, his Florentine friends, first among whom was Boccaccio, reacted with acrimony and Florence quickly revoked the invitation.

Petrarch's friends in Florence renewed their efforts to repatriate him at least twice more before his death. In 1363, as is demonstrated below, military leader and nobleman Roberto Guidi of Battifolle (ca. 1315–75) tried to convince the poet to take up residence in his lands in the Casentino, near the Camaldolensian hermitage at Pratovecchio, where Petrarch visited him in 1364. Just a year later,

²The collection of Petrarch's works, both finished and unfinished, was given to his son-in-law, Francesco da Brossano, on whom, see Guido Martellotti in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 14, 1972), s.v. "Brossano, Francesco da." The copying and distribution of his previously undistributed works, among which the *Africa* was the most desired, were assigned to Petrarch's friend Lombardo della Seta, on whom, see Emilio Pasquini in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 37, 1989), s.v. "Della Seta, Lombardo." On his poor management of the copying of Petrarch's works, see Billanovich, 330–39.

³On the politics of Boccaccio's engagement with Petrarch, see Usher; Houston, 2012; Houston, 2010, 184n16. On the *De Vita Petracchi*, see Houston, 2010, 55–62; Eisner, 2013, 79–82.

⁴This has been amply treated in Houston, 2010; Eisner, 2013.

in 1365, Florence offered him a canonry in its cathedral and even received papal approval for it, but again Petrarch refused.⁵ In 1369 Petrarch moved from Venice to Padua, and by 1370 his country residence in Arquà had become his home. Due to recurrent illness and a debilitating stroke suffered in Ravenna on his way to Rome in 1370, he remained in poor health for the rest of his life and was unable to travel far.⁶ It is largely thanks to Boccaccio's continual casting of Petrarch as a Florentine that Florence is considered Petrarch's intellectual homeland, where he was "nourished at the breast of the Muses."⁷ By the time of his death in 1374, Florence had tried and failed to recall Petrarch to his ancestral *patria* three times. At the moment of his passing, the sentiment remained among certain Florentines that at least Petrarch's fame, if not also his body, belonged to Florence.

In examining the reactions to Petrarch's death, scholars have largely ignored or underplayed the civic importance of the praise of Petrarch in the documents that survive.⁸ Prey to the rhetoric of these compositions, they have focused instead on how the cult of personality that surrounded Petrarch in life continued to grow much like that of a saint. In fact, Concetta Bianca has traced the myth of Petrarch as humanist back to this moment, while Andrea Tilatti has compared the posthumous reverence for Petrarch with fourteenth-century cults of saints, noticing in passing the civic import of the public fashioning of Petrarch's image.⁹ In his survey of the mourners of Petrarch, Benjamin G. Kohl noted the uniformity of praise of Petrarch, which "stressed his fine personal habits, his penchant for prayer and fasting, and the seriousness with which he took his Christian faith . . . his great intellectual abilities—his capacity for study, his prodigious memory, and his accomplished Latin style and elegant diction," but recognized only superficially that "Florentine writers, including Boccaccio and Sacchetti, claimed him as a brilliant son of the Arno city" while, "conversely, Zenone da Pistoia saw him as an outstanding example of Paduan culture."¹⁰ It is not a matter of chance, however, that Florentine writers and those in Padua claimed Petrarch as their own, nor is it just a sign of their devotion or admiration. Rather, the documents composed in lament of Petrarch's death show signs of a provincial political conflict both between Padua and Florence and within Padua itself. In readings of orations, letters, and poems about Petrarch's death composed in Paduan and Florentine

⁵See Wilkins, 1959b, 82–83.

⁶Ibid., 141–271.

⁷Boccaccio, 1992, 898 (*De Vita Petracchi* 1): "apud Florentiam . . . a Musarum . . . fuit uberibus educatus."

⁸See Feo; Kohl; Bianca; Špička. Cf. Tilatti, 896.

⁹See Bianca; Tilatti.

¹⁰Kohl, 350.

intellectual circles, with which the first part of this essay is concerned, the well-known praise of Petrarch in these texts is shown to be a function of a political competition over his remains and, with them, over the rightful location of his legacy.

If Boccaccio's *De Vita Petracchi* had sought to cast Petrarch as a Florentine in order to justify his repatriation while alive, then the Florentine compositions on his passing worked to legitimate the placement of Petrarch's legacy there after his death, while the Paduans, following Petrarch's testament, vindicated their own right to keep his body and works there where he died. A recognition of the political situation surrounding Petrarch's place of burial leads to a second, related observation about Boccaccio's letter on Petrarch's death, addressed to Petrarch's son-in-law and heir, Francescuolo da Brossano (d. 1405), which stands out among the other responses for its rhetorical sophistication and cultural sensitivity. By reading the letter within its proper political context, restored by the first half of this essay, it becomes manifest how Boccaccio intervenes in a largely provincial political debate with farsighted theoretical coherence and cosmopolitan political ambition. Animated by a familiar vernacular poetics, Boccaccio theorizes an intellectual entombment of Petrarch in Florence that is consonant with his ongoing cultural project, based on the retrieval and propagation in Florence of Petrarch's works alongside those of Dante—a project that established Boccaccio himself as the sacrificial hero of Florence's nascent cultural tradition.

BETWEEN PADUA AND FLORENCE: THE POLITICS OF PETRARCH'S BURIAL PLACE

The effort to place Petrarch's legacy begins with the funerary oration delivered by Augustinian friar Bonaventura Badoer (ca. 1332–85) on 24 July 1374.¹¹ Before a crowd of dignitaries, including Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara and the patriarch of Aquileia, Marquard of Randeck (ca. 1300–81), Badoer seeks to memorialize Petrarch not only as an intellectual, but also as a holy man. He first links the Aretine poet to Florence, but exclusively in immaterial terms related to the etymology of the city's name, as the sweet scent emanating from the flower of Florence. Rome, too, is granted importance for hosting the poet laureate in 1341, and yet Badoer describes Rome both before and after Petrarch's laureation as empty, sterile, and debased. The city's past greatness was fulfilled only for a single year; after his death, Badoer declares, Rome again became empty. Padua is mentioned last in the series of Petrarch's cities: it alone

¹¹On Badoer, see Giorgio Cracco in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 5, 1963), s.v. "Badoer, Bonaventura."

is singled out for its grief, as Petrarch's mother church and as the center from which his spiritual light reached the entire world. Uniquely among the three cities, Padua is represented as Petrarch's home and as the birthplace of a new Petrarchan rule.¹²

The first two cities' relationship with Petrarch had begun when he was alive and was experienced in terms of his absence; only Padua was wed to him in his living presence. Toward the end of what survives of his funeral oration, Badoer addresses his patron and the land in which Petrarch is buried, evoking the bond of friendship with Francesco da Carrara that will keep Petrarch's body there and the importance that it will give to the territory: "Neither the seat of Rome nor the imperial throne could confer on you as much glory as the body that is buried in you."¹³ The Augustinian friar establishes the foundations of Petrarch's postmortem cultural importance for the lord of Padua. For Badoer, who begins the process of Petrarch's secular beatification,¹⁴ Petrarch belongs to Padua, his true widow and the ordained location of his legacy.

The first response to Petrarch's death to be sent from Florence is in a postscript to a letter dated 25 July 1374 from Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) to Giovanni Malpaghini (1346–1417), Petrarch's former scribe who was likely teaching in Bologna at the time.¹⁵ Salutati asks for confirmation

¹²Badoer, 164–65: "Francesco, an excellent man, is not with me. Howl, city of Florence, since your brilliant flower has fallen. He who throughout the entire world made you perfume with the sweetest scent. He bestowed more on you than he who founded your city. Rome, feel his absence: since you have lost him whom you held as a citizen for his virtues. What will you do, empty city, Capitoline seat? Francesco, when he was crowned laureate in you he departed from you and ascended with his mind to heaven, with his body remaining on earth. In that year, 1341, you were equally pregnant and adorned. Since, in the previous 1,200 years, you had been made sterile of poets and consequently debased. Let flow the tears, split your chest, mother church, but also the whole city of Padua, widowed of such a clergyman, such a canon, and such a rule. Burst out and proclaim: since your light has failed, by which throughout the whole world you shown forth in his salvation-bearing letters. On behalf of the Paduan church, of the whole city of Padua, I speak from Holy Scriptures for peace." Cf. Tilatti, 885–91.

¹³Badoer, 166: "Non romana sedes, non Imperialis thronus tibi tantum gloriae contulisset quantum humatum corpus in te."

¹⁴See Tilatti, 889–90.

¹⁵Salutati, 1:172 (ep. 13): "I have heard, alas, that our Petrarch has migrated to the stars. Because I do not want it, I do not believe it, and because I fear it, I doubt the fact. If you have any news, write me back." Novati, the editor, lists this letter incorrectly as addressed to Benvenuto da Imola, but Foresti has clearly demonstrated that it was written to Giovanni Malpaghini, who then responded with his *Conquestus*. It is dated to August 1374. See Foresti, 505–07. On Malpaghini, see Maddalena Signorini in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 68, 2007), s.v. "Malpaghini, Giovanni."

about Petrarch's death, uncertain if it were just rumor.¹⁶ Malpaghini responded to Salutati quickly with his *Conquestus de morte Petrarce* (Lament on the death of Petrarch) in August 1374, expressing his sadness and defining Petrarch's death as the "loss of our generation" and the "public calamity of the present age."¹⁷ He also recommends that Salutati not overly grieve his passing, lest he unknowingly commit some injustice against Petrarch's legacy.¹⁸ He goes on to say that Petrarch is not really dead, since his soul is in heaven for eternity and his fame on earth is secured by his many works. He concludes his letter with an acknowledgment of the effect of Petrarch's death on Florence and the world: "In sum, in his age he was the only one above all other mortals who gave not less sadness to the world when dead, than he did joy to his homeland when alive."¹⁹ This conclusion juxtaposes Florence's fluctuating pride and joy in Petrarch when he was alive to the sadness that his passing causes for the entire world. While resonating with Petrarch's own rhetoric of stylized disengagement with the world, Malpaghini's recommendation that Salutati not weep because of Petrarch's death also indicates his worry that the excessive grief expressed by Petrarch's followers would contradict Petrarch's own views about the limited value of life in the here and now. Salutati did not respond to Malpaghini's letter until March of the next year, but in the meantime, he repeated Malpaghini's recommendation in a letter on Petrarch's death sent to Roberto Guidi, Count of Battifolle, on 16 August 1374. Before discussing this letter, however, it is helpful to consider a contemporaneous funerary poem, which sheds light on the political import of Petrarch's death.

Of the philo-Florentine writers to respond to Petrarch's death, Giovanni Quatrario da Sulmona (ca. 1336–1402) most clearly expresses the political problem represented by Petrarch's burial in Arquà and even goes so far as to suggest a military effort to recover his body. Quatrario was a Sulmonese self-taught man of letters who became acquainted with Petrarch because of their mutual friendship with Barbato da Sulmona (ca. 1304–64), but he was also connected to

¹⁶Petrarch had been rumored to have died before, such as in 1365 when Franco Sacchetti wrote two sonnets, both of which center on Florence's regret for its mistreatment of him and one of which links him to Dante. See Sacchetti, 196 (*Rime* 114.8), 232 (*Rime* 142).

¹⁷Foresti, 502: "The loss of our generation [*nostrī seculi damnum*] saddens me heavily, and this public calamity of the present age [*publicum malum presentis evi*] already demands that everyone weep."

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 503: "I think that in this enormous sadness of our plight your eyes overflowed with a flowing of tears. But what for? Do we perhaps weep because death has stolen him from our eyes? Certainly while we cover his death with our tears, indeed we seem to be guilty of a certain hateful injustice. For while we honor him with the pious tribute of our eyes, we make it so that our passion does not seem a balm of affection, but a certain detraction from his eternity."

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 504–05: "Denique seculo suo super mortales ceteros solus fuit qui mundo non minus merorem mortuus, quam patrie sue (vividus) gaudium dederit."

Petrarch's admirers in Florence and Naples, such as Coluccio Salutati and Niccolò Acciaiuoli (1310–65).²⁰ On 20 August 1374 he sent from Sicily to Florence a *Carmen Funerarium de Morte Petrarce* (Funereal song on the death of Petrarch). Throughout the poem Quatrario idealizes Petrarch and laments his death, repeating many of the commonplaces that inform other laments of his friend's passing. In conclusion to the poem, however, he turns to the question of Petrarch's tomb:

Therefore, let us perform his funeral with divine honor.
 Let us bury the most excellent of the poets on the high
 summit of Cyrrha. Let a sculpted pyramid standing forth from the air
 on three columns truly bear witness as his eternal tomb.
 And let engraved golden words teach about the man lying inside.
 And let Apollo, residing there, confirm the splendor of his work.
 But may Nyssa not envy the gift given to Cyrrha.
 The Muses have approved. Their grieving sighs have instructed.²¹

This ornamented pyramidal tomb on top of Cyrrha, one of the twin peaks of Parnassus, seems purely rhetorical when associated with the idealizing tone that leads up to it. Yet, after a few lines describing the grief of the Muses, Quatrario contrasts their sincerity with the lack of care that Florence demonstrates for its native son. The final lines of the poem take on another voice, exhortative and no longer plaintive, that makes the gilt-lettered tomb seem far less idealized:

But where are you Florence, mother of such a man?
 Are you lazy in celebrating eternal Petrarch however you can?
 Do you not build so that boulders cut from the marble
 mountains may come from abroad with wagons and carts?
 Let the marbles on the tomb thrive with amazing sculptures.
 You are truly preparing greater things—I think—and you will not
 allow the tomb to remain empty of the body of the native poet.
 The due laurel will cast no shadow on brows other
 than yours. It is right to fight, with Mars as judge,
 if some chance should dare deny you your crown,
 [Florentine] land, even if Padua also has the strength of great Troy.
 I beg you, build the tomb, so that our lord may come and

²⁰On Quatrario's relationship with Petrarch, see Pansa, 112–26.

²¹Quatrario in Pansa, 337 (lines 84–91): "Ergo divino funus lustremus [h]o[n]ore. / Precipuum Cirre vatium tumulemus in alto / Vertice sculpta tribus prestantque ex ere columnis / Pyramis eternum testetur nempe sepulcrum. / Aurea scripta virum doceant et verba iacentem. / Splendoremque operi residens hic fundat Apollo; / Nisa nec inuideat donate munere Cyrrae; / Assensere dee. gemitus docuere dolentes."

dwell in it and warm the hearts of pilgrim readers.
 Padua stole Francesco, Florence made him.
 He sang of customs and pastures and the war of Scipio,
 and [if] poets fail in prose and poetry,
 the Capitoline laurel flourishes in all through his life.²²

Exhorting Florence to action, Quatrario insists on the preeminence of Petrarch's Florentine origins. The imagery of a tomb on the Cyrrean peak of Parnassus takes on a concrete political dimension. It seems that, here, Florence and Padua, perhaps represented as the twin peaks of Parnassus, had developed a political animosity over the fate of Petrarch's body. Although Petrarch never regarded himself as a Florentine and never gave any sense that he would ever reside there, Quatrario claims for Florence the right to fight a just war in order to bring back his remains and install them in a florid, marble tomb. If, for Badoer, Arquà would be the sun from which Petrarch's holy rays would emanate, replacing both Florence and Rome, then, for Quatrario, Padua was an impostor and, in the final play on words, even the Roman Capitoline became Florentine with the flourishing caused by Petrarch's laurel crown. The civic contention that this poem discloses underlies Coluccio Salutati's letter to Roberto Guidi.

After his correspondence with Giovanni Malpaghini, Salutati composed his only surviving lament of Petrarch's death for one of the most revered military commanders in Florence.²³ Together with his brother Carlo, Roberto Guidi controlled the land in the Casentino and was bound to Florence by a pact of *accomandigia*, a mutual allegiance that required him to provide his services in war and to pay an annual tax to the city, but also guaranteed the city's recognition and protection of his feudal rights over the lands he had inherited in the Casentino.²⁴ In 1363 he contributed to Florence's siege of Pisa and in 1369 he was named commander of the Florentine army in its siege of San Miniato, whose rebellion against Florence was subsidized by the Visconti.

²²Ibid., 338 (lines 106–22): “Ast tanti genitiva viri Florentia quo stas? / Qua potes eternum pigres celebrare Petrarcam? / Non struis ut scisse veniant de montibus ultro / Marmoreis moles? / Carpentis atque quadrigis? / Sculpturis tumulo virescant marmora miris, / Credo equidem maiora paras, nec corpore vatis / Indigene vacuum patieris stare sepulcrum, / Non aliena tuis umbrabit debita laurus / Tempora, iuridico fas est contendere marte, / Audeat ulla tuam si fors vetuisse coronam, / Terra, licet magnam valeat quoque Padua Troiam. / Adde precor tumulo, ut dominus consistat in illo / Occurrens, foveat peregrini corda legentis, / Padua Franciscum rapuit, Florentia fecit, / Scipiadam cecinit, mores, et pascua, martem, / Deficiuntque prosa vates vel carmine, vita / Istius in cuntis floret Capitolia laurus.”

²³Salutati also wrote a *libellus* on Petrarch, which is now lost. On Salutati's letters and activities in the wake of Petrarch's death, see Witt, 183–90.

²⁴For a detailed discussion of *accomandigia*, see Dean, 167–78.

After securing the city for Florence, Guidi was given a small triumph and was absolved of his debts and financial obligations to the city.²⁵ Guidi's relationship with Florence was solely military in nature, but his correspondence with Petrarch has led to his exaggerated characterization as an enlightened humanist knight.²⁶

Guidi's relationship with Petrarch began when the poet sent him a letter from Venice, likely upon recommendation of Pandolfo Malatesta (ca. 1325–73), saying that he would like to meet him and to see the Apennines.²⁷ Guidi responded to Petrarch's letter by inviting him to visit the Casentino, where he would find the Camaldolensians and the sources of the Arno and Tiber,²⁸ but he expressed his surprise at Petrarch's lack of care for Florence.²⁹ Petrarch's subsequent response justified his absence by saying that Florence had neglected him,³⁰ to which Guidi responded in turn by asking him not to deny Florence his presence: "May the ingratitude of your homeland, which you imagine, not make you bitter. If [Florence] neglects you when you are absent, once you are present it will honor the lofty majesty of your dogma."³¹

²⁵On Guidi, see Marco Bicchierai in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 61, 2004), s.v. "Guidi, Roberto."

²⁶See, e.g., Novati's note in *Salutati*, 1:176nn1–2.

²⁷See Petrarch, 1992, 1:71 (*Rerum Senilium Libri [Sen.]* 2.6). On the correspondence between Guidi and Petrarch, see Wilkins, 1959a. Guidi's letters to Petrarch have never been edited, but are excerpted in Mehus, cxxvi and cxxxix, partially printed in Froissart, 481–82, and translated into Italian in Beni, 291–92, 294. On this period in Petrarch's life, see Wilkins, 1959b, 59–72. Petrarch was looking to leave Venice, and would soon settle in Padua, so he may have been considering the Casentino as a potential new home. This exchange has not been previously recognized as an effort to repatriate Petrarch. Given the undeniably rhetorical nature of Petrarch's love of pastoral solitude, it is unlikely that he ever really considered moving to the remote location in the Casentino. He never lived so far from an urban center.

²⁸During this same period, Petrarch also corresponded with the grand prior of the Camaldolensians, Giovanni degli Abbarbagliati, who had offered to accompany him to the hermitage. See Petrarch, 1992, 1:74 (*Sen.* 2.8).

²⁹Froissart, 481: "Because concerns about the health of one's homeland [*patria*] are best, I am troubled and terribly astonished that you flee it; you neglect it and you have no concern, as if you have forgotten how to honor piety, which may be great among those near to you, but which is nevertheless greatest in your homeland [*patria*]."

³⁰Petrarch, 1992, 1:72 (*Sen.* 2.7.25–30), modified: "I should like to respond with one brief, heart-felt sigh to your astonishment, shared by many others, about why I flee and forsake my homeland [*patria*]. O you who revere your homeland [*patria*], O you who love me, since you want it so, and pay attention to a man whom you do not know! I did not desert her, but she deserted me, whom at one time she seemed to embrace." Petrarch, 2002b, 189.

³¹Froissart, 482: "nec amaricet gustum tuum patriae ingratitude quam concipis, quae, si te absentem negligit, praesentem adorabit excelsam tui dogmatis majestatem."

In 1364, following an official trip to Bologna, Petrarch finally visited Guidi briefly in the Casentino, after which Petrarch wrote to him again to thank him, but refusing any offer to live there.³² Guidi's role in this failed repatriation of Petrarch is unclear, but given Petrarch's distrust of the Florentine people and his preference for protection by independent lords, Guidi could have been a potential patron, located at a safe—if unprecedented—distance from the city.

Thus, when examining Salutati's letter to Guidi, it must not be forgotten that Guidi's relationship with Florence was military and his connection with Petrarch was one of refused patronage. In the letter, Salutati turns to Petrarch's spiritual impact in an effort to diffuse any violent action on the part of his addressee. In the opening salutation, Salutati alludes to the fact that Guidi had already been contacted by others in Florence and that his own letter will concern something different:

Although, magnificent Count, it may seem foolish and rude to chafe your ears again with what I know was written to you a short while ago by others, nevertheless, because you seemed to be the only one of the nobles with whom it is possible to speak of the death of that divine man—Petrarch, I mean—and on account of that sincere love, with which we know that you honored him when he was alive, and also because the studies of others, who boast of an old and famous lineage, are not applied to letters, but to other things—I know not what, but just to bring to mind those that are not scandalous, we see them sweat over studies concerned with war or hunting, or take pleasure in horsemanship or fowling—I too will speak with you, not with that eloquence or with that adornment that would befit a great man like yourself or that would correspond with the subject matter that I am addressing, but according to my ability as a writer.³³

Salutati singles out Guidi as a friend of Petrarch, addressing his letter not to the nobleman interested in war, hunting, or birding, but to the man who shares his interest in letters, just as Petrarch had done in his own letters to Guidi. From this

³²See Petrarch, 1994, 424–32 (*Disperse* 62 [*Misc.* 18]).

³³Salutati, 1:176 (ep. 15): “Quamquam, comes magnifice, ineptum importunumque videatur quod dudum ab aliis scriptum scio, tuis auribus refricare, quia tamen unicuique nobilium visus es cum quo possit de migratione illius divini viri, Petrarce scilicet, loqui, tum propter sincerum amorem, quo te illum dum viveret accepimus coluisse; tum quia studia ceterorum, qui veteri famosaque prosapia gloriantur, non ad litteras applicari, sed aliis nescio quibus rebus, ut saltem fugientes flagitiosa commemorem, bellicis aut venaticis insudare videmus, et aut equitationibus aut aucupiiis delectari; loquar et ego tecum, non ea facundia, non eo ornatu, qui tantum virum, quantus es, deceat nec materie, quam aggredior, respondente, sed pro facultate scribentis.”

point of departure, the letter transforms Petrarch's legacy into a spiritual matter, never once bringing up Padua or Arquà. Even regarding Florence, Salutati mentions the city's grief only alongside that of Rome and the rest of the world. Like Badoer, he refers to Petrarch as a source of light, but the civic context of his passing is quickly absorbed by the universal lament that involves the entire world of Petrarch's friends.³⁴

Salutati's letter reacts to the dangers of the provincialism that informed responses by others such as Quatrario by taking as a model the spiritual attitude that defined Petrarch's career:

What have you done, death? When we will come into your jurisdiction, we will reach him, even against your wishes, if in fact he lives in his better part. For that divine gift that participates in reason lives, by which his poor body, to which alone you were savage, was made alive. You have no further power against either: the latter is in its place, while the former has returned to its maker. He even had victory over you, O death, when he was alive; he conquered you, he triumphed over you. Indeed, he kindled another perpetuity, against which you have no law; that is, his fame and eternal name. Both the present and the future age will honor him and the triple kingdom of shades will celebrate him. Only the filthy and worthless victory over his body has been left to you. Do not boast, O death; for living in his best parts, he has evaded your violence and power.³⁵

In this address to death, Salutati plays down the importance of Petrarch's body by referring to it with the diminutive *corpusculum* and by belittling death's victory over it. The aggressive language of competition is furthermore displaced from the world of bodies into the spiritual realm. Petrarch's battle with death has already been fought and won. There is no longer any need to fight. In the context

³⁴Ibid., 1:183–84: "But whence my oration began, there, if it is allowed, it will return. Therefore, may I not be sad that our sun and most famous radiance has perished? Let our entire age weep; let Latium weep too and let Florence herself overflow with tears . . . and you and I and others, whom he kindly deigned to receive as friends, let us grieve. Poor me! 'Oh, human mind, ignorant of fate!' as our Vergil says."

³⁵Ibid., 1:184–85: "Quid egisti, mors? Cum in tua iura veniemus, nos illo etiam, si nolueris, potiemur; meliori siquidem parte sui vivit. Vivit enim divinum illud munus, rationis particeps, quo corpusculum, cui soli seva fuisti, vivificabatur. In neutrum ulterius tibi dicio: hoc in sedem suam, illud ad suum remeavit auctorem; habuit etiam, o mors, de te, dum viveret ille, victoriam; te superavit, te triumphavit. aliam quidem perpetuitatem, in qua nichil tibi iuris est, ipse conflavit, famam scilicet et nomen eternum: illum enim et presens et futura etas laudibus excolet et umbrarum triplex regio celebrabit. solius tibi corporis victoria feda luteaque remansit. noli gloriari, o mors; optimis enim partibus vivens, omnes tuas violentias et vires evasit."

of the political posturing of a figure like Quatrario and those who had already written to Guidi, Salutati's lack of concern for the body and his insistence on the soul take on a political significance. Salutati seems to recommend that just as Petrarch himself had avoided the power and violence of death, so Petrarch's admirers should refuse to consider the least important part of Petrarch's being. The characterization of death could also be seen indirectly as a reaction to the pride of those in possession of Petrarch's body. Salutati finds that Petrarch's literary and philosophical legacy—more valuable than his body—is placeless and belongs to his friends everywhere.

The letter to Guidi thus focuses on the greatness of that legacy, parts of which remain to be seen by his followers. In its conclusion, Salutati compares Petrarch to Hermes Trismegistus, presenting his absence as the prerequisite for his future spiritual leadership:

In fact, it is said that Hermes, when the closeness of death already pressed on him, addressed a circle of friends standing by him: "Thus far," he said, "dearest sons, I have remained among you in banishment, a pilgrim and exile; but now I am restored in all things, I have recovered safety, and called back I return to my homeland, in which all men, who will have deserved to dwell there, become free from death and corruption. I already seem to myself to be filled with marvelous sweetness, since I consider myself joined with my maker and, with every condition of mutability left behind, about to take part in the inviolable and perfect good. So beware lest, when I will have left my poor body behind for my better part and seem to have flown out of the place of the living, you grieve for me as if I were dead. For now together with you I am dead, and then in the end, after I have been restored to life, I will wait for you in the house of the maker of all things."³⁶

This exemplary tale echoes Salutati's words to death, again referring to the body with *corpusculum*. The references to life as exile or pilgrimage and to the voyage

³⁶Ibid., 1:186–87: "Hermes siquidem, cum iam eum vicinia mortis urgeret, coronam amicorum sic fertur astantium allocutus: 'hactenus,' inquit ille, 'carissimi filii, relegatu[s] apud vos mansi, peregrinus et exul; nunc vero per omnia restitutus, incoluntate recepta, migro revocatus in patriam, in qua cuncti, qui eius meruerint incolatum, et mortis et corruptionis efficiuntur expertes. iam michi repleti videor suavitate mirifica, qui cogitem meo me auctori coniunctum, omnique mutabilitatis condicione fugata, inviolabilis perfectique boni fore participem. cavetote itaque ne, cum hoc relicto corpusculo meliore mei parte visus fuerim de loco viventium evolasse, me quasi mortuum lugeatis. nunc enim vobiscum una mortuus sum, et tunc demum vite redditus, vos apud summum omnium rerum opificem expectabo.'"

to heaven as a sort of repatriation, typically Neoplatonic, evoke nonetheless the realities of Petrarch's life and the hopes of returning him to Florence. By transforming into spiritual matters the historical realities surrounding Petrarch's death, however, *Salutati* attenuates any political tension. The connection with Hermes Trismegistus establishes Petrarch as a spiritual leader of a circle of friends that will continue even more strongly after his death. *Salutati* endeavors to maintain Petrarch as the head of a new school of thought centered upon the virtues of the man, his works, and his exemplary life, not upon his material remains. If Guidi had possessed any desire to retrieve Petrarch's bones on behalf of the city, it seems that *Salutati* was successful in dissuading him from it. Some still remained, however, who were concerned with finding a way to honor Petrarch's body in Florence.

A month later, in fact, in a letter dated September 19, Luigi Marsili (ca. 1342–94), an Augustinian friar from Florence who had known Petrarch in Padua and who was also an acquaintance of Boccaccio, wrote from Paris to Guido del Palagio (ca. 1335–99) concerning Petrarch's death.³⁷ A young Florentine from a wealthy family of wool traders who would become very influential in Florentine politics, Del Palagio had written to Marsili in late July or early August to inform him of Petrarch's death. Del Palagio's letter, now lost, was sent to Marsili in Bruges as he was leaving Florence for Venice to escape an onslaught of the plague that had hit Florence near the end of July.³⁸ He had hoped to visit Petrarch on his way, since he had never had the opportunity to meet him in person. Marsili's response alludes to the desire among Florentines, mentioned in the earlier letter by a sympathetic Del Palagio, to honor Petrarch somehow in death: "The citizens of Florence did not want to experience him and if they did want it, they did not know how to do so, as Solomon says: 'The lazy man both wants and does not want to work.' And now I do not think that they are more eager to honor his body than in the past they were to revere the whole man, when his noblest part was present. I would like, more out of love for their honor than for anything else, that, even if late, they would stir to do their duty."³⁹ Marsili's letter evidences a concern in Florence over what to do about Petrarch's body. Like Quatrario,

³⁷On Guido del Palagio, see Franca Allegrezza in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 38, 1990), s.v. "Del Palagio, Guido." On Luigi Marsili, see Paolo Falzone in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 70, 2008), s.v. "Marsili, Luigi."

³⁸See Celle and Marsili, 1:200–01, 2:482 (5.78–85).

³⁹*Ibid.*, 2:477–78 (4.41–48): "Non hanno li cittadini di Firenze voluto provarlo e se hanno voluto non hanno saputo volere, ché Salamone dice: 'Vuole e non vuole il pigro afaticarsi.' E ora non penso che siano più soleciti a ffare onore al corpo che per adietro sieno stati a fare reverenza all'uomo intero, quando la più nobile parte v'era presente. Vorrei, più per amore di loro onore che per altro, almeno tardi si destassono a ffare suo dovere."

Marsili portrays the Florentines as lazy in honoring Petrarch, comparing the wavering commitment of the Florentine government to invite Petrarch there in the early 1350s to a similarly unstable desire to honor his body. Whereas Quatrario is exhortative and hyperbolic in his rhetoric, Marsili, with Augustinian remove, is more realistic in his expectations of the Florentine citizens. He does not deceive himself that the nature of the people will change and he sees through the provincial political ideology behind an effort to repatriate Petrarch's cadaver. Like Salutati in his letter to Guidi, he redirects Del Palagio's attention onto Petrarch's soul and virtues, which are exemplified by both his life and his works. His vague concluding remark does not address the righteousness of Florence's desire to honor Petrarch's body, but leaves open the possibility that the city will find some other way to show its reverence for him.

While the Florentine responses to Petrarch's death indicate that the recuperation of Petrarch's legacy developed in reaction to the location of his body in Arquà and to the desire of some in Florence to vie for it, the only other response to come from Padua makes it clear that there was indeed a clash over his burial place. In late October, an otherwise unknown Pistoian named Zenone Zenoni, a follower of Petrarch who did not know Latin, penned a vernacular poem for Francesco da Carrara in commemoration of Petrarch's death.⁴⁰ Written in *terza rima* and in imitation of Petrarch's *Triumph* (*Triumphs*), the thirteen chapters of his *Pietosa fonte* (Fount of compassion) describe an allegorical scene set in a garden in which Jove presides over the other gods, the seven liberal arts, the Muses, and other attendees, all of whom lament Petrarch's passing. At the end, Petrarch is led through the garden by Apollo, Minerva, and a train of seventy philosophers, and is accompanied to heaven by a host of angels.

A large section of the poem is dedicated to Florence, which is personified as a widowed woman dressed in black, whose complaint occupies more than two entire chapters. At the end of chapter 5, Florence begins by asking Jove why he has taken so many of the feathers from her wings and continues her lament in the next chapter by addressing the loss of five of her famous citizens in the years prior to Petrarch's death: Zanobi da Strada (d. 1361), Niccolò Acciaiuoli (d. 1365), Paolo

⁴⁰On Zenoni and the *Pietosa fonte*, see Feo, 30–36; Bianca, 304; Benedetti. There is no reliable edition of the poem. The quotations here follow Zambrini's edition, incorporating additional variants—many suggested by Medin, from the earliest extant manuscript: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo MS 90 sup. 139, fols. 18^r–45^r (hereafter BML Plut. 90 sup. 139). On the manuscripts containing the poem and the quality of the text, see Zardo, 238n1; Medin, 427–30n1; Benedetti, 479–80. Kohl dates the poem to early autumn, while Feo notes that Zenoni himself indicates the date of composition as three months after the death of Petrarch, or mid- to late October. See Kohl, 352; Feo, 30n1.

dell'Abbaco (d. 1374), Manno Donati (d. ca. 1370), and Tommaso del Garbo (d. 1370).⁴¹ Petrarch, the reader understands, is just one of a number of recent Florentines to be taken from her, several of whom did not live in Florence and are not buried there.⁴² In chapter 7, Florence continues with her monologue about Petrarch, until, at the beginning of chapter 8, a procession of the liberal arts and the Muses interrupts her, allowing for no response from Jove. The celebration of Petrarch's achievements, in a new kind of laureation ceremony, takes place there despite Florence's complaint.

The poem is the Paduan equivalent in vernacular of Quatrario's eccentric and polemical Latin poem from a few months earlier. Zenoni, who as a Pistoian felt no great love for Florence,⁴³ represents the city as not being able to hold on to her own illustrious citizens, but only those of other cities, and as having had a troubled relationship with Petrarch:

And if I believed that with grief, or sacrifice,
 With orations, vigils, or love,
 Or with money, I could make him come,
 Out of death, alive, to my city,
 I would be obliged to do so,
 As would the entire world out of just piety,
 But since he cannot acquire
 Any more life, I am like she
 Who is denied that which she would like to do.
 And if I did not want him even when I was able,
 The sin is purged, as you know,
 Because another did not want it, when I surely did.
 Thus I will never be content,
 His widow in death and in life.
 Although it does not compensate for my loss or my troubles,
 I am often a sure magnet,
 That pulls the nails out of foreign wood,

⁴¹Zenoni da Pistoia, 42–48 (6.8–44). References in parentheses are to chapter and tercet.

⁴²Of these men, Acciaiuoli, dell'Abbaco, and del Garbo are buried in Florentine territory, while da Strada is buried in Avignon and Donati in Padua. Petrarch's epitaph for Donati's tomb in Padua expressed Donati's and, perhaps, his own general dissatisfaction with Florence with the same irony of Zenoni's representation of the city: "Famous in Italy and on far away foreign shores / I lived unknown to my homeland [*patria*], which perhaps once I am buried / will desire my return. Chance will love him whom she scorned." Wilkins, 1959b, 269.

⁴³See Zenoni da Pistoia, 38 (5.22–27).

And I do not know how to keep my own, so wretched I am.
So if I cry, it very well seems that I deserve it.⁴⁴

Zenoni's lines belittle the city's feeling of attachment to the poet, inasmuch as its desire to bring him back is shared by every other city. At the same time, they parody the disappointment of many Florentines with their city's lack of appreciation for Petrarch while alive and its lack of effort to bring him back to his ancestral city, just as Marsili had expressed to Del Palagio with a more consoling tone in his earlier letter.

After Petrarch's ascension, Zenoni concludes his poem with an encomium of his patron, Francesco da Carrara, and of the village of Arquà. He signals his awareness of the precariousness of Petrarch's resting place there:

And you, Arquà, what kind of rule
Will you follow regarding such a treasure,
Whose form you held both dead and alive?
I do not know if celebration or lamentation will come to you,
Since one side brings as evidence its loss,
And the other, in you, gives record of his death.
You cover the bones, which, despite their love and prayers,
Great cities were not able to cover,
And they will be envious of you.
So you can see yourself gain noble status
On that mountain, which is the most famous
Among all the others in poetic speech.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid., 55 (7.45–50): “E credendo io per pianto, o per martire, / Per orazion, vigilie, o caritate, / O per tesoro, questo far venire, / Di morto vivo nella mia cittade, / Obbligata sarebbi a tanto fare, / Ma tutto il mondo per giusta pietade. / Ma poi che questo non può meritare / Alcuna vita, fo come colei, / Che l'è negato ciò, che vorria fare. / E se nol vorsi pur quando potei, / Il peccato si purga, come sai, / Ch' altri non volse, quando pur volei. / Ond'io contenta non sarò giammai, / Vedova della morte e della vita. / Benché il danno non ristori [né] i guai, / I' son talvolta ferma calamita, / Che traggio i chiovi degli strani legni, / E' mie' non so tener, sì sono unita; / Perché s'i' piango, ben mi par che 'l degni.” Cf. BML Plut. 90 sup. 139, fols. 31^v–32^r.

⁴⁵Zenoni da Pistoia, 88 (13.11–14): “E tu, Arquà, di che maniera norma / Per te si seguirà di tal tesoro, / Che morto e vivo ne tenesti forma? / Io non so se ti segue o canto o poloro, / Ché l'una parte manifesta il danno, / E l'altra in te suo morte fa notoro. / Tu cuopri l'ossa, che coprir non àno / Potuto, per amore o per pregare, / Le gran città, che invidia te n'aranno. / Così veder ti puoi nobilitare / Appresso di quel monte, ch' à più fama / Tra gli altri nel poetico volgare.” Cf. BML Plut. 90 sup. 139, fol. 43^v, in which the first line reads “E tu Arqua diche marina norma.” Medin, 427–30n1, however, reconstructs the line as “E tu, Arquà, di: che maniera [e] norma.” In the absence of a critical edition, I have chosen to follow Zambrini's text.

While the village may want to celebrate its new status,⁴⁶ it will have to argue to maintain its legal right to keep Petrarch's body. Another party will claim that they have suffered a *danno* (loss or damage), recalling Florence's lament about her own *danno* from earlier in the poem. Zenoni knows that the envy of other cities will lead Arquà into a dispute with them, but also that this same envy will allow it to acquire a reputation that will reach as far as Mount Parnassus. In the lines that follow, after referring to a no-longer-extant vernacular composition sent to Arquà by Boccaccio,⁴⁷ Zenoni warns Arquà about the pretensions of these other cities:

And if you threaten other cities with your glory,
 You have good reason, but know how to keep him,
 Because I seem to see that others seek
 To be able to celebrate that body with more honor
 In their city, just as is fitting
 For the powerful to let themselves desire.

 Death, in [Petrarch's] words, has given you
 Such a body, therefore it is right that
 What you hold be left to you.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Sacchetti, 301 (*Rime* 173.130–34), seems to respond to this sentiment in his canzone on Petrarch's death, echoing from a Florentine perspective Zenoni's provincial lines about Arquà's future fame: "There is a single place on earth that celebrates / his death; and the reason for this is / that his tomb is being built. / O village of Arquà, what could ever add to your fame / once you have such a relic?"

⁴⁷Zenoni da Pistoia, 89 (13.15): "Already you are called by the great poetic speech / Of the Florentine Messer Giovanni Boccaccio, / Who glorifies you as the pride of Bacchus and Apollo." Medin believes the reference is to Boccaccio's letter to Brossano, discussed below, while Feo hypothesizes that these lines possibly refer to lost verses. Boccaccio's letter makes no mention of Bacchus or Apollo, nor does it represent Arquà in a positive light. The only surviving verse composition to be sent to Padua by Boccaccio is his *Versus ad Affricam* (*Carmina* 9). While he mentions both Apollo (9.108 and 9.131) and Bacchus (9.78) in the *Versus*, he does not do so in reference to Arquà nor does he address the city in positive terms. See Boccaccio, 1992, 446, 448. Since Boccaccio had not yet written his letter to Brossano, or his poem to the *Africa*, it seems more probable that Zenoni is referring to a lost poem in the vernacular—he did not read Latin—sent to Petrarch before his death. See Medin, 427n1a; Feo, 34–35.

⁴⁸Zenoni da Pistoia, 89 (13:16–17, 21): "E se di gloria gli altri tu minacci, / Tu ài ben onde, ma sappil tenere, / Perchè mi par veder ch'altre procacci / Con più onore quel corpo potere / Ornar nella città, sì che conviensi / Chi à la possa si lassi volere. / . . . / La morte per suo bocca t'è dotato / Di tanto corpo, dunque per cagione, / Che ciò che tieni ti venga lassato." Cf. BML Plut. 90 sup. 139, fols. 43^v–44^r.

With the mention of Boccaccio set between the claim of Arquà's new poetic glory and the description of the threat that it represents to other cities, which envy Arquà and desire to honor Petrarch's body, it is plausible to read these lines as a reference to the Florentine sentiments documented above. The only city to express envy for Arquà within the *Pietosa fonte* is, in fact, Florence.⁴⁹ The legal norm that would substantiate Arquà's claim to remain Petrarch's burial site is, of course, Petrarch's testament, which stipulated that he be buried in the place where he died.⁵⁰

Finally, in opposition to anyone who would take away Petrarch's body, Zenoni exhorts Arquà to trust in the good sense of Francescuolo da Brossano and in Petrarch's affection for Francesco da Carrara. He reiterates the ties of family and patronage that linked Petrarch to Arquà, remarking that Brossano, husband to Petrarch's natural daughter, Francesca, will make the final decision about his place of burial. Zenoni is hopeful that Brossano will make a prudent choice in consultation with da Carrara, who would naturally influence the outcome of any debate. Arquà, in the end, could remain hopeful that these individuals would respect Petrarch's wishes.⁵¹ Along with the philo-Florentine testimonials, the

⁴⁹In many ways, Zenoni's poem is directed toward Florence. For example, in chapter 12, at the end of the dream vision, when Petrarch's ascension into heaven is celebrated, Zenoni pauses to describe ironically Florence's misery: "When Florence, and her contingent, saw taken / From before her eyes, that son whom she loved so much, / The pain inside her appeared on her face. / She started to lament and cry so terribly / With her eyes, her hands, and her sighs, / That it kept her from hearing that song." Zenoni da Pistoia, 82 (12.11–12). Cf. BML Plut. 90 sup. 139, fol. 41^v.

⁵⁰Dated 9 April 1370 and drafted in anticipation of a trip to Rome that almost ended in disaster, Petrarch's testament stipulated that he be buried modestly in one of eight churches in seven cities, depending on where he died: Arquà was the second on the list of places where Petrarch foresaw his final resting place—Sant'Agostino in Padua, Santa Maria in Arquà, San Francesco della Vigna in Venice, Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, Sant'Agostino in Pavia, and Santa Maria Maggiore or San Pietro in Rome, among his habitual dwelling places. The cathedral in Parma, where he was "a useless and almost always absent archdeacon," concluded the list, but Florence was not among "those places in Italy in which [he was] accustomed to dwell" (Petrarch, 1957, 74–75, modified). It is worth noting that Petrarch's stipulation of seven cities presents an uncanny parallel with the legend of the seven cities that competed for the honor of being Homer's place of origin.

⁵¹Zenoni da Pistoia, 90–91 (13.33–38): "But the final decision belongs to Francescuolo, / Such a discrete and virtuous young man, / Who, as Petrarch's son-in-law, can be called his son. / And he, who is prudent and gracious, / With the decision about this proceeds to seek out / Honor for the father of she whom he married: / The taking and the keeping, as I see it, is theirs. / But whatever they advise about it is always / in consultation with the Carrarese lord, / Who, when Petrarch was alive, always loved him, / Just as he loves him after death. So greatly did / All of Petrarch's efforts, which you have heard, please him, / And as if it were a debt for his great love [of Petrarch], / He obeys each demand / That is related to his wise honor. / It seems that the outcome is still open, / O gracious Arquà, so may your worried thoughts / Be comforted with gentle hope." Cf. BML Plut. 90 sup. 139, fol. 44^v.

Pietosa fonte demonstrates the tenuous political situation surrounding Petrarch's final place of burial. Zenoni's perspective, like that of Quatrario, Del Palagio, and the Florentines to whom Salutati's letter to Guidi responds, is markedly provincial. His concerns with Petrarch's body and the fame associated with it are circumscribed by an *amor patriae* that stops at the boundary of the tiny village of Arquà. It is within this galvanized context that Boccaccio writes his letter to Brossano about how to honor properly the memory of Petrarch. If in their letters Salutati and Marsili had already tried to diffuse the tensions in Florentine circles caused by such a provincial mindset by spiritualizing the concerns about Petrarch's body, Boccaccio would intervene directly in the situation in Padua, while at the same time theorizing an intellectual entombment and cosmopolitan reception of Petrarch based in Florence.

PLACING PETRARCH IN FLORENCE: BOCCACCIO'S COSMOPOLITAN CULTURAL POLITICS

Just after Zenoni composed his poem, a copy of which may have been sent to Florence,⁵² on October 20, Boccaccio received the first official notification of Petrarch's death from Francescuolo da Brossano. Boccaccio's last surviving letter, dated November 3, is written in response to Brossano. Besides its employment of the typical consolatory and eulogistic tropes common to all of the compositions about Petrarch's death, Boccaccio's letter primarily addresses the nature of Petrarch's tomb and his connection to Florence and Arquà. His words to Petrarch's son-in-law, as Jonathan Usher has noticed, are "far from being a spontaneous outpouring of grief," but the letter is also not merely a "carefully composed piece of consolatory rhetoric."⁵³ Instead, Boccaccio both communicates in his missive a warning against building an elaborate tomb for Petrarch in Arquà and makes clear that in Florence he has in mind a different kind of monument for his friend.

While scholars have mostly taken this letter at its word, reading it as an expression of consolation by a wise old friend who communicates his concern for the works of his teacher Petrarch,⁵⁴ most recently Usher has pointed out that Boccaccio's concern for the written works of Petrarch and his seeming rejection of the idea of a tomb for Petrarch fit the paradigm that he had used for the repatriation and monumentalization of the memory and works of Dante earlier in his career: that is, in the absence of

⁵²BML Plut. 90 sup. 139 dates to this period and it seems that both Sacchetti and Boccaccio were aware of the subject of the poem, or at least of the ideology that it expresses, even if they do not directly acknowledge it.

⁵³Usher, 1.

⁵⁴See, e.g., Billanovich, 291–94; Bianca, 305–06.

a body for a tomb, he aims at a monument made by biography and commentary on the author's works.⁵⁵ Although Boccaccio was indeed concerned with the fate of Petrarch's works, the kind of monument that he suggests goes beyond the mere collection and annotation of them. Boccaccio lays the foundations for an intellectual entombment of Petrarch in Florence by distinguishing the Florentine reception of Petrarch from that in Arquà and Padua.

The letter opens with a reference to the exact date when Boccaccio received Brossano's letter announcing Petrarch's death, almost three months after the fact:

I received your tearful letter on October 20, dearest brother. Since I did not recognize the handwriting, I broke the seal and looked immediately at the name of the sender. As soon as I read your name, I knew what I would read in your letter: that is, the happy passing of our excellent father and teacher Francesco Petrarch from the earthly Babylon to the heavenly Jerusalem. None of our friends had written to me about it except for you, but to my greatest sadness, I had heard about it some time ago since almost the entire crowd was already proclaiming it. For a number of days, almost without stopping, I had wept over it—not for his ascension, but rather because I saw myself miserable and abandoned. This shouldn't be a surprise; no mortal was more attached to him than I.⁵⁶

Besides the consolatory reference to the happiness of Petrarch's passing out of the exile of life, which echoes the Neoplatonism of *Salutati's* anecdote about Hermes Trismegistus, Boccaccio pointedly notes that he only received Brossano's letter three months after his friend's death. Since none of their common friends had written to him either, in the meantime Boccaccio found out about it from the *vulgus predicans* (proclaiming crowd), which was scorned by Petrarch for most of his life. The preaching of the people is precisely what Petrarch had sought to avoid when he decided not to join Boccaccio in Florence in 1353.

⁵⁵See Usher, 1–4.

⁵⁶Boccaccio, 1992, 724 (*Epistole* 24.1): “Flebilem epistolam tuam pridie XIII kalendas novembris, amantissime frater, suscepi, cuius cum scribentis manum non noscerem, soluto nexu confestim in mittentis nomen oculos inieci, et quam cito nomen tuum legi, sensi quid in eadem lecturus eram: felicem scilicet transitum incliti patris et preceptoris nostri Francisci Petrarce ex terrestri Babilone in celestem Ierusalem, quem, esto amicorum nullus te preter ad me scripserit, iam dudum vulgo omni fere iam predicante maximo dolore meo audiveram et dies plusculos quasi sine interpositione fleveram; non enim ascensum, sed quoniam me miserum destitutumque viderem. Nec mirum: nemo mortalium me magis illi fuit obnoxius.”

After their first meeting, Boccaccio and Petrarch had experienced a political disagreement linked to Petrarch's refusal to take up residence in Florence, where he thought the crowd made the government unstable and isolated. Petrarch preferred the rigid political structure of the courts of Northern Italian princes, where his livelihood was more secure and where he could have a direct impact on international events, rather than the more volatile political situation of a republic like Florence. Boccaccio, however, was dedicated to the more chaotic and diverse political environment of the republic, where he fostered culture through the promotion of the city's greatest writers in Latin and the vernacular alongside instruction in ancient Greek and other disciplines.⁵⁷ Such different political and cultural affinities manifest themselves in their respective poetics, with Petrarch's well-known program of creating a new Roman culture and Boccaccio's championing of a hybrid vernacular culture, each of which appear in their epistolary exchanges, especially those regarding Dante and the vernacular.⁵⁸ In the letter to Brossano, therefore, the reference to the crowd immediately evokes a charged element of their complicated relationship and gives the letter both a political and a poetic valence.⁵⁹

The question of Dante and the vernacular, in fact, is central to the way in which Boccaccio is approaching Petrarch's legacy here. He mentions his lectures on Dante, continuing the letter in a similar vein by bringing up another typical Petrarchan nemesis—physicians. Boccaccio would have gone to Petrarch's funeral, but he was sick at the time: "But the tenth month had already passed since I was reading publicly in the city Dante's *Comedy* and I was struck with a dangerous illness that was longer and more tedious than any other crisis. While, for four months, by the insistence of friends, I was following the advice of I won't say doctors, but quacks, it continually grew worse. In fact, with potions and fasts my nutritive power was forced out of orbit from its usual order, with the result that I became so weak it is hardly believable to whoever has not experienced it, as is clear enough to whoever sees how I look."⁶⁰ By dating his

⁵⁷On the debate on culture between Petrarch and Boccaccio and its political valences, see Lummus, 2013. The political differences between Boccaccio and Petrarch are well known, if underestimated. That they lasted across the life of their friendship is evinced by Petrarch's response to Boccaccio's lost critique of his association with princes in *Sen.* 17.2, dated 27 April 1373: Petrarch, 1992, 2:644–54. See *ibid.*, 2:650, for Petrarch's reference to this critique.

⁵⁸E.g., Petrarch, 1985, 2:202–07 (*Rerum Familiarum Libri [Fam.]* 21.15).

⁵⁹On Boccaccio's poetics, see Kriesel; Lummus, 2015.

⁶⁰Boccaccio, 1992, 724 (*Epistole* 24.3): "Verum iam decimus elapsus est mensis postquam in patria publice legentem *Comediam* Dantis magis longa atque tediosa quam discrimine aliquo dubia egritudo oppressit, et dum per quatuor menses, non dicam medicorum sed fabulorum, amicorum impulsu, consilia sequor, continue aucta est, et potionibus et ieiuniis adeo a solito ordine exorbitare coacta est nutritiva virtus, ut in debilitatem devenerim fere inexperto credibilem, cui satis fidem prestat aspectus meus videntibus."

own illness in relation to his lectures on Dante, Boccaccio establishes himself politically and culturally within a different group than that of Petrarch's Paduan followers, setting the tone for the rest of the letter. The reference to following the advice of friends to see a doctor situates Boccaccio within his own circle of friends in Florence and Certaldo. Although Boccaccio had no special admiration for doctors, which is clear from his use of the term *fabulones* (quacks),⁶¹ he stages his recourse to their cures within the purview of friendship: Boccaccio follows the suggestions of friends, even if the consequences on his body turn out to be less than optimal.⁶² Unlike Boccaccio, Petrarch had insisted on continuing his intellectual labor despite his bad health and against the advice of Boccaccio himself, who, in his final letter to his friend in 1373, had asked him to desist and try to live longer out of love for his friends.⁶³

This paragraph is followed by a description of the pitiful state of Boccaccio's bodily health, which Tobias Gittes has connected to Boccaccio's representation of himself as a Prometheus-like civilizing figure, or culture hero.⁶⁴ According to Gittes, in his late sonnets Boccaccio's view of his debilitating illness as divine retribution for having "vilely prostrated the Muses / in the brothels of the miserable crowd" is not a sign of capitulation to critics of his public readings and explanations of the *Commedia's* allegorical significance, but rather "a sophisticated bid to displace blame from himself to his critics while simultaneously enhancing

⁶¹The term, related to the verb *fabulor* (to talk; to invent a story), is defined by Augustine of Hippo, 49, in the *De Haeresibus* (88) as denoting "those who weave stories just as empty as they are long and entangled." In Boccaccio, 1998, 8:1390, 1410, 1500 (*Genealogie* 14.5.9, 14.9.1, 14.22.4), it is mentioned as one of the derogatory names (spinners of tales) given to poets by critics.

⁶²The reference to physicians may also hint at the manner in which Petrarch was rumored to have died. In a fourteenth-century marginal annotation to *Fam.* 21.10.19, in Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, MS 9476–9478, an anonymous commentator writes about the circumstances of Petrarch's death: "The author so scorned doctors and medicine both in the books he composed and in reality, that, according to master Guglielmo da Ravenna, who lived in Venice and who was a great friend of this author, he suffered a seizure and he seemed to sleep for many hours as if he had died; and that master himself along with master Giovanni dell'Orologio wanted to issue a remedy for such a dangerous sickness, but, mocking them, [Petrarch] never cared to listen to them, and thus in his studio in Arquà he died from said illness, which was nevertheless curable, just like a beast without last rites, because no one saw him as he was dying." Billanovich and Peregrin, 226.

⁶³See Petrarch, 1992, 2:652–53 (*Sen.* 17.2).

⁶⁴See Gittes, 168. Descriptions of his physical ailments, real as they may have been, often form a part of Boccaccio's self-representation, such as in *Carmina* 7, addressed to Zanobi da Strada, and in *Epistole* 21, addressed to Mainardo Cavalcanti. See Boccaccio, 1992, 436–38, 690–98 (*Carmina* 7.13–36; *Epistole* 21).

his own stature.”⁶⁵ In sonnet 122, Boccaccio evokes his bodily state in a way that is echoed in his later letter:

It matters not if I am reproached anymore
 For such offenses, because Apollo
 Has taken cruel vengeance for them on my body
 Such that every body part hurts from it.
 He has made me turn from a man into a bag,
 Not full of wind, but heavy with lead
 So much that I can barely move.
 I do not hope ever to heal from such a malady,
 As it has surrounded me on every side;
 But I know well that God can help me.⁶⁶

The skin removed from Marsyas's body after being flayed by Apollo becomes the bag of winds given to Odysseus by Aeolus to arrive more quickly in Ithaca. Odysseus's men opened it in the mistaken belief that there was treasure inside, but it only caused them to be blown farther off course.⁶⁷ The bag that Boccaccio has become here, however, is filled with a heavy lead that prevents him from moving. Boccaccio is setting himself up as the sacrificial victim of the god of poetry, who punishes him for his hubris at having brought knowledge to the people.

Thus, in the letter to Brossano, Boccaccio describes his own state in stark contrast to that of Petrarch:

The skin of my entire, once full body is deflated. Its color has changed. My eyes are dull. My knees falter and my hands have become shaky. So, not to speak of the proud heights of the Apennines, but hardly all the way to my

⁶⁵Boccaccio, 1992, 95 (*Rime* 122.1–2): “le Muse vilmente prostrate / nelle fornice del vulgo dolente.” Gittes, 298n47; cf. Bruni, 470.

⁶⁶Boccaccio, 1992, 95 (*Rime* 122.5–11): “non cal che più mi sien rimproverate / sì fatte offese, perché crudelmente / Appollo nel mio corpo l'ha vengiate / in guisa tal, ch'ogni membro ne sente. / Ei m'ha d'uom fatto un otre divinire, / non pien di vento ma di piombo grave / tanto, ch'appena mi posso mutare.”

⁶⁷Boccaccio is referring to the punishment of Marsyas recounted in Ovid, 1:314–15 (*Metamorphoses* 6.382–90), surely with Dante's reemployment of the image at the beginning of *Paradiso* in mind: “come into my breast and breathe there, as when you drew Marsyas forth from the sheath of his members”: Dante, 23 (*Paradiso* 1.19–21). The bag of winds (*uter* in Latin, *otre* in Italian), to which he refers in the *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*, is taken directly from Boccaccio's reading of Homer's *Odyssey*. See Boccaccio, 1998, 7:1142 (*Genealogie* 11.40.6).

ancestral territory of Certaldo have I been escorted, by the decision of some friends, away from my homeland. And here, half alive and worried, rotting from inaction and uncertain of myself, I exist, waiting for medicine and grace from God who alone can command fevers. . . . [Petrarch] has cast aside the afflictions of this wretched life and has flown away into the sight of the highest Father and is enjoying his Christ and eternal glory; but he has left me and his friends in this tumultuous land, not otherwise than a ship without a captain while it is being tossed about by winds and waves among the rocks.⁶⁸

Like Petrarch, Boccaccio has been moved away from his *patria*, but only to his ancestral lands in Certaldo and not to the Apennines, where Petrarch could have relocated at the behest of friends. While Boccaccio is confined to the deflated sack of his sickly body, however, in death Petrarch was finally able to escape the flesh and become pure spirit. If in the sonnet Boccaccio is a disastrous bag of lead that keeps his ship from arriving in port, then in the letter the same ship is left without a captain by Petrarch's death. The rhetorical development of the opening paragraphs of the letter—from the crowd to Dante to Boccaccio's illness—evokes Boccaccio's own cultural politics and poetics in a way that sets his activities apart from those of the men who attend to Petrarch's tomb in Arquà. Yet, at the same time, Boccaccio's distinct cultural project, his ship, is depicted as connected to and even reliant upon Petrarch.⁶⁹

In the longest section of the letter, Boccaccio addresses the most pressing question for him and his Florentine friends—Petrarch's place of burial and the nature of his tomb:

You add that he concluded his time in the village of Arquà in the Paduan countryside and that he ordered his ashes to be delivered to perpetual rest in the same village, and that you will erect a beautiful and magnificent tomb in his eternal memory. Alas! I confess my crime, if it must be called a crime: as a Florentine, I envy Arquà, seeing that by the humility of another rather than

⁶⁸Boccaccio, 1992, 724–26 (*Epistole* 24.5–6): “Exhausta totius pleni quondam corporis pellis est, immutatus color, hebetatus visus, titubant genua et manus tremule facte sunt, ex quo, nedum superbos Appennini vertices, sed vix usque in avitum Certaldi agrum amicorum quorundam suffragio deductus e patria sum, ubi semivivus et anxius, ocio marciens et mei ipsius incertus consisto, Dei solius, qui febribus imperare potest, medelam expectans et gratiam. . . . [Petrarca] dimissis erumnis misere vite huius in conspectu summi Patris evolaverit et ibidem Christo suo et eterna fruatur gloria; sed michi amicisque suis in hoc estuoso solo relictis, non aliter quam absque gubernaculo undis et ventis inter scopulos agitata navis.”

⁶⁹On Boccaccio's representation of his cultural project, namely in the *Genealogie*, as a vessel at sea, see Lummus, 2013.

by its own merit so brilliant a happiness was saved for it, that it has been assigned the safeguarding of the body of him, whose egregious breast was the most welcome dwelling place of the Muses and of all Helicon, the most beloved sanctuary of philosophy and most abundant and outstanding honor of the liberal arts, and especially of that which regards Ciceronian eloquence, as his writings clearly demonstrate.⁷⁰

Usher has noted that Brossano's proposal to build a tomb for Petrarch was "directly counter to Petrarch's own will and testament, which specifically stipulated modest, humble burial."⁷¹ Whether or not Boccaccio knew of the stipulations of Petrarch's testament, he is acutely aware that Petrarch's body, which once housed all his learning when alive, will grant to little Arquà—with or without a tomb—a civic significance of historic proportion. For Boccaccio, it is a sign of Petrarch's humility that he chose to be buried in Arquà, and not of some merit specific to the location. In this he echoes the worries of his compatriots and tries to deflate the importance of Petrarch's patrons and followers in Padua.

Boccaccio finds that Arquà's insignificance is ironically appropriate, comparing it with the modest burial places of Virgil, Ovid, and Homer: "For this, Arquà—which is almost unknown to Paduans, not to mention foreigners and remote nations—will be recognized and its name will be prized by the whole world, not otherwise than we mentally cherish the hills of Posillipo even if we have never seen them, since the bones of Virgil are located at their roots; it will be honored like Tomis and Phasis, the extreme locales of the Black Sea that hold the tomb of Pelignian Naso, and Homer's Smirna, and other similar places."⁷² The place of burial, although humble, becomes the monument itself of the poet in the imaginations of readers. Precisely because Arquà is unknown to the world, including the nearby Paduans, any significance that it acquires will be associated

⁷⁰Boccaccio, 1992, 726–28 (*Epistole* 24.11–12): "Superaddis eum apud Arquade vicum in agro patavino clausisse diem et in eadem villula iussisse cineres suos perpetue quieti tradi, teque illi erecturum in memoriam sempiternam sepulchrum speciosum atque magnificum. Heu michi! crimen fateor meum, si crimen dicendum est: invideo Florentinus Arquati, videns illi aliena humilitate magis quam suo merito tam claram felicitatem fuisse servatam, ut sibi commissa custodia sit corporis eius, cuius egregium pectus acceptissimum Musarum et totius Helyconis habitaculum fuit, amantissimum phylosophie sacrarium artiumque liberalium abundantissimum et spectabile decus, et potissime eius quod ad ciceronianam spectat facundiam, ut liquido sua testantur scripta."

⁷¹Usher, 2.

⁷²Boccaccio, 1992, 728 (*Epistole* 24.13): "Ex quo fere Arquas incognita Patavinis, nedum exteris atque longiniquis nationibus, cognoscetur et orbi toto eius erit nomen in precio, eo quod eorum nos Posilipi colles etiam invisos mente colimus, nec aliter quam in radicibus locata sint ossa Virgilii, et Tomitaniam Phasinque euxinii maris extrema loca tenentia busta peligni Nasonis, ac Smirnas Homeri, et alia similia honorabitur."

with Petrarch. One need not even see or know the place in order to venerate it. Yet Boccaccio was also fully aware that Virgil was known as a Mantuan, that Ovid was, in fact, Pelignian, and that multiple cities claimed to be Homer's birthplace;⁷³ so Petrarch, too, would end up surpassing his modest place of burial through an association with his ancestral *patria*.

Boccaccio goes on to imagine that the sailor returning from the farthest reaches of the ocean will return to the Adriatic Sea and, gazing at the Euganean Hills, will declare: "Here we see the hills that hold in their depths the glory of the world, who was once the temple of all dogmas, Petrarch, the sweet-singing poet, and who was long ago crowned by command of the Senate with the triumphal laurel in the nourishing city of Rome, and so many of his praiseworthy books remain, such brilliant testimony of most holy fame!"⁷⁴ Here, Arquà disappears and becomes the general geographic area of its surroundings, which comes to represent the Rome that had crowned Petrarch poet laureate and the point of origin of his books and his fame, just as Badoer had declared in his oration. As such, the village will attract people from all over the world: "Perhaps at some point the black Indian or the fierce Spaniard or Sarmatian will come, attracted by the admiration of his holy name, and they will look at the tomb of the great man and will pay their respects with pious reverence to the hidden remains."⁷⁵ Because of Petrarch, Arquà will become the center of the world, despite the importance of Rome as the city representative of Petrarch's project of cultural renewal and despite the fact that his ancestors were Florentine.

For Boccaccio, Florence—an unhappy homeland—deserves its fate of being denied the honor of safeguarding Petrarch's ashes because it is unworthy.⁷⁶ He notes, however, with a phrase reminiscent of Marsili's closing words to *Del Palagio*, but more final in its acceptance of Florence's reality: "I would have preferred, nevertheless, whatever you may be, that the honor had been granted to you rather than to Arquà."⁷⁷ Echoing the hagiographical formulations from

⁷³See Boccaccio, 1998, 8:1486, 1488 (*Genealogie* 14.19.9, 13).

⁷⁴Boccaccio, 1992, 728 (*Epistole* 24.14): "Ecce videmus colles suis in visceribus servantes orbis decus et olim dogmatum omnium templum Petrarcam vatem dulciloquum, iamdudum ex senatusconsulto in alma Urbe triumphali insignitum laurea, cuius tot extant laudanda volumina, tam clara sanctissime fame preconia!"

⁷⁵*Ibid.* (*Epistole* 24.15): "Venient et forsan aliquando niger Yndus aut ferox Hispanus vel Sauromata, sacri nominis admiratione tracti, et tam egregii hominis tumulum spectantes pia cum reverentia conditas salutabunt reliquias."

⁷⁶*Ibid.* (*Epistole* 24.16): "Alas, unhappy homeland, to whom it was not conceded to keep the ashes of such an illustrious son, to whom such a bright glory has been denied. Truly you are unworthy of so much splendor."

⁷⁷*Ibid.* (*Epistole* 24.17): "Mallem tamen, qualiscunque sis, tibi hic quam Arquati contigisset honor."

a few lines earlier, Boccaccio clarifies the relationship between Florence and Petrarch by explicitly recalling Christ's words when he is rejected in Nazareth: "Thus it happened that the old truthful saying was confirmed, 'No one is accepted as a prophet in his homeland.'" ⁷⁸ By representing Florence as Petrarch's Nazareth, Boccaccio places the blame for Petrarch's absence onto the Florentines and reverses the story of Petrarch's rejection of the city of his ancestors. Yet, he also implicitly asserts that Florence is, in fact, Petrarch's *patria*.

Immediately following this phrase, however, Boccaccio reverses the analogy, associating Nazareth with Arquà and representing Florence as Petrarch's Jerusalem: "He nevertheless was able to avoid this intentionally, in imitation of the humility of Christ, his lord and redeemer, who wanted to grant the honor of his carnal origin to the Nazarenes rather than to the Jerusalemites, and preferred to have a poor but holy virgin as a mother rather than the important and proud queens of that age." ⁷⁹ By choosing his place of burial in humble Arquà, ⁸⁰ Boccaccio insinuates, Petrarch's intentional *imitatio Christi* inverts the circumstances of Christ's places of ancestral origin and of death. And yet, at the same time, Boccaccio's description of Petrarch's humility resounds with irony, since he has already told his reader that in Arquà Petrarch's resting place would become the sole focus of the pilgrims from near and far. By recognizing the significance of Petrarch's modest burial site for posterity and by proposing Christ's perfect humility as a model, Boccaccio subtly indicates that at the heart of Petrarch's intentional humility lay his well-known quest for fame. In Arquà his tomb would not have to compete with the many holy places of Rome, with the tombs of Ambrose in Milan, Augustine or Boethius in Pavia, or with those of Jacopo da Carrara in Padua or Azzo da Correggio in Parma—all places in which he imagined in his testament that he could have been buried. Boccaccio cuts to the core of Petrarch's own self-fashioning and of the civic refashioning of his reputation as a secular saint, unraveling the rhetoric of praise that envelops the figure of Petrarch in the various responses. The

⁷⁸Ibid.: "Sic factum est, ut vetus veritatis servaretur sententia: Nemo susceptus est propheta in patria sua."

⁷⁹Ibid., 728–30 (*Epistole* 24.18): "Potuit tamen et ipse consilio vitasse, imitaturus humilitate magistrum et redemptorem suum Christum, qui originis sue secundum carnem Nazarenis magis quam Ierosolymitanis ornatum concessisse voluit, maluitque pauperem virgunculam sed sanctissimam in matrem quam pregrandes evo eo reginas sed superbas habere."

⁸⁰By April 1370, Arquà had become Petrarch's home. In the time between then and his death, he was often in Padua, but traveled outside of Paduan territory only once, to Venice, in September 1373. In the spring of 1372, Brossano and Petrarch's daughter Francesca moved to Arquà to care for him. Between November 1372 and February 1373, they briefly resided in Petrarch's small canonical house in Padua before returning definitively to Arquà. Petrarch must have been all but certain that he would, in fact, die and be buried in Arquà or Padua. See Wilkins, 1959b, 141–271. See also Zenoni da Pistoia, 89 (*Pietosa fonte* 13.18). Thus, the list of six other cities named in his testament as possible burial sites should be considered a largely rhetorical gesture.

gap between Christ's choice of carnal origin, as Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, and Petrarch's choice of mortal resting place, as Petrarch buried-in-Arquà, points to a further, redemptive irony in Boccaccio's critique of Florence. If, like the Nazarenes, Florence is arrogant, in Boccaccio's convoluted analogy it also plays the role of Jerusalem, the location of Christ's resurrection. This suggests that the origin of the secular eternity of Petrarch's legacy, analogous here to the eternity of hope offered by Christ's death and resurrection, would be in Florence.

At this point, Boccaccio turns to the symbolic representation of such hope by addressing Brossano's plans to build a tomb:

I also praise that a tomb will be built for him: for the height of his brilliance and the magnificence of his works deserve it. It is believable enough, however, that in the perception of erudite men it will be of small importance, since the virtues of the man buried, not the ornaments of cadavers, are considered by such men, for whom thus far he made himself brighter than the sun with his many volumes; but it will be a monument for the ignorant. For sculptures and paintings are the books of the ignorant, and furthermore the cause of finding out who is so great a man as to lie in it, what his merits are, what his glories; and while a response will be given to such men, doubtlessly the glory of our most excellent old man will be enlarged somewhat.⁸¹

Boccaccio cautions Brossano that a magnificent tomb, not unlike that imagined by Quatrario, will not impress the circle of men that surrounded Petrarch in Padua and that followed him from afar. A tomb would have other effects, however, that would be both culturally edificatory and ironically beneficial to Petrarch's worldly glory among the illiterate crowd. Boccaccio's suggestion that the ignorant would benefit from a funerary monument to Petrarch is more in tune with Boccaccio's vernacular poetics than with Petrarch's cultivation of an elite Neo-Latin cultural revival of ancient Rome. Such a tomb would amount to the vernacularization of Petrarch's largely Latin legacy.

These lines clearly allude to Gregory the Great's highly influential and well-known late sixth-century explanation to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, who had destroyed sacred images in his churches. Gregory had responded by arguing that pictures are like a form of visual writing for the illiterate and so the bishop should

⁸¹Boccaccio, 1992, 730 (*Epistole* 24.20–21): “Sepulcrum autem illi erigi laudo: celsitudo enim fulgoris sui et operum suorum magnificentia meruere. Satis tamen credibile est quoniam in conspectu eruditorum parvi momenti erit, cum sepulti virtutes, non ornamenta cadaverum prospectentur a talibus, quibus ipse se sole clariorem hactenus multis in voluminibus fecit; verum ignaris erit monumentum. Horum enim libri sculpture sunt atque picture, et insuper causa percunctandi quisnam tam grandis in eo iaceat homo, que illius merita, qui splendores; et dum responsum talibus dabitur, procul dubio ampliabitur aliquo prestantissimi senis gloria.”

not destroy them.⁸² Boccaccio inverts Gregory's warning to Serenus, however, praising Brossano for his efforts to instruct the ignorant, while counseling that a sculptured tomb would be of no interest for fully literate intellectuals. Instead, if such a tomb might be insignificant in Padua, it would be appropriate, if anywhere, in Florence, where Boccaccio had been lecturing on the recondite meanings of Dante's *Commedia* for the benefit of the multitude. Boccaccio's arguments are carefully constructed and, in fact, resonate with his self-representation in the opening paragraphs of the letter as a culture hero who sacrificed himself for the vulgar crowd. Just as he was revealing the complex, hidden meanings of the *Commedia* to all Florentines, so he imagines a tomb that might reveal the profound cultural importance of Petrarch's life and work to all viewers.

If Boccaccio praises Brossano's intentions to build a tomb in order to defend and draw attention to his own poetics and cultural politics, he nevertheless seeks to dissuade him from going through with it by asking him to consider an example from the past: "But let me recall one thing to your memory. Famous men lie more honorably in an unknown tomb than in a less distinguished one, if it is known; and so that you should see this, reflect on what Fortune did with Pompey the Great."⁸³ Boccaccio is recalling to Brossano's memory a story he had written about in the *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (On the misfortunes of famous men). It was well known: a eunuch betrayed the Roman leader, had him beheaded, and threw his body into the sea. Pompey ends up being burned on a funeral pyre and buried with only a single man to honor him, but the rumor of his burial along the coast of Egypt transforms the entire coastline along the delta of the Nile into his tomb. Boccaccio had told the story in the *De Casibus* to show how Fortune had made up for her poor treatment of the great man at the end of his life. He concluded it, however, with the notion that had Pompey died earlier in Rome, he would have received all of the funerary pomp due to a hero.⁸⁴ In the

⁸²Gregory the Great, 1128–30 (*Epistolae* 11.13), 1128: "For what writing presents to those who can read, a picture presents to unlearned viewers, since in it the ignorant see what they ought to follow and in it those who do not know letters read. Whence chiefly for the common people, a picture stands in for reading." See also *ibid.*, 1027–28 (*Epistolae* 9.105).

⁸³Boccaccio, 1992, 730 (*Epistole* 24.23): "Sane in memoriam tuam unum revocari libet. Honorificentius iacent viri illustres in sepulcro incognito quam in minus egregio, si noscatur; et ut videas, volve tecum quid egerit cum Magno Pompeio Fortuna."

⁸⁴Boccaccio, 1983, 526–28 (*De Casibus* 6.9.30): "Oh, if he had fallen in his homeland [*patria*] only a little earlier, with what funeral pomp, with what tears of consuls, senators, and all citizens, by how many and what kind of fathers he would have been brought down to the pyre! And how many military insignia, how many arms and imperial and triumphal honors would have been cast upon him! How many praises sung and related before the rostra, with what piety his ashes collected! All of these honors, sought in life and lost in unhappy death, are covered by a small mound of sand in Egypt."

letter, Boccaccio tells essentially the same story of his burial, but modifies the conditional conclusion by comparing Pompey's potential funerary honor in Rome to that of King Mausolus made by Artemisia: "But if it had befallen him to die among his own people, considering the preeminence of the things he had done, I hardly believe that the famous tomb that Artemisia, queen of the Carii, once had constructed for her husband, King Mausolus, in Halicarnassus, would have been enough."⁸⁵ It is peculiar that Boccaccio brings up the story of Artemisia here in place of the ending from the *De Casibus*. There are two motivations behind his choice that result in two different interpretations of Boccaccio's example within separate political contexts.

First, Petrarch himself had already combined these two stories in the final dialogue of the *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae* (On the remedies for both kinds of fortune).⁸⁶ In the dialogue between Sadness and Reason concerning the dying man who is afraid of going unburied, Reason mentions the story of Pompey as evidence that burial does not bring happiness to the dead. Neither Crassus, whose life ended in ignominy, she says, nor Caesar, who was granted a great tomb in Rome, were any happier or sadder than Pompey. Reason concludes that "if a tomb could make one happy, no one could possibly be happier than Mausolus."⁸⁷ By recalling these stories to Brossano's memory, Boccaccio is advising him to cast aside his idea of building a tomb for Petrarch in Arquà by using Petrarch's own arguments against tomb building. Petrarch's desire that his body lie in a humble grave was the ultimate act of self-fashioning that would ensure the continuity of his persona after death.

The second reason that Boccaccio would combine these two stories concerns the nature of the tomb that Artemisia built for her husband. The story about the construction of the mausoleum was also a part of Boccaccio's own repertoire—in the chapter on Artemisia in the *De Mulieribus Claris* (On famous women), which refers to two entombments of Mausolus. Artemisia first ingests the ashes of her

⁸⁵Boccaccio, 1992, 730–32 (*Epistole* 24.25): "Si autem glorioso illi apud suos mori contigisset, considerata rerum gestarum ab eo preeminentia, vix credam satis illi fuisse insignem tumulum quem Arthemisia Cariorum regina Mausolo regi viro suo apud Alicarnassum erigi olim fecit."

⁸⁶The *De Remediis* was well known in Petrarch's Paduan circle. Badoer cites it in his oration and Zenoni mentions it in the *Pietosa fonte*. It was also among those of Petrarch's works in Boccaccio's library. For evidence of Boccaccio's possession of the full version of the *De Remediis*, see Mazza, 38. There is some debate on the history of the composition of the work, which has caused some to doubt that Boccaccio knew it in its entirety. See Petrarch, 1955, 1169–71, where Ricci explains the dating controversy, and makes a strong argument that the work was completed in 1366, after which it was subject to only minor revisions. See also Ricci. For a different, though less plausible composition history, see Heitmann.

⁸⁷Petrarch, 1991, 3:335; Petrarch, 2002a, 1:1142 (*De Remediis* 2.132.36): "Alioquin si sepulcro felix sit, nemo felicior Mausolo."

husband because she “thought there was no receptacle more suitable for so beloved a spouse than that breast wherein the flames of her old love burned—still more brightly now that Mausolus was gone.”⁸⁸ Only in a second moment does she begin construction of the mausoleum, which is completed after her death. The result of both monuments, in Boccaccio’s story, was to immortalize not the man within it, but rather the love that caused it to be built: “Thus the conjugal love of Artemisia gained renown, and even more so her perseverance in widowhood and mourning. No less famous was the marvelous sepulcher, whether you prefer the carved version or Artemisia’s own breast, wherein rested her husband’s ashes which she had drunk.”⁸⁹ In what seems like a response to the representation of Florence in the *Pietosa fonte*, the analogy that Boccaccio draws between Pompey, Mausolus, and Petrarch serves rhetorically to cast Florence as Petrarch’s rightfully mourning widow. Like Artemisia, Florence became enflamed with love especially after Petrarch’s death. Furthermore, throughout the letter, despite his concern with Petrarch’s burial place, Boccaccio constantly refers to Petrarch’s remains in terms of his ashes. He only once mentions Petrarch’s *corpus*, or body—a word he otherwise uses in the letter when speaking of himself.

As with the earlier description of the function of a tomb’s decoration as defined by the public that views it, Boccaccio is showing that the place of a tomb determines how it should be construed. In terms of his project in Florence, then, Boccaccio suggests that the proper tomb for Petrarch could only have been built in Florence, “among his own people,” as an expression of his ancestral city’s love. In its place, Boccaccio suggests, Florence—as Petrarch’s widow—may follow Artemisia’s model by internalizing the monument of its love for Petrarch. To Brossano, however, the story would have signaled the idea that an unknown tomb would be more appropriate to a great man buried outside his own *patria*, in accord with Petrarch’s own sentiment that tombs have no impact upon the dead and can only affect the living.⁹⁰ With Arquà as Petrarch’s final resting place, then, it would be better for Brossano to build no tomb at all. Perhaps this is what Boccaccio would like Brossano to consider when he concludes this portion of the letter with the injunction: “Therefore, before you begin, think about what you are about to do.”⁹¹

⁸⁸Boccaccio, 2001, 233; Boccaccio, 1970, 228 (*De Mulieribus* 57.2): “existimans tam amati coniugis omne aliud vas incongruum esse preter id pectus in quo veteris amoris flamme longe plus solito, eo defuncto, flagrabant.”

⁸⁹Boccaccio, 2001, 237; Boccaccio, 1970, 232 (*De Mulieribus* 57.10): “Clarus ergo Arthemisie coniugii amor, clariores perseveratio viduitatis et lacrimae, nec minus sepulcrum spectabile, seu sculptum velis, seu Arthemisie pectus in quo poti viri mortui cineres quieverunt.”

⁹⁰Petrarch, 1991, 3:338 (*De Remediis* 2.132.118): “And let the living worry about this.”

⁹¹Boccaccio, 1992, 732 (*Epistole* 24.26): “Quam ob rem, antequam ceperis, prospecta quid facturus sis.”

In conclusion to the letter, Boccaccio turns to the legacy represented by Petrarch's works, in a sort of postscript added on in a seemingly casual manner to the body of the letter.⁹² Boccaccio fears that Petrarch's legacy has fallen into the hands of incapable men, who will determine whether or not to distribute his works, and most importantly, whether or not to burn the *Africa*: "I hear that the evaluation and review of both [the *Africa*] and his remaining works has been entrusted to certain men, I know not by whom, and that those works that they deem worthy will be kept."⁹³ These men, whom Boccaccio calls *iuristes*, or lawyers,⁹⁴ likely include those named in the *Pietosa fonte* as individuals involved in the controversy over Petrarch's tomb: Francesco "Checco" di Pietro da Lion, Guasparo Scuario de' Broaschini da Verona, and Lombardo della Seta, Petrarch's devotee and scribe, who was charged with the care of his works after his death.⁹⁵ While Zenoni is concerned solely with the fate of Petrarch's body, Boccaccio transforms his grief over the loss of Petrarch and his envy of Arquà into more pressing cultural interests.

In another composition, the *Versus ad Affricam* (Verses addressed to the *Africa*), sent to Padua around the same time as, if not along with, the letter to Brossano, Boccaccio gives voice to these concerns, focusing on the safekeeping of Petrarch's incomplete Latin epic poem. He again figures Florence as Petrarch's widow, beseeching the *Africa* to return home to its mother. The city's familial connection to Petrarch—a sentiment parodied by the personified Florence's grief in the *Pietosa fonte*—is applied to his poem. Afraid that Petrarch's followers in Padua would burn the *Africa* before it became known, Boccaccio expresses his contempt for the assessors of Petrarch's testament, never mentioning Padua or Arquà by name, only

⁹²Ibid. (*Epistole* 24.31): "I was about to put an end to the letter, but a worry impels me to add something else."

⁹³Ibid., 732–34 (*Epistole* 24.32–36): "Sentio nonnullis, nescio a quo, examen tam huius quam reliquorum librorum fuisse commissum, et quos dignos assererent, eos mansuros fore." In the following paragraph Boccaccio also expresses concern for all of Petrarch's works, naming in particular the *Triumphs*, which, he says, some claim "was burnt by unanimous decision of the doctors of law": *ibid.*, 734 (*Epistole* 24.38).

⁹⁴Boccaccio, 1992, 734 (*Epistole* 24.36).

⁹⁵See Zenoni da Pistoia, 89–90 (*Pietosa fonte* 13.22–30). On "Checco" di Lion, a member of the Carrarese court who owned property next to Petrarch's villa in Arquà, see Billanovich and Pellegrin, 222–23. On Guasparo da Verona, glossed in a fourteenth-century manuscript copy of *Sen.* 13.18 as a "man instructed in the art of war and, reportedly, in letters" (Billanovich, 23–24n2), see Eugenio Ragni in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (vol. 14, 1972), s.v. "Broaschini, Guasparo Scuario de'."

alluding to the area as the epic's prison and as a place of danger.⁹⁶ Boccaccio adds that Paris, Rome, and Bologna all call out, demanding that the poem be saved.⁹⁷ If Zenoni had been worried that other cities would demand Petrarch's body, for Boccaccio, various cities "desire that [the *Africa*] will want to stay safely with them"—a desire that Boccaccio presents as evidence that the poem should not be burned.⁹⁸ He goes on to claim that they cannot vie with the offer from "mother Florence," since "no other land in Italy is more famous nor is her power equaled by any other. For this she will provide the riches, souls, and weapons of her men."⁹⁹ Boccaccio wants to save the *Africa* from oblivion, but he also asserts the legitimacy of Florence's claim over all others.

His hope for the *Africa* to find safe haven in Florence, however, is not just another example of provincial quarreling over the material that will form Petrarch's legacy. Rather, in a series of lines that evoke the passage from his letter to Brossano about the peoples who will visit Petrarch's tomb, Boccaccio singles out the importance of Florence within a larger European geopolitical landscape: "Once you are safe, every glory of the homeland will rise again. It will set aside its bleak squalor, place on its head the Etruscan crown, and wear again the vestments of royal purple. All together it will rush to meet you from behind and will receive its niece in close embraces. . . . Open and reveal the sacred poem to your family. I beg you to do it: reveal your secrets so that all Italians, young and old, Spaniard and Gaul, and Briton late to his studies, the fierce German, the Hyster, the old Liburnians, and whatever peoples reside under the cold star may see."¹⁰⁰ These lines from the *Versus ad Affricam* cast light on how Boccaccio's

⁹⁶Boccaccio, 1992, 446 (*Carmina* 9.85–105): "Do you not hear, now in the middle of your prison, Florence saying in vain that she is a weak, defenseless, lonely, wretched, grieving widow, and calling her child? If you lift up your head, you will see her tired and weeping, tearing at her disheveled hair with her hands, beating her chest with her fists, clawing violently at her face with her nails, sitting in black clothing, covered in squalid dust. . . . Filled with rage, she'll rush to her death, she'll call upon the black Eumenides in her prayers because they took away through the shadows and defiled the name that you were going to make eternal, if you had lived. . . . Take flight swiftly and leave the dangerous Euganean hills."

⁹⁷Ibid., 448 (*Carmina* 9.110–22).

⁹⁸Ibid. (*Carmina* 9.124): "cupiunt ut salva velis consistere secum."

⁹⁹Ibid. (*Carmina* 9.125–28): "Si tibi sola sinus pandat Florentia mater, / egregium magnumque sat est: non clarior ulla / est Ytalis patria, non equa potentia cuiquam; / hec animas, hec arma virum sumptusque datura est."

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 450 (*Carmina* 9.146–57): "Patrie decus omne resurget / sospite te, et tetro posito squalore coronam / etruscam capiti ponet vestesque resummet / purpureas, omnisque ruet post obvia, neptem / susceptura suam totis amplexibus . . . / . . . sanctumque poema / pande tuis aperique, precor, fac pande secreta, / ut videant omnes Ytali iuvenesque senesque, / Hesperus et Gallus, studiis tardusque Britannus / Germanusque ferox, Hyster veteresque Liburni / et quecunque sedent gelido sub sydere gentes." Cf. Boccaccio, 1998, 8:1536 (*Genealogie* 15.6.11); Petrarch, 1992, 2:647–48 (*Sen.* 17.2).

promotion of Petrarch's works in Florence would perform the same function of the tomb he describes to Brossano in the letter. Boccaccio's intervention into Paduan politics, with his advice about Petrarch's tomb, thus also serves the purpose of retrieving the most important material remains of Petrarch's legacy. He sees Petrarch's works as having a significant value in the present and future, beyond the provincial civic contest to which the reactions to Petrarch's death bear witness, as he mentions in the letter: "For much advantage and utility would be stolen from both the present and the future talents of the Italians, if all of his volumes should be less carefully entrusted to the judgment of the ignorant or the hands of the envious."¹⁰¹ The group in Padua, he fears, will not do justice to the legacy of Petrarch by keeping his works trapped there or, worse, by destroying them. Florence, he feels, will be able to provide the resources for their diffusion across Italy and Europe.

Just before the final salutation, Boccaccio returns to the subject of himself and his privileged relationship with Petrarch. He adds that he would like Brossano to send him copies of two of the last letters written to him by Petrarch, including the Latin translation of the final tale of the *Decameron*, collected as letters 2 and 3 of book 17 of the *Rerum Senilium Libri* (Letters of old age). Within the context of the rest of the letter Boccaccio's seemingly casual request subtly indicates that one of Petrarch's final acts was of willing and generous participation in Boccaccio's cultural project, in which he engages by "[honoring] the last of [Boccaccio's] stories with his writing" and by trying to send it to him in Florence.¹⁰² The letters, about which he learned from Luigi Marsili, were lost along the way because of the "laziness of those carrying them" and "at the hands of those who supervise the presentation of letters, who often shamefully steal them and unjustly take jurisdiction over them."¹⁰³ Boccaccio here signals to Brossano the fragility of the cultural heritage that he would save and propagate in Florence—a heritage that brought together Petrarch's works not only with those of Dante, but also with those of Boccaccio himself.

With his letter to Francesco da Brossano, Boccaccio continues his singular efforts across his career to bring together the diverse strands of classical and vernacular literature and culture, which he saw as meriting serious attention and study in works such as the *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri* (Genealogy of the pagan gods). Although Boccaccio developed this position in contrast to

¹⁰¹Boccaccio, 1992, 734 (*Epistole* 24.40): "Multum enim tam presentibus quam futuris Ytalorum ingeniis utilitatis et commodi auferretur, si minus considerate volumina in sententiam ignorantium aut in manus invidorum permitterentur omnia."

¹⁰²Ibid. (*Epistole* 24.41): "copiam ultime fabularum mearum quam suo dictatu decoraverat."

¹⁰³Ibid. (*Epistole* 24.42): "desidia portitorum . . . opere presidentium presentationibus, qui sepe indigne surripiunt et sui iuris iniuste faciunt."

Petrarch's arguments about the superiority of a noble Latin culture over a more popular vernacular poetics and cultural politics, he nevertheless saw Petrarch's project as a principal part of his own—just as important as the poetry of Dante. While Boccaccio's carefully constructed letter intervenes in pressing matters of immediate political and cultural significance in Padua and Florence, it theorizes an engagement with Petrarch's legacy that goes beyond municipal and provincial politics. His concern for Petrarch's works should be seen in this light, as a gesture toward a much larger cosmopolitan cultural project anchored in Florence.

BEYOND PROVINCIALISM: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF PLACE

The cult of personality that Petrarch generated during his lifetime was cosmopolitan, inasmuch as it superseded political affiliations and locations. Yet it was also paradoxically localized and provincial, insofar as it was centered around the person and presence of Petrarch in the courts by which he was supported throughout his life. Petrarch understood that in order to have any impact on the world beyond his person, he needed to situate his presence in a specific place that offered him such an opportunity. After his death, his friends and patrons feared that there would be no one to fill his important roles as a statesman, philosopher, scholar, and poet. Their works in lament of his death and praise of his life seek to lay claim to his legacy. For Arquà (renamed Arquà Petrarca in 1870), Petrarch's tomb ensured that the village would not fall into utter oblivion, while for Padua more generally, Petrarch's body was an additional material marker of the local humanistic tradition that went back to Lovato Lovati (1241–1309) and Albertino Mussato (1261–1329). For his followers in Florence, the repatriation of Petrarch's dead body meant the last opportunity to redeem the city's treatment of him in life and to wash away the bitter memory of its refusal of Dante.

For Boccaccio, however, closing the gap between Florence and Petrarch was more than a question of returning Petrarch's physical presence to his ancestral city as expiation for the sin of Dante's exile. Rather, he envisioned Florence as the epicenter of a cultural movement that would set Petrarchan Latinity alongside Dantean vernacularism; create a new canon of Florentine lyric poetry that included verses by Petrarch, Dante, and others;¹⁰⁴ and foster

¹⁰⁴In sonnet 126 Boccaccio places Petrarch in heaven alongside other Florentine and Tuscan vernacular poets Sennuccio del Bene, Cino da Pistoia, and Dante Alighieri. See Boccaccio, 1992, 97 (*Rime* 126). On Boccaccio's role in formulating a canon of the nascent Florentine poetic tradition, see Eisner, 2013.

learning across multiple disciplines.¹⁰⁵ The repetition of the word *patria* across all of the works considered above, used to denote either the specific physical location to which Petrarch belonged or the spiritual world beyond the body, takes on a more complex meaning in Boccaccio's letter. For Boccaccio, once Petrarch was no longer a bodily presence, he belonged to the entire world and to Italy especially, thanks to the broad reach of his fame; but his conceptual and material legacy needed to be properly placed in the world in order to have a lasting cultural impact. As Petrarch himself was in life, his legacy had to be simultaneously grounded and cosmopolitan.

Although the political tensions that emerged with Petrarch's death ceased to be immediately relevant within a few years,¹⁰⁶ Boccaccio's last letter shows an ideology that surpasses the culturally limited and provincial concerns of his contemporaries, even as it responds to the realities of the moment. Above all, it is a demonstration of how he theorized the European cultural politics necessary for the reception and popularization of Petrarch's works alongside those of Dante and his own. In the way that it brings together Latin and vernacular in a unified, local cultural project that reaches out to the world, Boccaccio's last letter is the capstone of the vision that unifies his career.

Despite everything that Petrarch did to distance himself from Florence, Boccaccio, in the end, succeeded in planting the seeds there for the continuation of both his humanist and his vernacular poetic legacy. With more clearly defined political exigencies and a more developed sense of Latin style, later generations of Florentine humanists would trace the foundations of their own cultural endeavors to Petrarch, even if they demonstrated a more sober appraisal of his Latin works and a focus on the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (Fragments of vernacular matters) as his major poetic contribution.¹⁰⁷ The new context required a freshly fashioned civic engagement with the ghosts of both Petrarch and Dante, especially on the part of the generation of Leonardo Bruni and Giannozzo Manetti, whose casual dismissal of Boccaccio served to differentiate their own projects from one that was all too similar to it in motivation.¹⁰⁸ Although products of different cultural and political worlds, the foundations of later Florentine recuperations of Petrarch alongside Dante were laid in the fourteenth century, in large part by Boccaccio.

¹⁰⁵In book 15 of the *Genealogie*, Boccaccio connects the study of Greek, Latin, and vernacular poetry to the study of new developments in disciplines like arithmetic, geometry, and medicine. See Lummus, 2013.

¹⁰⁶Petrarch's body remained buried in Arquà and a tomb was built to house it there in 1380, in imitation of the tombs of Antenore and Lovato Lovati in Padua. Boccaccio himself died on 21 December 1375, two years before a copy of Petrarch's *Africa* reached Salutati in Florence.

¹⁰⁷See Hankins, esp. 906, 919–21; Eisner, 2013, 74–75.

¹⁰⁸Cf. Eisner, 2014, 780–82.

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