



Prolegomena to a New Lyric Petrarch in the Digital Future

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Abstract: This article presents some features of the new edition of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* recently published by the author. This edition is very different from all previous editions and arguably the most innovative in its editorial decisions. Preparation of the edition involved approaching the *Canzoniere* with a view to establishing concordances/correlations among all aspects of its “lexicon” (literally lexical, graphemic, and visual). The use of computer technology, both on the lexical level and in the treatment of images, made the difference with respect to the traditional philological approach, both in analysis and in the properly editorial phase. Proceeding by concordance/correlation implies that before making any editorial decision one must compare all analogous elements of the work. Today only computer science can provide a scientific basis for our textual analyses. Digital treatment of a text allows us to move from the syntagm to the paradigm, that is, puts us in contact with the system specific to the text that we wish to understand and also publish.

I would like first of all to explain that the word *prolegomena* in the title of my contribution refers simply to the preliminary nature of my presentation, which treats only a few of the problems encountered in the course of preparing a new critical edition of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*.



Figure 1. Book covers

The basic motive that led me to undertake this endeavor was my love of Petrarch’s poetry and my felt need to read it in a version as simple and clear as possible, that is,

pruned of the many incrustations and manipulations that over the centuries have changed and defaced a poetic language that is among the most luminous and fluid in the literature of the world. In line with this aim, my constant effort has been to offer the reader a text as close and faithful as possible to the original manuscript (Ms Vat. Lat. 3195).

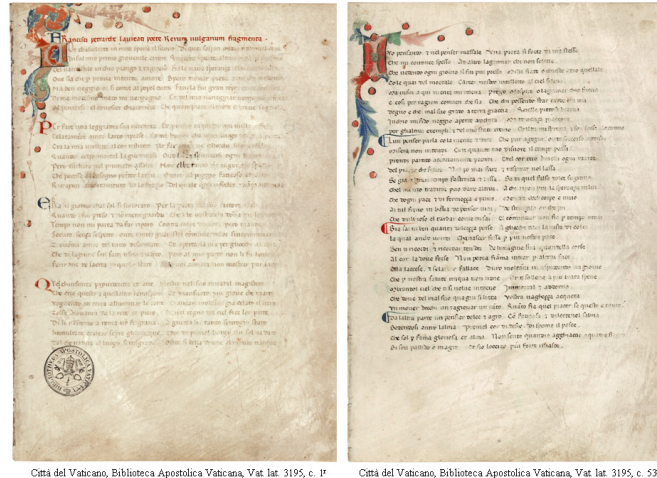


Figure 2. Sample pages from MS Vat. Lat. 3195

Perhaps I have not always been successful in this endeavor, but my text is certainly, objectively, the most different from all previous editions and the most innovative in its editorial decisions.

In this summary table one can see that in this new edition, compared with the digital text displayed in Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli (LIZ), 3685 verses have been modified, i.e., almost half of the verses of the *Canzoniere*, with a grand total of 8455 specific changes. This means that there is an average of more than two differences in each of the 3685 modified verses.

Table 1. Comparison of Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli (LIZ) and Savoca editions

	Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli	Edizione Critica Savoca
Verses	7785	7785
Modified verses		3685 (47.33% of 7785)
Occurrences	57082	57096
Modified verses by forms		1318 (16.92% of 7785)
Modified/cancelled words	1530 (2.68% of 57082)	
Modified/added forms		1548
Distinct forms	7111	7044
Cancelled forms	186 (2.62% of 7111)	
Added forms		119 (1.69% of 7044)
Used punctuation marks	9 plus angle quotes: ! () - ; , . ? « »	3 plus angle quotes: , . ? « »

In fact, after the now outdated nineteenth-century critical edition by Mestica (1895) and the taking up of Contini's 1949 Tallone edition by Einaudi as a critical edition of the *Canzoniere* (1964), no one in Italy in the twentieth century confronted the problem of a new critical edition of Petrarch's masterpiece. Scholars and readers were essentially content with a vulgate text mistakenly thought, even by specialists, to be based on the original manuscript, and the idea gained acceptance that it was impossible to produce a true critical edition because of the enormous number of codices present in Italy and in the world. The argument is false, the scholars who pronounced this judgment having forgotten that we have the original of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*!

As a reader of poetry unsatisfied with the perennial erroneous presentation of Petrarch's lyric poetry (of its punctuation, its format and spelling, its vocabulary), the only possible approach was to follow the strict path of reading and interpreting directly from the original manuscripts, excluding every mediating factor, including, at the outset, that of the admittedly precious photographic reproductions (from the "phototype" of 1905 to the digital one of 2003 in color and the one more recently produced with ultraviolet rays). I am very happy to humbly place my work on the threshold that separates the traditional philological study of texts from the digital present and future, in which new technologies can allow us, even without direct contact with the original manuscripts, to reproduce them and to read them perhaps better than if we had them before our very eyes, to study them with sophisticated techniques, and thus to understand them ever better.

I have in fact for more than thirty years been studying the Italian literary lexicon with the help of computers. I therefore approached the *Canzoniere* with a view to establishing concordances/correlations among all aspects of its "lexicon" (literally lexical, graphemic, and visual). In general, I think that the use of computer technology, both on the lexical level and in the treatment of images, can make (and, in the case of my work, has in fact made) the difference with respect to the traditional philological approach, both in analysis and in the properly editorial phase.

In this connection I would like to display (Fig. 3) some images from the expository volume that accompanies my edition (*Il Canzoniere di Petrarca tra codicologia ed ecdotica*):

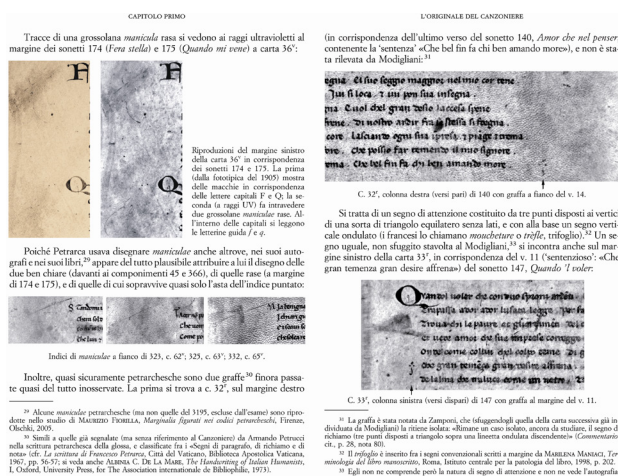




Figure 3. Sample pages from *Il Canzoniere di Petrarca tra codicologia ed ecdotica*

Here also (fig. 4) are some pages from the critical edition concerning sonnets I-IV:

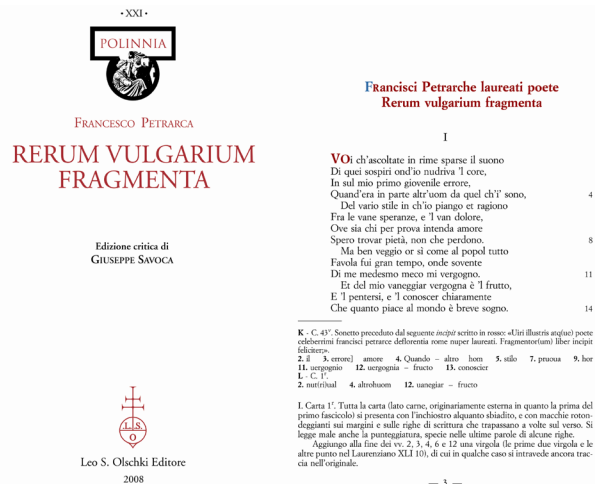




Figure 4. Sample pages from Savoca, *Rerum vulgariū fragmenta*

To summarize very briefly: proceeding by concordance/correlation implies that before making any editorial decision one must compare all analogous elements of the work. Today only computer science can provide a scientific basis for our textual analyses. Digital treatment of a text (I repeat, at all levels, literal and iconic) allows us to move from the syntagm to the paradigm, that is, puts us in contact with the system specific to the text that we wish to understand and also publish.

Mirror stains

I proceed now with brief discussion of a series of examples, beginning with a codicological phenomenon that no one had previously noticed, and which I have dubbed “mirror stains,” consisting of accidental marks produced on one folio of the codex and

which have then passed to the facing folio by contact. There are many hundreds of these marks left involuntarily by Petrarch and his copyist on their folios, and also by the owners and readers of the codex, and they have gone entirely unnoticed. Once they are noticed, they call out to us to imagine and search for events and new dimensions of the history of the precious artifact.

I choose two examples (both in texts written in Petrarch's hand) that have precise philological significance. The first concerns sonnet 179 (entered by Petrarch in 3195 and present also in Vat. Lat. 3196, the so-called *Codice degli abbozzi*), whose interpretation changes in the new edition because of a *virgula* at the end of verse 6 (differing from the twentieth-century vulgate text, which has a question mark, the result of an error of transcription by the editor of the diplomatic text, Modigliani), and because of the recovery in verse 9 of the reading *Se ciò* instead of *E ciò*, erroneously accepted by Mestica and passed on to the twentieth century.

Consider the images of the two folios 36 verso and 37 recto, side by side.

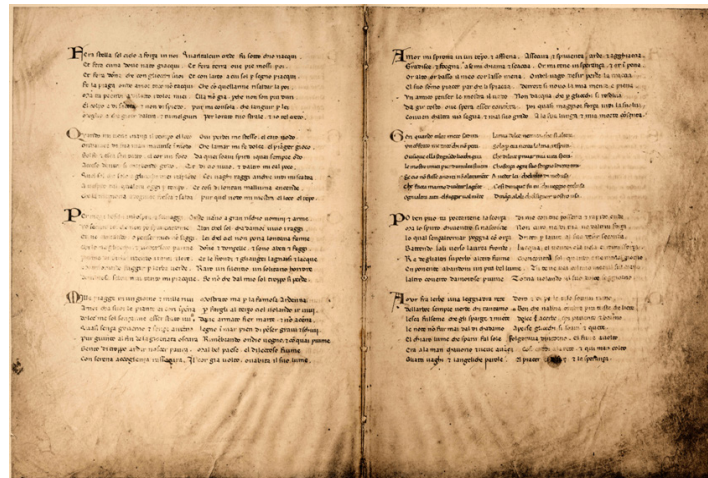


Figure 5. Folios 36v and 37r

The sonnet entered by Petrarch is to the right and is easy to distinguish because of the difference in handwriting and poetic format. But I wish to call attention to the stains that occupy the left column and margin.

These consecutive leaves belong to the same central bifolium of the fifth quaternion of the codex, and when the codex was closed some stains on one page were picked up and mirrored by contact on the other. The phenomenon can be better seen in the following detail (fig. 6), which also provides the exact distances of the stains from the central fold of the bifolium.

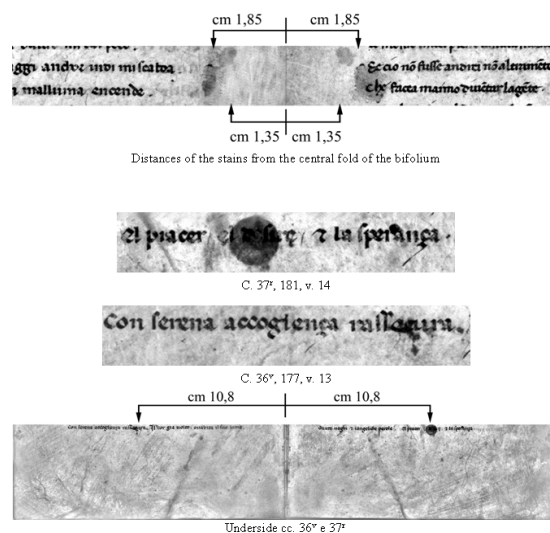


Figure 6. Detail from Folios 36v and 37r

Confirming these observations, one finds other stains of the same type on the same folia. I refer to the companion volume to the edition for the philological discussion of the case. Here I wish only to emphasize that there was no change of intention on Petrarch's part (the reading is attested by the *Codice degli abbozzi, Se ciò*), only an external accident. We must therefore return to the older reading (to the original, and to the entire tradition, which until the late nineteenth century had preserved the correct reading).

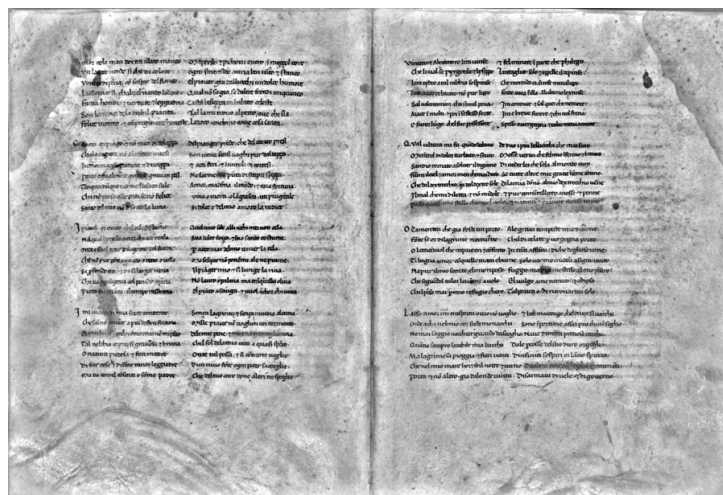


Figure 7. Folios 44v and 45r

The second case of mirror stains concerns sonnet 228, verse 5, where the original and correct reading *Vomer* was not changed by Petrarch into the absurd *Voncer* that one finds in the codex. Instead it so happened that on folios 44 verso and 45 recto (adjacent at the center of the sixth quaternion) stains were produced that defaced *Vomer* and caused one of the owners of the codex to correct the word clumsily (fig. 8):

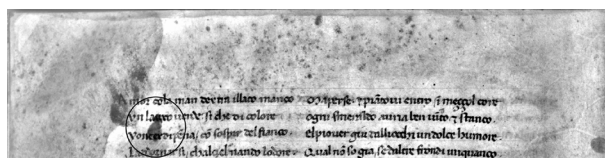


Figure 8. The top section of folio 44v, where we find *Vomer*

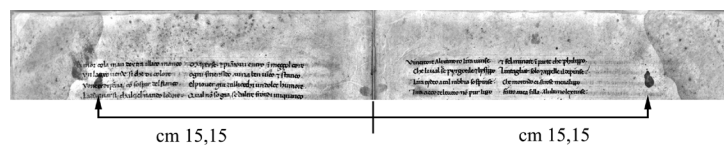


Figure 9. Detail of the two pages, with the distance of the mirror stains from the center

Here is a detail of the two external corners of the two pages, where one can see how the stains are perfect mirrors of each other, while on the page to the left there is a mark not shared on the page to the right.



Figure 10. Detail of external corners

Punctuation

I now turn briefly to the theme of punctuation, which I consider absolutely central to the rediscovery of the music of Petrarchan poetry, which (contrary to current opinion) presents also a system of prosodic punctuation. My work has required interminable corroborating tests and has resulted in solutions of an extreme editorial radicality (such as the reduction of the marks of punctuation employed in the edition to only three: point, *virgula*, and question mark, the retention of the dot indicating deletion, etc.). Summarizing, one can say that this is the area in which the editorial tradition has acted with absolute freedom, almost always adhering to the punctuation of the Bembo-Manutius edition, but very frequently going against the wishes of Petrarch. In this climate of arbitrary license, Leopardi innovated courageously in comparison with the other editors and could legitimately boast of having produced “almost a new commentary” with his punctuation. But the first and fundamental obligation of a true commentary consists in the rediscovery of the signs specific to Petrarch’s autograph punctuation.

I present a few examples of punctuation marks as they appear in the codex, beginning with two less important ones, the “comma” and the dot traversed by a *virgula* [slash]

(represented by me with a dot or a *virgula*). The “comma” consists of a vertical or slanted line placed above a dot. The dot traversed by a slash is a sign that has no name, consisting of a more or less vertical line drawn over a dot.

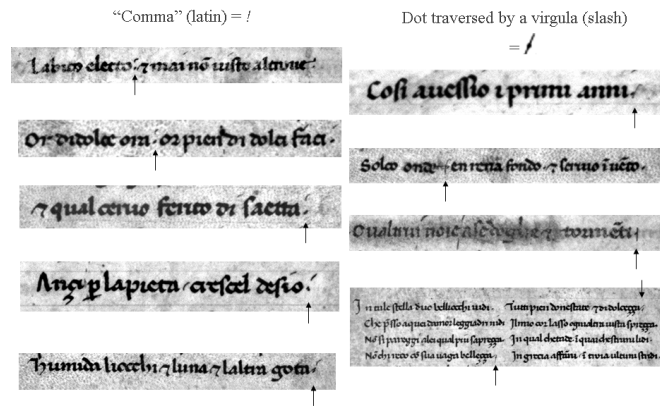


Figure 11. Examples of use of comma and dot traversed by slash

Consider also these examples of the question mark (*punctus interrogativus*, retained by me as such in the positions indicated by Petrarch).

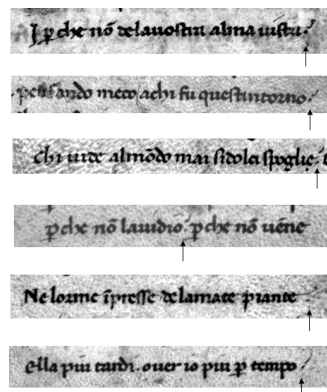


Figure 12. Examples of use of question marks

There remain the point (like our modern period) and the slash [*virgula*], which make up almost 96% of the total punctuation marks contained in the *Canzoniere*, with a preponderance of the point (61.5% against 34%).

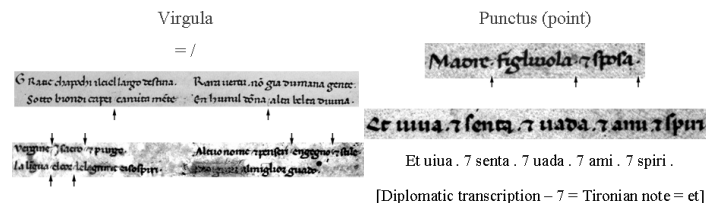


Figure 13. Examples of use of point and slash [*virgula*]

I cannot repeat here all the observations and considerations gone over during analysis and editing. Let me simply say that in the printed edition the dot, when purely indicating meter (such as the end of a verse), may be omitted, while at times it may be rendered by a comma in the modern sense (and rarely also by a question mark).

The *virgula* (consisting in general of a slanting line, similar to the English slash, or one curved toward the right) merits special mention. Here is an example (fig. 14).

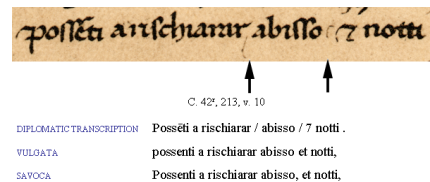


Figure 14. A more complex example of use of punctuation

Modigliani’s diplomatic transcription of this verse contains two *virgulae*: “Possēti a rischiarar / abisso / 7 notti,” while in the printed vulgate text no comma appears (“possenti a rischiarar abisso et notti”), with the loss of a specific characteristic of Petrarch’s writing, in which a *virgula*/slash almost always immediately precedes the conjunction *e*, *et*. The diplomatic editor (Modigliani) transcribed the marks below the guide line as well as the mark between *abisso* and the tironian symbol 7, all with *virgula*/slash. But here we must take into account the paleographic difference, in Petrarch’s hand, between the supposed first *virgula* following *rischiarar*, which is placed lower, in the interline space, and the one following *abisso*, which is located on the guide line. The first sign is not really a *virgula*/slash but a rhythmic accent (heretofore not recognized by the philologists because taken for a *virgula*). It is frequently inserted by Petrarch to indicate the rhythmic ictus, which here falls on the sixth syllable of the verse (-rār).

Thus, verse 134 of the canzone to the Virgin does not have the four slashes registered in the diplomatic transcription (*El cor / or / cōscientia / or / morte pūge.*) but has only one, after *cōscientia*. The other marks (see fig. 15) are forms of rhythmic accent and in fact are located in the lower interspace.

Another variety of rhythmic accent, typical exclusively of Petrarch’s writing, consists of a small mark placed beneath the accented *or*, present in *cor*, *amor*, *morte*, etc.

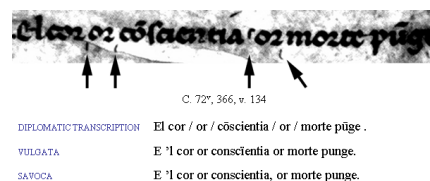


Figure 15. Rhythmic accents

Consider the reproductions collected in fig. 16, which show other example of rhythmic accents:

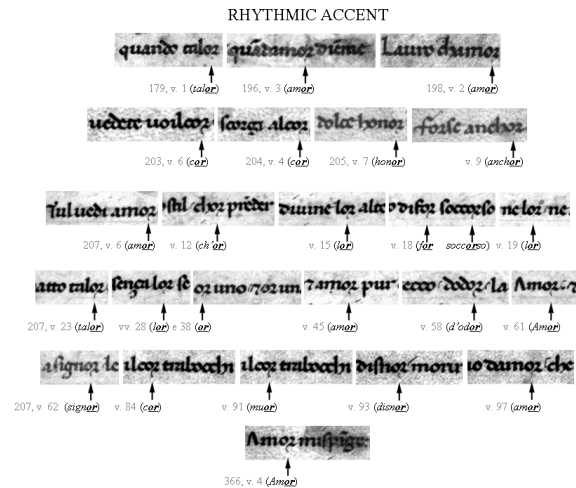


Figure 16. Additional examples of rhythmic accents

Punctuation is the area in which the heaviest editorial interventions have taken place.

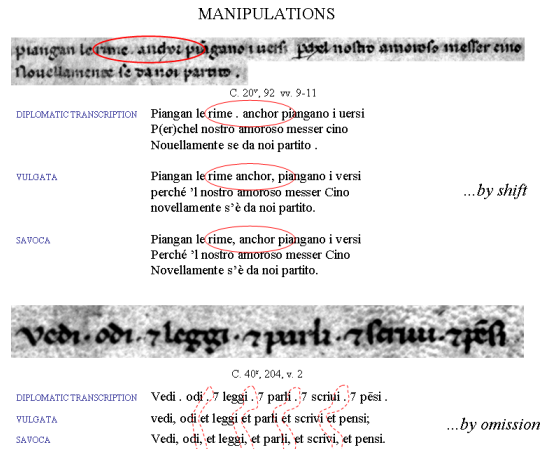


Figure 17. Heavy editorial interventions

The attentive consideration of the codex has permitted us to eliminate more than 2600 punctuation marks present in the vulgate text and to restore more than 2750 new ones (but present in the original).

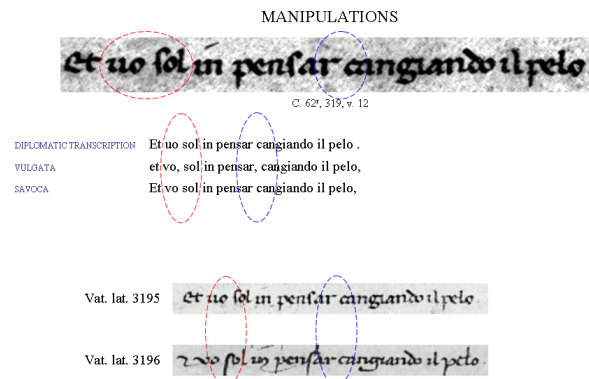


Figure 18. Examples of punctuation changes affecting interpretation

In Figure 18 I show some examples of manipulation of the codex's punctuation, as a result of omission of a sign or introduction of new signs not included in the original.

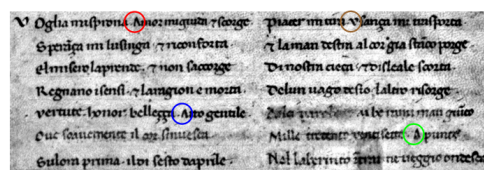
In verse 12 of sonnet 319 Petrarch himself added no internal *virgulae*/slashes (in either the original or the *Codice degli abbozzi*), but his editors have added two of them, forcing the reader to connect *sol* with *pensar*, in spite of the fact that *sol* refers to the poet, who, as he frequently tells us, loves to walk alone (*Solo et pensoso i più deserti campi / Vo mesurando a passi tardi et lenti*, etc.).

Upper and lower case

One restoration that distinguishes the new edition from most of the twentieth-century printings is that of restoring the capital letter beginning each verse in the original.

In Petrarch the system of upper-case letters is clearly tentative, but even this area has undergone constant intervention. In fact, while in the codex we find 200 capital letters internal to verses, in the editions we meet almost 2000. Of these, some are reasonable (a capital after a period, at the beginning of quoted direct discourse, in proper names, in *God*, etc.), while about 400 capitals are due to “interpretation” and to the habit of dignifying substantives understood (often correctly) as personifications, personal pronouns and possessives, etc. In substance we are in the presence of the reverential, ideological, and semantic use of capital letters which causes us to find *Tuo*, *Ti*, *Suo*, *Lui*, *Fortuna* and *fortuna*, *Natura* and *natura*, *Morte* and *morte*, *Ira* and *ira*, etc., without these distinctions having any authorisation in the graphic form of the letters of the codex. The problem concerns above all the 308 appearances of *amor* and *amore*, variously rendered by the editors, but with a clear preponderance of initial capitals (around 200), in comparison with the author's capitals for the word (fewer than 10 instances), which have thus become confused with the editors'.

Without entering into particulars, I will say only that greater respect for the punctuation of the codex implies also greater respect for the capitals in Petrarch's handwriting. In the following figure (fig. 19) I show the two sonnets 211 and 222, where, unlike other editors, who inserted capitals after *virgulae*, I retain both the periods and the capital letters of the autograph.



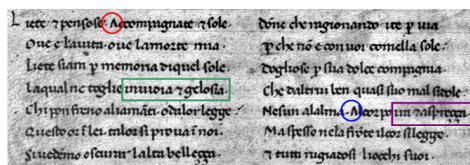
C. 42v, 211

Vulgata

Voglia mi sprona. Amor mi guida et scorge,
 Piacer mi tira, Usanza mi trasporta,
 Speranza mi lusinga et riconforta
 et la man destra al cor già stanco porge;
 e 'l misero la prende, et non s'accorge
 di nostra cieca et disleale scorta:
 regnano i sensi, et la ragion è morta;
 de l'un vago desio l'altro risorge.
 Virtute, Honor, Belleza, o gentil
 dolci parole ai be' rami m'han giunto
 ove soavemente il cor s'invesca.
 Mille trecento ventiseette, a punto
 su l'ora prima, il dì sesto d'aprile,
 nel laberinto intrai, né veggio ond'esca.

Savoca

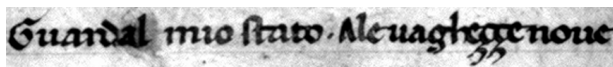
Voglia mi sprona. Amor mi guida et scorge.
 Piacer mi tira. Usanza mi trasporta.
 Speranza mi lusinga, et riconforta,
 Et la man destra al cor già stanco porge.
 E 'l misero la prende, et non s'accorge
 Di nostra cieca, et disleale scorta.
 Regnano i sensi, et la ragion è morta.
 De l'un vago desio l'altro risorge.
 Virtute, Honor, Belleza, o gentil.
 Dolci parole ai be' rami m'han giunto
 Ove soavemente il cor s'invesca.
 Mille trecento ventiseette, a punto
 Su l'ora prima, il dì sesto d'aprile,
 Nel laberinto intrai, né veggio ond'esca.

C. 43^r, 222

Vulgata	Savoca
- Liete, et pensose, <u>A</u> compagnate et sole, donne che ragionando ite per via, ove è la vita, ove la morte mia? perché non è con voi, com'ella sole? - Liete s'iam per memoria di quel sole; dogliose per sua dolce compagnia, la qual ne toglie <u>Invidia et Gelosia</u> , che d'altrui ben, quasi suo mal, si dole. - Chi pon freno a li amanti, o dà lor legge? - Nesun a l'altra; <u>Al</u> corpo <u>Ira et Asprezza</u> : questo or in lei, talor si prova in noi. Ma spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge: si vedemmo oscurar l'alta bellezza, et tutti rugiadosi li occhi suoi.	«Liete, et pensose, <u>A</u> compagnate, et sole, Donne che ragionando ite per via, Ove è la vita, ove la morte mia, Perché non è con voi, com'ella sole?» «Liete s'iam per memoria di quel sole, Dogliose per sua dolce compagnia, La qual ne toglie <u>invidia et gelosia</u> , Che d'altrui ben, quasi suo mal si dole». «Chi pon freno a li amanti, o dà lor legge?» «Nesun a l'altra. <u>Al</u> corpo <u>ira et asprezza</u> » Questo or in lei, talor si prova in noi. Ma spesso ne la fronte il cor si legge. Si vedemmo oscurar l'alta bellezza, Et tutti rugiadosi li occhi suoi».

Figure 19. Use of capitals in sonnets 211 and 222

And see (fig. 20) the conclusiveness of the argument concerning punctuation and capitals in this verse of sestina 214 (v. 31).

C. 42^r, 214, v. 31

DIPLOMATIC TRANSCRIPTION	Guardal mio stato . Ale uagheççe nove
VULGATA	Guarda 'l mio stato, a le vaghezze nove
SAVOCA	Guard'al mio stato. A le vaghezze nove

Figure 20. Use of capitals and punctuation in sestina 214

This verse has been badly transcribed and misunderstood by all prior editors, omitting the period and resolving *Guardal* into *Guarda 'l*. But here, to restore the passage's syntactical and semantic coherence, together with the meaning of the original, one must transcribe simply *Guard'al mio stato. A le vaghezze nove*.

New resolutions

A critical edition of very old texts is characterized above all by new readings and new resolutions of graphic forms and words. The radical innovations in the new edition in this area are many hundreds. Other new elisions of *a*, *e*, *è*, *i* have emerged in the original codex, in perfect harmony with Petrarch's graphemic and syntactic habits, in an edition that is more conservative than all previous ones and can boast of having preserved all the letters written by Petrarch without adding a single new one.

I present without comment the following table (fig. 21) with several of the newly disentangled words.

In the last example, as in so many other instances, I have been able to disentangle *al* from *Guardal* because the systematic analysis of the graphemic (but also lexical and semantic) system of the *Canzoniere* furnishes proof that Petrarch found the possibility of eliding the final *a* of a verb acceptable when followed by the preposition *a* or *al*. This certainty has allowed the recovery of 417 cases of *al* and 1439 cases of *a*. In this case, as in

all my work, I have enlisted the method of concordances/correlations and computer science in the service of philology and poetry.

<p>C. 37, 21, vv. 1-4</p>	VULGATA	<p>Mille fiate, o dolce mia guerrera, per aver co' begli occhi vostri pace v'aggio proferto il cor, ma voi non piace mirar si basso colla mente altera.</p>
<p>C. 37, 21, vv. 1-4</p>	SAVOCA	<p>Mille fiate o dolce mia guerrera Per aver co' begli occhi vostri pace V'aggio proferto il cor. M'a voi non piace Mirar si basso colla mente altera.</p>
<p>C. 369, 173, vv. 12-14</p>	VULGATA	<p>ma pochi lieti, et molti penser' tristi, et più si pente de l'ardite imprese: tal frutto nasce di cotal radice.</p>
<p>C. 369, 173, vv. 12-14</p>	SAVOCA	<p>M'a pochi lieti, et molti penser tristi, E più si pente de l'ardite imprese. Tal frutto nasce di cotal radice.</p>
<p>C. 42, 273, vv. 1-4</p>	VULGATA	<p>Che fai? che pensi? che pur dietro guardi ne tempo, che torna non pote omai? Anima sconsolata, che pur vai giugnendo legne al fuoco ove tu ardi?</p>
<p>C. 42, 273, vv. 1-4</p>	SAVOCA	<p>Che fai? che pensi? che pur dietro guardi Nel tempo che torna non pote omai? Anima sconsolata a che pur vai Giugnendo legne al fuoco ove tu ardi?</p>
<p>C. 56, 214, vv. 31-33</p>	VULGATA	<p>El se pur s'arma talor a dolersi L'anima a cui vien mancho consiglio, ove 'l martir l'adduce in forse, rappella lei da la sfrenata voglia subita vista, che del cor mi rade ogni delira impresa, et ogni sdegno fa 'l veder lei soave.</p>
<p>C. 56, 214, vv. 31-33</p>	SAVOCA	<p>El se pur s'arma talor a dolersi L'anima a cui vien mancho Consiglio, ove 'l martir l'adduce in forse, Rappella lei da la sfrenata voglia Subita vista che del cor mi rade Ogni de l'ira impresa, et ogni sdegno Fa 'l veder lei soave.</p>
<p>C. 42, 273, vv. 1-4</p>	VULGATA	<p>Che fai? che pensi? che pur dietro guardi ne tempo, che torna non pote omai? Anima sconsolata, che pur vai giugnendo legne al fuoco ove tu ardi?</p>
<p>C. 42, 273, vv. 1-4</p>	SAVOCA	<p>Che fai? che pensi? che pur dietro guardi Nel tempo che torna non pote omai? Anima sconsolata a che pur vai Giugnendo legne al fuoco ove tu ardi?</p>
<p>C. 56, 214, vv. 31-33</p>	VULGATA	<p>Guarda 'l mio stato, a le vaghezze nove Che interrompendo di mia vita il corso M'an fatto habitador d'ombroso bosco;</p>
<p>C. 56, 214, vv. 31-33</p>	SAVOCA	<p>Guard'al mio stato. A le vaghezze nove Che interrompendo di mia vita il corso M'an fatto habitador d'ombroso bosco.</p>

Figure 21. Further examples of textual clarifications based on Petrarch's graphemic and syntactic habits

In conclusion I would like to reiterate that these achievements create important conditions to introduce a "new" lyric Petrarch, keeping in mind the digital future of humanist studies.

Works Cited

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