Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* is undoubtedly the most influential collection of poems in the Western tradition. Petrarchism – a specific way to write love poems inspired by the Petrarchan model – was, from the late fourteenth century onward, and for a period of more than two and a half centuries, the dominant mode not only in Italy, but also in Spain, France and England. The influence of Petrarchism reached Germany, Scandinavia, Poland, Russia, and even countries like Cyprus; in terms of timespan, the vestiges of the Petrarchan model may be found up to and including the nineteenth century; an experienced reader will have no difficulties detecting direct or mediated traces of schemes, patterns and forms typical of the Petrarchan collection even in love poems published in our times. And due to his enormous impact on Occidental literary history, Petrarch is an author who has been discussed not only by literary scholars, but also by philosophers and historians of ideas, starting with Rousseau and Hegel.

My modest contribution to this most impressive tradition of literary as well as philosophical readings of Petrarch’s work will consist in problematizing a sometimes tacit, but in many cases explicit assumption in scholarship thus far; namely, that the semantic core of Petrarch’s collection, the concept of love, would be a continuation of Dante’s *Vita nova*, hence a Christianized version of the Platonic model. Within this standard reading, it is assumed that the sublimating, that is, the specifically religious implications – meaning the presentation of the *donna* as an angel not only in the metaphorical, but also in the literal sense – have been reduced in Petrarch as compared to Dante. However, the tendency is considered to be preserved: the spiritualizing of the love object, as well as of the feelings she arouses in the lover, including the ending that refers, in both Dante and Petrarch, to the obligatory last station of the Christian *iter mentis*, the renunciation of earthly love and the conversion to spiritual love – in this case, the substitution of Laura by Mary which seems to be expressed in the *Canzone alla Vergine*, the last poem of the collection.

My reading proposes to consider the love concept inherent in the *Canzoniere* as being modeled, at least to a certain extent, after the theory of love developed

---

1 I am thinking of certain well-known poems (the most prominent being *A une passante*) from Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal.*
within the medical discourse of that age, which became known under the name of hereos. Its origins are in part Aristotelian, Galenic and Arabic, and the common denominator of these conceptual sources is what I would schematically term an ‘anthropological materialism.’

Within a Christian framework, the human being is conceived of as a microcosm structured in analogy to the macrocosm. Just as the macrocosm is governed by the one and only God, man is governed by that part which is the God-like feature of human beings; namely, reason. According to Christian dogma, and in line with the Platonic tradition, indulging in bodily pleasures signifies a neglect of the specific dignity granted to humans. It is a symptom of animality, labeled akrasia\(^2\) by Plato; Christian theology preserves this negative assessment while supplementing it with a metaphysically relevant condemnation: since such action ignores the potential inherent in God-given reason, it is sinful.

Classical (Galenic) and Arabic (Avicennan and Averroist) anthropological materialism, both in turn based on Aristotelianism, postulates, by contrast, that humans are primarily material beings – meaning that their concrete actions are influenced by bodily constellations that may not be strictly controlled by the rational mind of the person concerned; it is a consequence of such an approach to consider actual patterns of behavior as liable to the eventual influence of external action (that is, cures and therapies) applied by medical doctors. From a Christian vantage point, the highly provocative implication of such a conceptualization consists in the fact that wrong (‘sinful’) behavior would no longer be systematically imputable to humans. Rather, such behavior might be a symptom of bodily dysfunctions that may or may not be treated successfully. The only way to make this approach compatible with Christian views is a rigorously Augustinian interpretation of the dogma: the body’s dysfunction and its consequence – sin – would be conceived of as indicating one’s place within the massa damnata.

---

1 My argument proper is divided into three parts. The first section offers some preliminary remarks concerning the general background of my reading; it deals with the relation of medical and humanist discourses in texts from the pre-modern period. The second part presents the, as it were, material basis of my argument, namely, the concrete malady discussed under the name of hereos in the medical discourse of the

2 Literally translated: ‘acting against one’s better judgment’.
Middle Ages. Finally, the third section provides some observations concerning the presence of this concept in vernacular poetry, focusing on the Petrarchan *Canzoniere*.

In present times, the medical discourse and the humanist discourse—literature, philosophy and the scholarly discourses concerning literature and philosophy—have reached a state of complete separation on the epistemological as well as on the practical level, divisions reflective of what we often call the “two cultures.”\(^3\) At least in continental Europe, it would be hard to find a young medical doctor who also takes an interest in literature or philosophy, and continental intellectuals typically view science as something threatening to the basis of culture and even to life itself. With respect to the division of the “discursive field,”\(^4\) the actual situation differs fundamentally from that of ancient and medieval times. All important classical and medieval philosophers were “natural philosophers” as well; they treated problems that from the seventeenth century onward belonged to the separate field of exact science.

At first sight, this rough sketch may suggest that the relationship between the scientific and the humanist discourses could be described as a continuous process of separation. One can rather observe that in a specific phase of Western history, the affinity, or, should I say, the interpenetration of the respective discourses was even greater than it had been in classical times. The period to which I am referring comprises the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries and is characterized by the Western reception of Greek philosophy, in particular of Aristotelianism.

Aristotle’s writings were imparted to the West via the Arabic intermediary. At least in the beginning, the interest the Islamic cultures took in studying the Greek tradition was not genuinely philosophical. Monotheism does not need a philosophy. The reasons for which Arab scholars began to read the classical texts were pragmatic. They were eager to learn from these texts not how to conceive of the world but rather how to handle it. Since one of the major problems human beings face in dealing with the material world is the physical part of their own selves, it is perhaps no surprise that the Arabic reception of Greek knowledge gave prominence to questions of health and hygiene. And it is very probable that at least in the beginning—that is, in the twelfth century—Western interest in the Arabic texts was motivated by the same reason; namely, the desire to deal with problems neglected by the blending of (unorthodox) Judaism and Platonism we call Christianity.\(^5\) The details of this

---

5 As early as the Middle Ages, there is a partial plurality in the Christian West, which is linked to the fact that scripturally-fixated monotheism is something other than monotheism *tout court*. 
process are not relevant to the topic discussed here. What matters is the fact that what was in later centuries regarded as separate – the philosophical part of Greek learning on the one hand and the scientific, especially the medical part on the other – was considered at this time one integral corpus of texts. This somewhat striking situation was reflected in the organization of teaching. In the universities of Bologna and Padova, but also in Montpellier, the disciplines of the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music) were taught mainly by professors of medicine.

Monotheisms claim an all-comprising discursive competency. In principle, no truth is predicable which would be situated outside the system. Yet monotheisms conceiving of themselves as based on a scripturally-fixated revelation confront the problem of texts being finite and focused. By necessity, these texts do not treat all problems humans may face on an equal level. In addition, we have to take into account that Christianity, in contrast to Islam, did not militarily subjugate other cultures in the age when its dogma was shaped; it colonized them by way of subversion from within. In order to do that it was forced to strip off the all-too-obvious remains of its particularistic origins; it tried to become universally acceptable by explicitly rejecting almost all ritualistic practices regulating daily life. Dietary rules, hygienic prescriptions – that is, the norms constituting an elementary system of public health within Judaism – were eliminated in the interest of gaining access to a huge variety of different communities. In short: there is no discourse concerning the body’s malfunction within Christianity. It is this lacuna that was then filled by importing the medical discourses flourishing in the Arabic world, an import that was considered unproblematic, because it carried the brand of Aristotle, who is systematically denoted as the ‘philosophus’ by Thomas; meaning, the one (and only) who, although a pagan, was allowed by the Christian God to develop concepts the verity of which would become fully obvious only after Christ’s self-sacrifice. So, what we have in the Middle Ages are not two competing anthropological discourses (one theological, the other medical). We have a discursive field that is compartmentalized, as it were. The main parts of the field are fiercely guarded and rigorously defended: they are exclusive properties of Christian theology and its various ancillae, with philosophy in the first place. There are, however, sections of the field to which Christian theology did not lay absolute claim, since it would not have been able to deliver a meaningful discursification of these parts. The medical discourse is perhaps the most important section to be mentioned here; but I would tentatively suggest that we consider other instances of the discursive lacuna described above: these may be the discourse on political power, the discourse of the judiciary, the discourse of economics and, at least in part, the discourse on phenomena of the natural world. More or less unnoticed by the theological authorities, these un(re)claimed sections of the field became, over the course of the following centuries, discursive territories occupied by semantic constellations alien to, or in contradiction to, the Christian dogma. It may have been a more or less conscious, in any case an important work done by moral-philosophical texts of minor, almost negligible value – namely, literary texts – to have secretly opened up the main field, the stronghold of theological orthodoxy, for these heterodoxical discourses to make their way upwards, towards serious acceptability.

Petrarch, the author on whom I will focus in the main section of this paper, had been a student of the *artes liberales* in Bologna and Montpellier. However, with respect to his knowledge of contemporary medical discourses, one need not even speculate. He wrote a text titled *Invective contra medicum*, which is much less known than his collection of love poems. A glance at the title alone makes one anticipate a contribution to the genre of satire well known from later times, such as Molière’s *Le Malade imaginaire* or the *Sueños* by Quevedo, both of which are exaggerated incriminations of physicians who promise to save lives and nevertheless become, sooner or later, the messengers of imminent death. Paul O. Kristeller has shown, however, that although Petrarch’s text is partly anti-medical in a satirical sense, its main concern is philosophical. It is a document of Petrarch’s adherence to the *via moderna* in the controversy on nominalism that characterized the fourteenth century. The anonymous addressee of the *Invective* is a professor of medicine who is incriminated, in his pretentions as a philosopher, as an Averroist, one of those who were convinced that the world in its entirety could be explained by a discourse based on logic. The polemics do not concern the genuinely medical dimensions of Averroism. Such an attitude is characteristic not only of Petrarch but of his contemporaries as well, who, notwithstanding the philosophical controversies and the differences concerning religious belief, considered the practical assumptions of Greek and Arabic medicine as a matter of course, because it was able to provide – in contrast to the obscure knowledge of witches and magicians – at least some curative competency.

There is a second aspect involved in my argument that from a modern standpoint may perhaps seem somewhat strange: the speculation that a highly sophisticated poetic discourse may be based on a quite down-to-earth medical discourse. Such an assumption might appear less odd if one takes into consideration the difference between what is meant when we use the term ‘soul’ in modern times – that is, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries onward – and that which it designated in pre-modern times. It may seem provocative to say that the pre-modern anthropological discourse is much more materialist than its modern

---


9 Supposedly, the person addressed was the private physician of Pope Clement VI.


continuation. In the age of positivism and empiricism, what we typically call the soul became a sort of catch-all term for those aspects of human behavior that cannot (or cannot yet) be explained by a somatic approach. The ‘psyche’ is the instance of difference as such: it is the abysmal, an ‘Unheimliches’, the site of the illogical, of those aspects of our selves which elude the discourses of ‘normal science’. As what we call the ‘soul’ has been considered the source of our emotions and especially of love since the beginning of the Western tradition, it is evident that in modern times love, and furthermore the problems linked to love, are conceived of as escaping the discourses based on logic and reason. When in present times a physician is asked to intervene in a case of unhappiness caused by an actual or virtual relationship, the underlying assumption consists in perceiving humans as bodies only and all problems traditionally labeled ‘love problems’ as being purely sexual. In short: in the modern age, there are the alternatives of an anthropological discourse that is exclusively materialist and a discourse that considers what is specifically human – meaning our emotions and in particular ‘love’ – as transgressing the capacities of regular, logical and scientific discourse.

The medieval and early modern concept of \textit{anima} or \textit{animus}, which derives from Platonic concepts and owes even more to the theorizing of Aristotle, may perhaps be described as a sort of intermediate stage between these two alternatives, which implies that it is much more materialist than the modern concept of ‘psyche.’ \textit{Anima} is a sort of principle common to all beings, that is, living objects both human and non-human, including plants. It comprises aspects that are purely material. Specifically the human \textit{anima} integrates bodily and non-bodily, immaterial phenomena. The different parts are hierarchically organized (\textit{pars vegetativa, pars sensitiva, pars rationalis}), but during a human being’s lifetime they are inevitably linked to each other. It is for this reason that in pre-modern anthropological discourses the merely ‘vegetative’ functions of human bodies (for instance sleeping and waking, laughing and crying), the ‘sensitive’ functions (in other words, perceptions), and the rational functions are conceived of as being involved in a process of permanent mutual exchange.

Such a conceptualization of the human soul had several consequences: there is no distinct concept of ‘feelings,’ distinct in the sense of structuralist semantics, that is, as differing from reason on the one hand and from vegetative bodily phenomena on the other. ‘Emotions’ is a term referring to a specific constellation of bodily functions, of perceptions and of rational activities; or, should I say, a name for a specific constellation of reciprocal data processing between the three \textit{partes} operated by the \textit{anima} as a whole. This approach explains the somewhat strange idea that by administering medical or bodily cures one can influence the most intimate of human feelings.

\textsuperscript{12} By which I mean, to be precise, the pre-postmodern anthropological discourse.
Considering the discursive scenario, it is perhaps not altogether astonishing that literary texts of that age, in their fashioning of love and lovers, frequently refer to the prevalent medical discourses. Still somewhat perplexing are the enunciations\(^{13}\) of a love discourse based on such a concept of the soul. Particularly in the scholarly treatment of the Petrarchan *Canzoniere* these concrete shapings — as I will call them — of the feeling named ‘love,’ which differ from our modern understanding and even stand in opposition to it, have been assessed as idiosyncratic utterances of a somewhat strange mind. With the intention of problematizing this standard assessment, I will try to demonstrate that the self of the *Canzoniere* may be considered as being modeled — at least to a certain extent — according to the central assumptions of the medical discourse on *hereos* whose main features will be introduced by way of a concise sketch.

2

My presentation of the malady (*morbus, egritudo*) is indebted to Mary F. Wack’s book *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages*.\(^{14}\) Out of several dozen treatises, which belonged to the corpus of texts contemporary students of medicine were obliged to study, Wack chooses six examples: the first is part of the *Viaticum peregrinantis* by

\(^{13}\) Concerning the Foucauldian differentiation between *énonciation* and *énoncé*, see *L’Archéologie du savoir*, p. 45–54.

Constantinus Africanus, who initiated the Western reception of Arabic and Greek medical scholarship when he came from North Africa to the monastery of Montecassino and to Salerno in the middle of the eleventh century. The *Viaticum* is based on Galen, on the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, and on additional Arabic empirical knowledge. All the following texts are commentaries on the corresponding chapter of the *Viaticum*. Gerard de Berry (Gerardus Bituricensis) wrote his gloss (*glosule*) at Paris or Salerno at the end of the twelfth century; he was the first to blend Constantinus Africanus’ text with the *Canon medicinae* by Avicenna and the *De anima* by Aristotle. Giles/Egidius (Paris or Santarem, Portugal, early thirteenth century) organized his text according to the scholastic pattern of the *quaestio*. Petrus Hispanus, who later became Pope under the name of John XXI, wrote his commentary at Siena in the middle of the thirteenth century; his text is the most influential of all the extant treatises, including those not considered by Wack. Bona Fortuna wrote his tract at Paris or Montpellier in the first half of the fourteenth century. There are a great number of further commentaries from the fourteenth century, which in substance, however, do not differ from or exceed what one can find in the treatises by Petrus Hispanus or Bona Fortuna. The following portrait will be for reasons of convenience a sort of *cento*, a hybridization of the texts to which I am referring.

*Hereos* is described in all of the texts as being primarily an illness of the mind. According to its location in the brain, the dysfunction associated with the illness is characterized first and foremost as a hypertrophy of the brain’s normal operation of thinking, the thoughts being transfixed by the beauty of a beloved person:

...
Amor [hereos] est melancolica sollicitudo mentis cum profunditacione cogitacionum in qua figitur mens propter pulchritudinem [...] est mentis insania qua vagatur animus per inania crebris doloribus permiscens gaudia [...] est [...] cogitacionis in eadem [in re amata] assiduitas.18

Beginning with Constantinus Africanus, the theoreticians emphasize that the hypertrophy of cogitatio goes along with a strong physical desire: “[hereos] est autem magnum desiderium cum nimia concupiscentia et afflictione cogitationum.”19

With reference to the etiology, the authors of treatises from Gerard de Berry onward20 agree that the part of the mind affected by the disease is the virtus estimativa, the faculty of the soul or mind that must assess whether something or someone is well- or ill-suited to the person concerned:

Causa ergo huius passionis est error uirtutis estimatiue que inductur per intentiones sensatas ad apprehendenda accidencia insensata que forte non sunt in persona. Unde credit aliquam esse meliorem et nobilem et magis appetendum omnibus aliis. [...] unde si qua sunt sensata non conueniencia occultantur a non sensatis intentionibus anime uehementer infixia.21

This faculty is damaged to such an extent that it offers a positive assessment of a specific person even if this person is not at all suited to (“conveniens”) the person affected by the illness: “ad personam quam estimatiua iudicat esse conuenien-tem, licet non sit.”22 The misled appreciation concerns the visible or sensuous aspects (forma sensata) of the ‘object’, and the forma insensata, the attitude of the object towards the person affected by hereos. A quote from Petrus Hispanus makes it particularly clear that the malady is – to put it in modern terms – a

were particularly susceptible to the malady. In the age I am addressing, this caste was no longer ‘heroic,’ but was rather on its way to becoming a ‘leisure class’ (which may explain its propensity to catch somewhat lofty diseases) but went on pretending that it was a warriors’ caste in order to veil its parasitic status.

18 PH, B, 6–15. “Love is a melancholic worry of the mind with a depression of thought in which the mind is transfixed because of beauty [...] [it] is a sickness of the mind in which the spirit wanders through emptiness, mixing joy with frequent sorrows [...] [it] is [...] a continual [mental] preoccupation with [the beloved].”

19 CA, 3. “[hereos] is a great longing with intense sexual desire and affliction of the thoughts.”

20 Note that Gerard’s treatise is the first to blend the Viaticum with the Canon medicinae by Avicenna.

21 GB, 7–15. “The cause, then, of this disease is a malfunction of the estimative faculty, which is misled by sensed intentions into apprehending non-sensed accidents [better: non-perceptible traits] that perhaps are not within the person. Thus it believes a certain woman to be better and more noble and more desirable than all others. [...] Any unfitting sensations are, as a consequence, obscured by the non-sensed [i.e. supposed] intentions deeply fixed in the soul.”

22 GB, 21 sq. “[...] to the person whom the estimative [faculty] judges to be fitting, though this may not be so.”
syndrome of an overestimation of a woman’s physical qualities and a positively-biased assessment of her attitude, resulting in a unilateral fixation: “In amore hereos estimat virtus estimativa aliquam mulierem [...] esse meliorem [this refers to the forma insensata] vel pulchriorem [forma sensata] omnibus aliis cum non sit ita [...].”

The dysfunction of the virtus estimativa has consequences for the faculties of the soul that govern the other mental capacities, as well as those that control the bodily parts. The faculty most affected by the estimativa’s dysfunction is the virtus cogitativa: “et tunc [virtus estimativa] inperat virtuti cogitativa ut profundet se in formam illius rei. Et sic in amore hereos est profundacio cogitationis.”

All the theoreticians underline the particular importance of this point. A second consequence of the appreciative faculty’s dysfunction consists in the fact that the virtus imaginativa, the faculty which synthesizes the mental representations of the outside world, constantly displays the picture of the beloved in the mind of the person affected: “Estimatiua [...] imperat imaginationi ut defixum habeat intuitum in tali persona.”

In the treatises based not only on the Viaticum but also on the Canon medicinae, one may find an explanation of this fixation (“figitur”) deriving from the assumptions of humoral pathology: the hyperfunction of the virtus cogitativa withdraws energy and heat from the virtus imaginativa (the site of which is conceived as adjacent to that of the virtus cogitativa), which consequently becomes cold and dry (“frigida,” “sicca”). Since what has been ‘impressed’ or imprinted into a dry substance is more stable than that which has been impressed into a humid substance, the imagination of the person affected is incapable of detaching itself from the “fortis impressio alicuius dilecte” it has

---

23 PH A, 37–39 (my italics). “In lovesickness, the estimative faculty judges a certain woman [...] to be better or more beautiful than all the rest, even though it might not be so [...].”

24 PH A, 39–41. “[...] and then it orders the cogitative faculty to plunge itself into the form of that thing. And thus in lovesickness there is depressed thought [better: the state of being deeply mired in thought].”

25 “Cum hec infirmitas forciara anime subsequentia habeat, id est cogitaciones nimias, [...] in cogitationibus profundatur.” (CA, 17–25); “[Ratio passionis] est inordinatio et profundacio cogitationum circa rem quam omnibus aliis prefert.” (PH B 89 f.)

26 GB, 15–18. “The estimative [faculty], then, [...] orders the imagination to fix its gaze on such a person.”

27 GB, 23.

28 Although there was no systematic practice of autopsy in that age, it was known that the regular state of the brain as compared to other organs is rather humid; I should like to add in this context that women’s bodies including their brains were considered to be more humid (softer) than males’ bodies. For this reason hereos was seen as a malady affecting males primarily (though not exclusively).

29 PH A, 145.
received. I would like to stress that the picture of the beloved which the *virtus imaginativa* cannot cease to represent again and again is not indeed an ‘objective’ representation of the person concerned, but rather a picture positively biased due to the *virtus estimativa*’s dysfunction. The “extrinsicum apprehensum” is only believed to be ‘convenient’ (“putatur conveniens et amicum”) and the “forma sensata,” the physique considered by the patient to be more pleasing than anything else, may be that of any woman (“forma alicuius mulieris”). The confused imagination then instructs the faculties governing the body to desire the person concerned and to take action in order to obtain her: “et eam mandat virtuti irascibili et concupiscibili, que sunt virtutes motive [...] Et tunc huiusmodi virtutes inperantes inperant virtuti motive que est in nervis ut moveant membra ad prosecuteionem illius rei.” The mental fixation thus results in a corresponding fixation of the bodily desires: “unde concupiscibilis hoc solum concupiscit.”

To my knowledge, only Petrus Hispanus has discussed the question of *causa* for the dysfunction of the *virtus estimativa*. He observes that *hereos* particularly affects youths who have just had their first sexual experience. Since this encounter, precisely because it is the first one, is perceived by them as overwhelming, they yearn for a repetition. Petrus suggests it is this powerful desire for intercourse that damages their *virtus estimativa*, causing them to regard women who are not particularly beautiful as more beautiful than all others, and those who are not willing to concede them their favors as “conveniens,” as ready to convene with them: “Unde [...] est primus coitus qui maxime est delectabilis, quare maxime appetunt coitum. [...] defectus estimative qui est maxime in pueris [...] valet ad generationem amoris hereos.”

---

30 BF, 33.
31 BF, 33–37.
32 PH, A, 44–46. “And then the imaginative faculty sends it [the image of the beloved] to the irascible and concupiscible faculties, which are faculties [...] [that] control movement. And then these controlling faculties order the faculty of movement, which is in the nerves, to move the limbs in pursuit of that thing.”
33 GB, 19.
34 The fixation may be on the first sexual partner. But according to the formulations to be found in the treatises it is much more probable to conceive of a *hereos* patient’s sexual biography in quite another way: first sexual experience with an anonymous love object (a prostitute, a peasant girl, a servant); subsequent random non-sexual encounter with a “worthy” love object of equal status (a *donna*) who then becomes the focus of an obsession although there is not the slightest sign of the readiness to reciprocate.
35 PH, A, 173–177. “Thus the first sexual encounter happens to them, which is most pleasurable, wherefore they desire intercourse most greatly. [...] the failure of the estimative [faculty], which is greatest in boys, contributes [...] to the generation of lovesickness [...].”
The second major point discussed in the treatises is symptomatology ("sign[a] que signant egritudinem"). Absentmindedness is the primary symptom of permanent preoccupation with the beloved ("si aliquis de aliquo loquatatur, uix intelliget"); further symptoms are sleeplessness ("uigilia"); weeping as soon as the patient thinks of the beloved — and as he constantly thinks of her, this implies nearly constant weeping; weeping even when he is sleeping ("etiam in somnpo accidit eis [...] fletus"); unmotivated laughter; the sudden change from laughing to crying and vice versa ("de facili ridet et de facili de fletu ad risum mouetur"); rapid movement of the eyes ("oculi [...] cito mobiles propter anime cogitationes"); deep sighing ("suspiria profundae"); "hanelant cum suspirio"); permanent sadness for no evident reason ("tristicia sine causa"); and, finally, a preference for solitude ("querunt solituidinem"). A symptom noted in particular by Bona Fortuna — which should be mentioned in view of Petrarch — is the weeping or singing of patients when they are far removed from human society ("et quando sunt soli tunc flent aut cantant").

I should perhaps mention a point that may already be evident in the term ‘tristicia’, which is the Latin term for the Greek melancholia: all treatises emphasize that hereos is an illness akin to melancholy. The theoreticians differ slightly with respect to the exact relationship between the two maladies. Some only hint at the affinity of the symptoms ("est similis melancolie"); others consider hereos a version of melancholy ("hereos est sollicitudo melancolica cum profundatione cogitationis"); and Gerard de Berry identifies hereos as a symptom of incipient melancholy ("unde remanet dispositio melancolica"), which implies that in case it remains without treatment it will necessarily lead to fully developed melancholy ("unde si non eriosis succurratur ut cogitatio eorum auferatur et anima leuigetur, in passionem

36 BF, 48 f.
37 GB, 32–34.
38 CA, 21 f.
39 BF, 60–62.
40 GB, 38–39.
41 CA, 18 f.
42 PH, B, 34 f.
43 BF, 68.
44 PH, B, 36.
45 BF, 60.
46 BF, 60–61.
47 GB, 2–3.
48 PH, A, 77 f.
melancolicam necesse est incidant”,50 “quando non curantur fiunt melancolici vel manici”).51

The last point I would like to present – that of therapy – will perhaps be the least astonishing aspect since the cures advised by the theoreticians are largely identical with the well-known Ovidian *remedia amoris* which most probably derive from the antique preliminary stages of the discourse on *hereos*. The authors recommend the moderate consumption of wine, conversations with good friends, socializing, frequent baths and a concentration on the problems of everyday life. The most important recommendation seems to be the change of place (“mutatio [...] regionis”)52 with the intention of diverting the *cogitatio* from its fixation:

> Dicendum quod a patria exire competit in amore *hereos* quia talis exitus facit videre res pulcras et loca amena et in quibus paciens figit suam cogitationem. Et per consequens retrahit ymaginationem suam a sua amasie et facit patientem oblivisci sue amasie, quod maxime competit in cura amoris *hereos*.53

The second of the remedies with maximum efficiency and which also intends to divert the *cogitatio* is therapeutic sexual intercourse: “Ualet etiam consorcium et amplexus puellarum, plurimum concubitus ipsarum, et permutatio diuersarum.”54 There is also one medication in the literal sense that is mentioned again and again: a concoction of herbs that is described through various details and seems to have been considered highly efficient.

3

In this main section of the paper I will treat my topic proper, the life of the classical and Arabic texts I have just presented, not within medical texts of the West where their influence is manifest, but rather within poetic texts where their discursive presence is veiled to the extent that it has remained largely unnoticed in an age in which the concept of lovesickness has become obsolete as far as the

---

50 CA, 28.
51 BF, 29–30.
52 BF, 153.
53 PH A, 189–194. “It must be said that leaving one’s country is beneficial in lovesickness, because such travel causes one to see beautiful things and pleasant places, upon which the patient fixes his thought. And consequently he withdraws his imagination from his beloved, and it makes the patient forget his beloved, which is most beneficial in the cure of lovesickness.”
54 GB, 53 f. “Also useful is consorting with and embracing girls, sleeping with them repeatedly, and switching between various ones.”
medical sphere is concerned. I would like to comment on the presence or, rather, the transparency of the discourse on *hereos* in the Petrarchan *Canzoniere*.55

If the underlying hypothesis is correct, I should be able to demonstrate the statistically relevant recurrence in the collection of basic terms and concepts of the discourse on *hereos* and furthermore of characteristic conceptual configurations. I would like to insist on this latter point. Of course one can find isolated aspects presented above – for example, sadness – in any text on love from any period and any cultural community, Western or non-Western. My argument is therefore dependent not only on evidence indicating statistical recurrence but also on the structurality of the phenomena of correspondence. I would like to add a third point that must be considered; namely, the aspect of historicity. The hypothesis of Petrarch’s treatment of love as modeled on *hereos* is only viable if the structure that informs his discourse can be shown to differ significantly from corresponding discourses on unhappy love from other backgrounds.

In the following, I will a) present basic concepts of *hereos* and some basic discursive syndromes (concatenations of concepts) to be found in the *Canzoniere* by quoting one or two examples in each case and by referring to additional – albeit not exhaustive – material in the footnotes; b) comment on two longer poems that will allow for consideration of the aspect of structurality; and c) refer to some

55 In almost every poem of the *Canzoniere*, the love of the lyrical self is said to be located in the heart (and not the brain). This might suggest that Petrarch, in the controversy between orthodox Aristotelians and the theoreticians of *hereos* (who are dependent on the Hippocratic concept of man), agrees with the Aristotelians who consider the heart the location of love. However, all passages in Petrarch where the author refers to the heart as the location of love belong to the conventional Allegory of Amor, which Petrarch borrows from the *dolce stil novo*: the God of love shoots his arrows through the eyes of the beloved into the eyes of the lover, where they continue on until they reach the heart, which is wounded. Cf. e. g. *RVF* III (“Era il giorno ch’al sol si scoloraro”), esp. the tercets (“Trovommi Amor del tutto disarmato/ et aperta la via per gli occhi al core, / che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco:// però al mio parer non li fu honore/ ferir me de saetta in quello stato, / a voi armata non mostrar pur l’arco.”); see also *RVF* II. In some poems one may read that the personification of Amor has its seat in the ‘soul’ (*anima, animus*), which is to be located physiologically in the brain (“Amor, che dentro a l’anima bolliva” [LXVII, v. 5]). In accordance with my interpretation of the meaning of the term ‘heart’ in the *Canzoniere* see LXXII, vv. 29 sq., which refer to the ‘heart’ as the seat of the (love-)cogitatio (“empiendo d’un pensier alto et soave/ quel core ond’ànno i begli occhi la chiave.”). That is to say, the term ‘heart’ in Petrarch (as with many other terms in the *Canzoniere*) is to be understood as rhetorical, metaphorical, not in the proper sense of the term; or, to put it in other words: the presence of this term in the *Canzoniere* is not pertinent to the problem I will discuss. I should like to add that in a most famous treatise on *hereos* from the University of Montpellier, written by Arnaud de Villeneuve/Arnaldus de Villanova (which Wack does not consider), the heart as the location of *calor innatus* is integrated in the etiology, based on humoral pathology, of *hereos* as I have presented it.
general structures of the collection that could be considered in light of the malady described in the treatises. My remarks on the problem of historicity as well as the discussion of all further problems (for example, of what use my hypothesis may be for a new reading of the Canzoniere) will be formulated in a separate section of concluding remarks.

Since the Petrarchan Canzoniere first garnered scholarly attention, there is one aspect of the collection that has seriously irritated many commentators, leading them to suggest more or less problematic explanations for the phenomenon (which I will not discuss here): it is indeed conspicuous that in almost every poem, readers encounter a term that would be extremely unusual in modern love lyric. Moreover, we find this term located in exactly those passages where, in modern contexts, we would find the term “feelings” or one of its synonyms. Petrarch, however, uses a word that, according to the organization of the semantic field with which we are familiar, stands in opposition to ‘feelings’, namely ‘thinking’: ‘pensare’, or ‘pensieri’, the vernacular terms for ‘cogitare’, ‘cogitatio’. As a first step of my argument, I would propose that the extremely high frequency at which this term appears in the text be considered in connection with the discourse on hereos. As mentioned, the treatises consider the profundatio cogitatio or, to put it precisely, the lover’s constant and exclusive thinking of the beloved as the main symptom of the malady; in Petrarch’s words: “[…] e’l pensier mio,/ ch’è sol di lei, sí ch’altra non v’à parte.” Considered from the perspective presented here, the frequency of the activity of ‘pensare’ (this is my first remark with respect to the aspect of historicity) in Petrarch would thus not necessarily imply a de-sexualized, intellectualized or a Platonizing concept of love.

56 Within the German-speaking academy there has been a particularly fierce controversy concerning this feature of Petrarch’s écriture (Karlheinz Stierle: Petrarcas Landschaften. Zur Geschichte ästhetischer Landschaftserfahrung. Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag 1979; Bernhard König: Petrarcas Landschaften. Philologische Bemerkungen zu einer neuen Deutung. In: Romanische Forschungen 92 [1980], p. 251–282). My reading differs from Stierle’s as well as from König’s interpretation of Petrarch’s insistence on cogitare.

57 “D’amorosi penseri [...]” (X, v. 12); “[...] i be’ pensier’ celati” (XI, v. 5); “Da lei ti vèn l’amoroso pensero” (XIII, v. 9); “l’anima [...] con molto pensiero indi si svelle.” (XVII, vv. 13–14); “miro pensoso le crudeli stelle” (XXII, v. 15); “Da me son fatti i miei pensier’ diversi” (XXIX, v. 36); “Allor saranno i miei pensier’ a riva/ che foglia verde non si trovi in lauro” (XXX, vv. 7–8); “Dentro pur foco, et for candida neve,/ sol con questi pensier’ [...]” (XXX, vv. 31–32); “l’amoroso pensiero che m’atterra.” (XXXVI, v. 5); “del pensiero amoroso che m’atterra.” (XXXXVI, v. 2); “Allor mi strinsi a l’ombra d’un bel faggio,/ tutto pensoso; [...]” (LIV, vv. 7–8); “Vaghi pensier’ che cosí passo passo/ scorto m’avete a ragionar tant’alto,/ [...]” (LXX, vv. 21 sq.); “L’amoroso pensiero/ ch’alberga dentro [...]” (LXXI, vv. 91–92); “[...] un sol dolce penser l’anima appaga” (LXXV, v. 6); “Amor, con cui pensier mai non amezzo” (LXXIX, v. 5); “Cosí potess’io ben chiedere in versi/ i miei pensier’ [...]” (XCV, vv. 1–2)

58 LXI, vv. 13 sq.
The second point I would like to mention concerns a concatenation of terms that I have characterized above as belonging to the basic syndromes of heroe. For a modern reader, one of the most striking features of the Canzoniere is the concomitance of weeping or crying, and a strong physical desire, as, e. g., in RVF LXI, vv. 9–11: “Benedette le voci [...] e i sospiri, et le lagrime, e’l desio”. It is a peculiarity of Petrarch’s discourse to permanently insist on the lover’s weeping (“lagrime”), on his suffering (“la doglia mia”), on exhaustion (“lasso”, “[il] corpo stancho ch’a gran pena porto”), on lamenting (“lagnarsi,” “lamentar”), on the “affann[i]” – a disposition that advances to the point of permanent weeping, which continues day and night. This feature alone is quite unusual, considered from a modern standpoint; but what is even more irritating is the frequently overlooked, or rather unrealized fact – unrealized because it seems to not fit the semantic feature of weeping or lamenting – that the lyrical self expresses

59 “[...] gli occhi [...]/ che di lagrime son fatti uscio et varco: [...]” (III, vv. 10–11); “[...] anzi che sian venute/ l’ore del pianto, [...]” (XIV, vv. 11–12); “et gli occhi in terra lagrimando abasso./ Talor m’assale in mezzo a’ tristi pianti” (XV, vv. 8–9); “Piovonmi amare lagrime dal viso” (XVII, v. 1); “che le lagrime mie si spargan sole.” (XVIII, v. 14); “però con gli occhi lagrimosi e’nfermi” (XIX, v. 12); “poi quand’io veggio fiammeggiar le stelle/ vo lagrirmando [...]” (XXII, vv. 11–12); “come costei ch’i’piango a l’ombra e al sole;” (XXII, v. 21); “Lagrime anchor non mi bagnava il petto/ né rompea il sonno [...]” (XXIII, vv. 27–28); “piani molt’anni il mio sienfato ardire” (XXIII, v. 143); “Amor piangeva, et io con lui talvolta” (XXV, v. 1); “Lagrime dunque che dagli occhi versi” (XXIX, v. 29); “sempre piangendo andrò per ogni riva” (XXX, v. 33); “per gli occhi che di sempre pianger vegghi/ [...]” (XXXVII, vv. 1–2); “Et lo si son un di quei che’l pianger giova; et par ben ch’io m’ingegni/ che di lagrime premi/ sien gli occhi miei [...]” (XXXVII, vv. 63–97); “et par che dica: Or ti consuma et piagni.” (XXXVIII, v. 8); “Però i di miei fien lagrimosi et manchi” (XLVI, v. 5); “Per lagrime chi’i’ spargo a mille a mille, [...]” (XLVIII, v. 5); “Qual foco non avrian già spento et morto/ l’onde che gli occhi tristi versan sempre? (LV, v. 7 and v. 11–12); “Ma, lasso, [...]” (LXII, v. 12).  

60 LXI, v. 6; see also CLV, v. 7; CCXXIII, v. 14; CCLV, v. 3.


62 XV, v. 1 sq.; “veggio a molto languir pocha mercede” (CI, v. 5); see also CLXXIV, v. 12; CCXXIV, v. 2; CCXLIV, v. 7.

63 XXXVIII, v. 5 and LXXXIV, v. 4; see also CCV, v. 5; CCCXI, v. 7; CXXXII, v. 6.

64 LXXII, v. 15; see also XII, v. 2; LXI, v. 5; LXII, v. 12.

65 The concept of permanent weeping is to be found in its most explicit version in the first quatrain of CCXVI (“Tutto ’l di piango; et poi la notte, quando/ prendon riposo i miseri mortali, / trovomi in pianto, et raddoppiarsi i mali: / così spendo ’l mio tempo lagrimando.”).
at the same time a strong sexual desire: "cieco" or "possente" or "fermo" or "vago desir"; "ardente" or "caldo desio"; "bram[a]"; "amorosa" or "fera" or even "vil voglia"; "voglia ardente"; "infiammate voglie"; "fero ardore"; "sfrenato ardire."66

Modern ignorance of *hereos* has led not only to the neglect of the massive physical implications of the feelings expressed by the lyrical self of the collection; it has also led to a characterization of the lover presented by Petrarch as unmanly, effeminate, and even somewhat ridiculous.67 Indeed, in modern love discourses, ‘tears’ and ‘physical desire’ are – to put it in terms of structuralist semantics – distributed complementarily; where one may find item A, one will not find item B, and vice versa. And if the two terms appear together, this would be in most cases the utterance of a female person.

I will draw some provisional and still highly hypothetical conclusions from the preceding remarks: one need not judge the semantic substratum of the *Canzoniere* as a point of Petrarch’s poetic discourse which should be benignly neglected because it seems somewhat embarrassing from a modern perspective. One should perhaps be more cautious to affiliate the love concept found in the *Canzoniere* with Platonic love. Finally, one should keep in mind that according to the contemporary discourse, the story of an unhappy love that informs the poems of the collection is to be considered an articulation of ‘normal discourse,’ implying that it is not informative or does not bear a specific meaning as such. The *Canzoniere* is not the story of an absolutely exceptional or highly idiosyncratic love put into verse; if we want to continue speaking of emerging subjectivity with reference to Petrarch’s collection, we will have to find this subjectivity elsewhere; meaning, not in the semantic substratum of the emotions expressed in the collection.

I will now proceed to comment more in detail on two poems in order to substantiate my above suggestions. The first poem is *RVF* CXXIX, the famous *canzone* “Di pensier in pensier.” I will skip some verses and will focus on those that are particularly pertinent to my argument:68

66 LVI, v. 1; CLXI, v. 3; XXII, v. 24; CLXXVIII, v. 6; see also XXIII, v. 147; LVII, v. 2; LXXIII, v. 78; CXLVII, v. 11; CLXXI, v. 14. As to “desio” see XXXVII, v. 50; VI, v. 1; XVIII, vv. 10 and 13; LXXIII, v. 17; LXXIX, v. 4; CXIII, v. 8; CXXVII, v. 52; XLVII, vv. 5 and 14; XLVIII, v. 12; LXXI, v. 18; LXXVII, v. 13; XCV, v. 11; XCVI, v. 3; CCXXXVI, v. 5; CCXL, v. 14. For “brama” see CXVI, v. 5; see also LXXI, v. 5; CLXVIII, v. 4; CCVII, v. 34. As to “voglia” see CCLXX, v. 66; XXIII, v. 3; XLVIII, v. 8; CLIV, v. 14; CCX, v. 13; LXXIII, v. 2; CXX, v. 3; LXXVII, v. 94; CCCLI, vv. 3–4; CLXXIII, v. 10; LIII, v. 69; LXXIII, v. 2. For “ardore” see CLXI, v. 2; see also CLXXV, vv. 7 and 12; CXXIV, v. 14; CCIII, vv. 1 and 9; XXIII, v. 143; CXL, v. 8.

67 This line of interpretation is accentuated perhaps most heavily in Hugo Friedrich: *Epopee della lirica italiana*. Milan: Mursia 1974, p. 158; see also p. 139, 144, 146.

Di pensier in pensier, di monte in
monte mi guida Amor [...] 

Se 'n solitaria piaggia, rivo o fonte,
se 'n fra duo poggi siede ombrosa
valle, ivi s'acqueta l'alma sbigottita;
et come Amor l'envita, or ride, or piange [...]

onde a la vista huom di tal vita experto
diria: “Questo arde, et di suo stato è
incerto”.

Per alti monti et per selve aspre trovo
qualche riposo: ogni habitato loco
è nemico mortal degli occhi miei.
A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo
de la mia donna [...] 

Ove porge ombra un pino alto od un colle
talor m'arresto, et pur nel primo sasso
disegno co la mente il suo bel viso.

Poi ch'a me torno, trovo il petto molle
de la pietate; et alor dico: “Ah! lasso,
dove se' giunto! et onde se' diviso!”

Ma mentre tener fiso
posso al primo pensier la mente vaga,
et mirar lei, et oblïar me stesso,
sento Amor sì da presso,
che del suo proprio error l'alma s'appaga.[]

L’lò piú volte (or chi fia che mi 'l creda?)
ne l'acqua chiara et sopra l'erba verde
veduto viva, [...] 

Poi quando il vero sgombra
quel dolce error, pur li medesmo assido
me freddo, pietra morta in pietra viva,
in guisa d'uom che pensi et pianga et
scriva.

From thought to thought, from mount to
mount, Love leads me on [...] 

If by a lonely heath or shore or fount
Or if between two lofty hills there lies

A shadowed vale, there my soul terrified
Grows calm; as Love invites
It laughs, now weeps [...] 

Thus seeing it, one expert in such life
Would say, “Uncertain of his state, he
burns.”

Amidst high mountains and in rugged woods
I find some peace; each spot that's tenanted
Of my eyes is a deadly enemy.
At every stride springs up a fresh thought of
My lady [...] 

Where some tall pine tree or a hill gives shade
Sometimes I pause and, on the very first
Stone with my mind trace her fair counte-
nance.
Then, coming to myself, I feel my breast
Wet through with pity; then I say: “Ah, woe!
Where have you come? From what are you
cut off?”

But while I can hold firm
On that first thought my straying intellect,
Can gaze upon her and forget myself,
so near is Love, I feel
the soul with its own error is content.

Alive I've seen her many times (now who
Is there to credit me?), in water clear
And on green grass, [...] 

When truth sweeps sweet illusion out, there I
Sit down, cold through, dead stone on living
stone,
Shaped like a man who thinks and weeps
and writes.

(vv. 1–52)
Aside from some not uninteresting but – at least with respect to this canzone – less crucial aspects of etiology,\(^{69}\) I would like to emphasize the following aspects: firstly the motif of *profundacio cogitationis*, which constitutes the semantic isotopy of the poem and is characterized explicitly, not so much as permanent thoughtfulness, but as a permanent or even obsessive preoccupation of the lover’s activity of *cogitare* with the person of Laura (vv. 17–18: “A ciascun passo nasce un penser novo / de la mia donna […].”) Then there is a sort of secondary isotopy for this canzone which is one of the strangest features of the Petrarchan discourse and a syndrome rarely found in other texts. I am referring to the lyrical self’s tendency to see his beloved wherever he looks even when she is not actually present,\(^{70}\) a feature perhaps most evident in vv. 28–29: “[…] et pur nel primo sasso / disegno co la mente il suo bel viso.” What is expressed in these lines is that the mind (“la mente”) designs a picture of Laura – which must consequently be understood as an imaginary picture – in or on a contingent object of the surrounding world (“nel primo sasso”). Let me reiterate that the regular task of the *virtus imaginativa* is to synthesize the data realized by the senses in order to convey an adequate picture of the world to the mind. What happens in the process described in the poem is, rather, that the imaginativa of the perceiving person is fixated on a certain picture to the extent that it constantly blends the sensory perceptions with what is already firmly impressed or imprinted on the mind. What is more: this interior picture is the dominant component, so that the self ‘really’ sees, or believes it sees Laura in places where she is not in fact present: “I’ l’ò piú volte […]/ ne l’acqua chiara et sopra l’erba verde / veduto viva […].” (vv. 40–42). The corresponding operation of the mind is evaluated by the self as an “error [del] l’alma”; the reason

\(^{69}\) I refer to v. 8 (the continuous change from laughing to crying and vice versa); to vv. 30–32 and to v. 52 (the thematizing of permanent lamenting and weeping); to v. 55, which I did not quote here (the concomitant thematizing of “desiderio intenso”), and finally to the symptom “querunt solitudinem” which is the theme of the *canzone*.

\(^{70}\) I would like to stress the importance of genre for the more or less far-reaching consequences of this feature. In several of Boccaccio’s novellas one can easily detect the ‘secret life’ of the *hereos* treatises (II, 8; IV, 8; X, 7; V, 9; II, 10; IV, 5). Within a third person-narrative, however, these vestiges take on a quite different shape. As to the fixation of the *virtus imaginativa*, e. g., one may read in II, 8, 40: “si forte s’innamorò, che più avanti di lei non vedeva.” Within the *Canzoniere*, in contrast, the results of such a subjectivized view are thematized and exhibited to the reader at length. It is only by way of this device that the feature I will below apostrophize as ‘perspectivism’ is able to emerge. I would like to add that the second prominent text to which I shall refer in this context – Cervantes’ *Quijote* – has its characters articulate their views to a large extent in direct, first-person speech (in accordance with its author’s comprehensive (ethical and poetological) Aristotelianism, the Stagirite recommending the ‘mimetic’ mode not only for drama, but also – whenever it is possible or plausible – for epic texts).
for not attempting to overcome it lies in the fact that the mind perceives the result of its own dysfunction as pleasurable: “che del suo proprio error l’alma s’appaga.” (v. 37) And when, finally, the ‘real’ reality destroys the “dolce error,” the lover changes from ‘normal’ to ‘abnormal’; he becomes cold (“freddo”) and is petrified (“pietra morta in pietra viva,” v. 51). From the standpoint of humoral pathology, these two states are symptoms of melancholy, which in turn is the result of long-lasting lovesickness.

The most important point for my general argument is, however, that the canzone seems to evidence the two main aspects of hereos to be found in the treatises: namely, the fixation of the virtus cogitativa and the ensuing dysfunction of the virtus imaginativa. What has up until now, and particularly with reference to this canzone, been interpreted as idiosyncratic, or even as an expression of a decidedly subjective attitude of the lyrical self towards the world, seems rather to correspond to a wide-spread form of behavior. This enables not everyone, but the ‘experts’ to state the problem of the person concerned: ardent love without fulfillment (“onde a la vista huom di tal vita experto / diria: Questo arde, et di suo stato è incerto.” vv. 12–13).

The second poem I would like to address is the canzone “Quel’antiquo mio dolce empio signore” (CCCLX), which is a text from the last section of the Canzoniere that analyzes the self’s suffering in retrospect. The analysis is construed as an altercatio, a dispute between a person referring to himself as ‘I’ and a personification of love, ‘Amor’. The ‘I’ laments his past whereas ‘Amor’ emphasizes the positive aspects of the love story; the dispute takes place before “la reina che la parte divina / tien di nostra natura e ’n cima sede,” (vv. 2–4), meaning, before the rational part of the mind. The dialogue must be understood, therefore, as a versified psychomachia; that is, as a dispute within the person’s mind. ‘Reason’ here does not refer to an abstract concept but rather to the pars rationalis of the self; the person lamenting named ‘I’ is the suffering part of the self, while the person named ‘Amor’ is a reference to the God of love on the literal level, whereas it refers on the allegorical level to the loving component of the self.71 In anticipation of my analysis I would like to stress that at the end of the poem, the pars rationalis evades the judgment it is asked to pronounce; that is, whether the position of the lamenting or of the loving component of the self is correct: “Nobile donna, tua sententia attendo. / Ella allor sorridendo: / Piacemi aver vostre questioni udite, / ma piú tempo bisogna a tanta lite.” (vv. 154–157) The rational part of the self is not able to

71 This constellation is evidenced by v. 75, in which Reason – that is, the pars rationalis – is addressed with the words: “Giudica tu, che me conosci et lui.”
pass judgment, which means that it is involved as well; its normal function – in this case, the appreciation or evaluation of objects perceived, including their constellation – is damaged or blocked.

The most interesting aspects of the canzone are in fact the descriptions of the self’s state from two different perspectives and the analytical implications of these descriptions. I shall limit my quotes once again to passages that are particularly pertinent to the points discussed here:

[...] 
i vi [dianzi a la reina, i.e. the reason] 
i mi rappresento carco di dolore,

[...] 
e’ ncomincio: “Madonna, il manco piede 
giovenetto pos’io nel costui regno,
on’d’altro ch’ira et sdegno 
non ebbi mai; et tanti et sì diversi 
tormenti ivi soffersi,
ch’alfine vinta fu quell’infinita
mia patientia, e ’n odio ebbi la vita.
Cosí ’l mio tempo infin qui trapassato
è in fiamma e ’n pene: et quante utili
honeste 
vie sprezzai, quante feste,
per servir questo lusinghier crudele!
[...]
O poco mèl, molto aloè con fele!
[...]
Questi [Amor] m’à fatto men amare Dio 
ché non deveva, et men curar me stesso: 
per una donna o messo
equalemente in non cale ogni pensero.
Di ciò m’è stato consiglier sol esso,
sempr’aguzzando il giovenil desio 
a l’empia cote [...]
[...]
Misero, a che quel chiaro ingegno altero,
et l’altrè dotì a me date dal cielo?
ché vo cangiando ’l pelo,
né cangiar posso l’ostinata voglia:
cosí in tutto mi spoglia

[...] 
There holds court [the queen, i.e. reason] 
[...] 
I represent myself, weighed down with pain,
[...] 
Thus I begin: “My lady, my left foot, 
In tender youth I set within his realm. 
From this naught have I known 
But anger and disdain; there I’ve endured 
So many torments cruel 
That finally my patience infinite 
Was overcome, and life grew odious. 
So up till now my time here has been spent in 
fire and grief: what useful paths and 
chaste, 
how many joys I scorned 
In serving this deceiver harsh and cruel! 
[...] 
But little honey, aloes much with gall! 
[...] 
This one [Love] caused me, less than I 
ought, to love My God, and to myself 
to pay less heed; And for a lady’s sake 
Each care I have neglected equally. 
To that end, only he has counselled me, 
While ever honing on an evil stone 
My youthful passion; [...]
[...] 
Poor wretch! For what was bright and 
lofty wit 
And other talents given me by heaven? 
Although my hair is changing 
I cannot force my stubborn will [desire] 
to change. 
In every way he steals
di libertà questo crudel ch'i' accuso,  
ch'amaro viver m'à voltò in dolce uso.  
Cercar m'à fatto deserti paesi  
[dure genti et costumi,  
[né costui [Amor] né quell'altra mia  
 nemica  
ch'i' fuggia, mi lasciavan sol un punto;  
Poi che suo fui non ebbi hora tranquilla,  
né costui [Amor] né quell'altra mia  
nemica  
sbandiro, et più non ponno  
per herbe o per incanti a sé ritrarlo.  
Per inganni et per forza è fatto donno  
sovra miei spiriti; et non sonò poi squilla,  
ov'io sia, in qual che villa,  
ch'I' non l'udisse. [...]  
[Quinci nascon le lagrime e i martiri,  
le parole e i sospiri,  
di ch'io mi vo stancando, et forse altrui.  
Giudica tu [Ragione], che me conosci et  
lui".  
[The speaker of the following verses is Amor; that is, the loving part of the self]  
"Ei sa che 'l grande Atride et l'alto  
Achille,  
lasciai cader in vil amor d'ancille:  
et a costui di mille  
donne electe, excellenti, n'èlessi una,  
qual non si vedrà mai sotto la luna,  
[Questi fur con costui li 'nganni mei.  
Questo fu il fel [...]  
[Et per dir a l'extremo il gran servigio,  
da mille acti inhonesti l'ò ritratto,  
ché mai per alcun pacto  
My freedom, this cruel one that I accuse;  
To sweet use he has turned my bitter life!  
He's driven me to seek out desert lands,  
[Harsh people and harsh ways,  
[Not for one instant did he [Love] leave  
me  
free, No more will she, that other foe I fly.  
[Since I was his, I've had no tranquil hour,  
Nor do I hope to have; and sleep my  
nights  
Have exiled; no more can  
They recover it with herbs or spells.  
Deceit and force have made him ruler of  
My spirits; when I stay within some town,  
There rings no midnight bell  
That I hear not. [...]  
[In it are born the tears and sufferings,  
The words and sighs, that have  
Exhausted me, and others too perhaps.  
Pass judgment [Reason], you who know  
both him and me."  
[he knows that I let great Atrides,  
Achilles high,  
sink low in passion for a slave;  
Yet for this man I picked  
One from a thousand ladies choice and  
rare,  
whose like will not be seen beneath the  
moon [...]  
And such were my deceptions with this  
man. This was the gall" [...]  
[To mention last my greatest help to him,  
I've saved him from a thousand unchaste  
acts, for in no circumstance

72 The translation quoted has “my gall” which may be misleading, since it is in fact not only about a metaphorical gall, but also an excess of the body fluid in its very literal and thus trans-personal sense.
a lui piacer non poteo cosa vile: Could he be pleased by an unworthy thing –
giovene schivo et vergognoso in acto A bashful youth, and timid in his deeds
et in penser, poi che fatto era huom ligio And thoughts – then he became her
liegeman true;
di lei ch’alto vestigio With her high image graven
l’impressa al core, et fecel suo simile. Upon his heart, and in her likeness
formed,
[...] Ne’er nighttime spectre was
Mai nocturno fantasma As full of error as he is towards us!
d’error non fu sí pien com’ei ver’ noi: [...] For that this proud one wails and has
[...] regrets!”
Di ciò il superbo si lamenta et pente.” (vv. 5–135)

This canzone differs from the first one I presented in so far as it does not focus on
one or two major symptoms of hereos but gives a nearly complete catalogue of the
etiology, the symptomatology and even the curative aspects. I shall not delve into
all of the details; I will rather point out some of the most salient references in the
verses quoted above.

In vv. 9 ff. (“Madonna, il manco piede [...]”), the ‘I’ presents a description
of the development of his state which corresponds to what may be found in the
medical treatises. He was affected at the age of adolescence (“giovenetto”). The
result is suffering (“tormenti”) since the fixation is unilateral (“altro ch’ira et
sdegno non ebbe mai”). The affective fixation, which, as we learn in vv. 41–42,
is resistant to therapy (“ché vo cangiando ’l pelo, né cangiar posso l’ostinata
voglia”), finally leads to a general abomination (“odio”) of life, which is the
typical result of hereos that remains uncured; namely, melancholy. In v. 24, we
find the manifestation of this latter disease according to humoral pathology: an
excess of gall (“molto aloè con fele”), which we encounter once again in v. 106
(“questo fu il fel”).

As far as the resistance to therapy is concerned, the text provides an amount
of additional information. The cure of a concoction of herbs propagated by
the experts of Petrarch’s time apparently proved ineffective, as did the popular
magic practices (“et piú non ponno / per herbe o per incanti a sé ritrarlo.”
vv. 63–64). Also ineffective were the remedies of mutatio regionis (“Cercar m’a
fatto deserti paesi / [...] né costui né quell’altra mia nemica ch’i’ fuggia, mi lasciava
sol un punto”; v. 46 and vv. 54–55) and the strategies of diversion by useful
occupations as well as by pleasurable social activities (“et quante utili honeste /
vie sprezzai, quante feste”; vv. 17–18). Finally, ‘Amor’ conveys that the remedy
of therapeutic intercourse praised by the medical authorities was not applicable in this case because of the intensity of the fixation (“da mille acti inhonesti lò ritratto, / ché mai per alcun pacto / a lui piacer non poteo cosa vile”; vv. 122–124).

As far as the non-bodily dimension of the illness is concerned, I would like to direct attention to the complete lack of regard for the problems of the souci de soi (“Questi m’à fatto [...] / men curar me stesso,” vv. 31–32). Next, I would like to emphasize the explanation for the state of permanent “profundacio cogitationum” (vv. 33–34): as causa the ‘I’ names the “giovenil desio” (v. 36), this having been misdirected (“aguzzando [...] / a l’empia cote [...]”) by a “consiglio” (“consigliar,” v. 35) – that is, an act of the virtus estimativa – which was biased by “questi,” meaning by ‘Amor’ or love. The damage to the estimativa goes so far as to completely block the normal function of the virtus volitiva (vulgo: liberum arbitrium; “cosí in tutto mi spoglia / di libertà questo crudel ch’i’ accuso,” vv. 43–44), and, what is even worse, it reaches a point at which the entire rational part seems useless to the self (“a che quel chiaro ingegno altero, / et l’altre doti a me date dal cielo?” vv. 39–40).

Particularly conspicuous in the justification pronounced by ‘Amor’ (meaning: by the loving part of the self) is the boundless overestimation of the beloved’s qualities, an error that is – according to the treatises – so typical of those suffering from heroe. The idea of this overestimation being based on a loss of reality is foregrounded by the mode of the praise: “[...] una, / qual non si vedrà mai sotto la luna” (vv. 98–99). Laura – says the loving part of the self – is not only more beautiful than any other woman of her age; she is not only more beautiful than any other woman who has ever lived on earth; but rather, she is more beautiful than all the women who will ever exist in the sublunary worlds. In light of this complete irreality – in the very logical sense – of the loving self’s appreciation of Laura, we should perhaps read the “inganni” to which ‘Amor’ refers in v. 105 with ironic intention as the proper verdict on his past actions.

I would like to conclude my commentary on this canzone with some short remarks on vv. 126–132, where it seems that the Petrarchan discourse is transparent to the underlying concept of heroe almost like the superior layer of a palimpsest. In these verses, ‘Amor’ describes how the self turned into a “huom ligio / di lei” (that is, of Laura): a lover. He says that a “vestigio” of Laura has been impressed or imprinted (“li ’mpresse al core,” vv. 126–128) on the lover’s heart. I would suggest these verses be read according to the concept of the impression (“imprimitur”) of the beloved’s picture on the lover’s mind described in the treatises as an act whose consequence
is a lasting fixation. In particular, I would like to draw attention to what in particular is impressed on the mind of this lover, which qualifies as an “alto vestigio”; meaning, not as a picture in the sense of photographic representation but as a ‘trace’ produced by the person concerned. So, what is imprinted on the self’s heart or mind is a metonymy of Laura, a complex of characteristics that are contiguous to what she really is, and furthermore an “alto vestigio,” a complex that gives prominence to the positive aspects. It is from this metonymy that the loving self extrapolates the image of the person with whom he is obsessed since he is not obsessed with the “vestigio,” but with the image of the person. The effect of this fixation was: “et fecel suo simile” (v. 128). Laura – says ‘Amor’ (in proper terms, the self-deceiving part of the ‘I’) – has made him similar to herself. This may be read as an allusion to a specific problem expounded in the treatises; namely, that the person suffering from hereos subjectively believes that there is a relationship of reciprocal accordance or convenientia between the person desired and the patient. The chronological arrangement of the steps described in the verses above evidences that the relationship of convenience (in the etymological sense of the term: convenire) does not exist between the lover and the real person of the beloved but between the lover and the image of the beloved impressed or imprinted on his mind, which is based on the extrapolation of a positively biased metonymy. The loving part of the self articulates this diagnosis but is nevertheless incapable of mentally realizing it, though he should have inferred it from the permanent indifference of the person concerned towards him. And it is for this reason that the polemically-intended qualification of the ‘I’ as being stuck in a “nocturno fantasma / d’error” (vv. 131–132) exactly hits the mark.

As a last point in my remarks with reference to the texts of the Petrarchan collection, I will present a most provisional re-interpretation of some general structures in light of what I have discussed so far.

What is perhaps the most conspicuous feature of hereos we find in the Canzoniere is the dysfunction of the virtus imaginativa with respect to its normal task:

The last aspect on which I commented with reference to poem CCCLX, which is particularly important to my hypothesis, is perhaps best evidenced in RVF L, vv. 63–68: “Misero me, che volli/ quando primier sí fiso/ gli tenni nel bel viso/ per iscolpirlo imaginando in parte/ onde mai né per forza né per arte/ mosso sarà [...]” (L, vv. 63–68). The first intense look at the beloved causes her face, mediated by an act of the imaginativa (“imaginando”) – that is, not the face as such, but the face as re-synthesized by the lover’s imagination – to be from then on as though sculpted (“iscolpirlo”) in a “parte” (Latin: pars) of the lover. Her face is set in a material that is hard and dry and can neither be removed by force nor by ‘arte’ (and ars in this age does not refer only to modern ‘art’ or to a general concept of know-how in the sense of Greek ‘techne,’ but also to the disciplines included in the university curriculum, including medicine).
the synthesizing of data of the surrounding world, which are mediated by sense perceptions. The feature is not only present in the canzone analyzed above, it is a characteristic of the entire collection and it is actualized by the device of explicitly contrasting the subjective, hallucinatory perceptions with their objective counterparts: the loving self is said to consistently see Laura in objects only vaguely or metonymically related to her and which sometimes have no evident relationship to her at all: “e 'l suo parlare, e' l bel viso, et le chiome / mi pia- quen si ch'i’ l’ò dinanzi agli occhi,/ ed avrò sempre, ov’io sia, in poggio o ’n riva.” (vv. 4–6)

74 See also XCVI, vv. 5–8: “Ma 'l bel viso leggiadro che depinto/ porto nel petto, et veggio ove ch’io miri,/ mi sforza; onde ne’ primi empii martiri/ pur son contra mia voglia risospinto.” See also CCLXIV, vv. 102–108, where the activity of the virtus imaginativa, which is misguided by the ‘piacere’ and which itself also misguides, is apostrophized (“Et questo ad alta voce ancho richiama/ la ragione svïata dietro ai sensi;/ ma perch'ell'oda, et pensi/ tornare, il mal costume oltre la spigne,/ et agli occhi depigne/ quella che sol per farmi morir nacque,/ perch’a me troppo, et a se stessa, piacque.”); see also CVII, vv. 5–11: “Fuggir vorrei: ma gli amorosi rai,/ che di et notte ne la mente stanno,/ risplendono si, ch’al quindecimio anno/ m’abbagliai più che 'l primo giorno assai;// et l’imagine lor son si cosparse/ che vover non mi posso, ov’io non veggia/ o quella o simil indi accesa luce.”; also CXVI, vv. 5–14: “[...] et ò sí avezza/ la mente a contemplar sola costei,/ ch’altro non vede, et ciò che non è lei/ già per antica usanza odia et disprezza./ In una valle chiusa d’ogni’ntorno,/ ch’è refrigerio de’ sospir’ miei lassi,/ giunsi sol cum Amor, pensoso et tardo./ Ivi non donne, ma fontane et sassi,/ et l’imagine trovo di quel giorno/ che’l pensier mio figura, ovunque io guardo.”; CXXV, vv. 66–74: “Ovunque gli occhi volgo/ trovo un dolce sereno/ pensando: Qui percosse il vago lume./ Qualunque herba o fior colgo/ credo che nel terreno/ aggia radice, ov’ella ebbe in costume/ gir fra le piagge e’l fiume,/ et talor farsi un seggio/ fresco, fiorito et verde.” The metonymic nexus between the flowers that the speaker picks and those between which Laura moves is purely subjective (“credo che nel terreno/ aggia radice, […].”), the objective status of which is called into question through the generic qualification of the plants alone (“Qualunque herba o fior colgo […].”) See also CLVIII, vv. 1–4 (“Ove ch’i’ posi gli occhi lassi o giri/ per quetar la vaghezza che gli spinge,/ trovo che bella donna ivi depinge/ per far sempre mai verdi i miei desiri.”); CLXXVI, vv. 5–8: “et vo cantando (o penser’ miei non saggii!)/ lei che’l ciel non poria lontana farme,/ ch’i’ l’ò negli occhi, et veder seco parme/ donne et donzelle, et sono abeti et faggi.” See also CXXVII, vv. 71–98: “Se mai candide rose con vermiglie/ in vasel d’oro vider gli occhi miei/ allor allor da vergine man colte,/ veder pensaro il viso di colei/ […]./ Ma pur che l’òra un poco/ fior’ bianchi et gialli per le piagge mova,/ torna a la mente il loco/ e’l primo di ch’i’ vidi a l’aura sparsi/ i capei d’oro, ond’io si sùbito arsi./ […]/ per ch’agli occhi miei lassi/ sempre è presente, ond’io tutto mi struggo./ Et così meco stassi,/ ch’altra non veggio mai, né veder bramo,/ né l’nome d’altra ne’ sospir’ miei chiamo.” See also CXLIII, vv. 1–10: “Quand’io v’odo parlar sí dolcemente/ com’Amor proprio a’ suoi seguaci instilla,/ […]/ Trovo la bella donna allor presente/ ovunque mi fu mai dolce o tranquilla/ […]/ Le chiome a l’aura sparse, et lei conversa/ indietro veggio; […].”
A second manifestation of this basic structure consists in the fact that after Laura’s death, the ‘I’ continues to speak about his encounters with her in quite the same way as when she was alive, although in these later cases he qualifies the encounters as hallucinations produced by his mind. And if one pays attention to

75 The hope uttered at the end of CCLXX (“Morte m’ hà sciolto, Amor, d’ogni tua legge:/ quella che fu mia donna al ciel è gita,/ lasciando trista et libera mia vita.” [vv. 106–108]) will be proven as having been illusoriony. Already in CCLXXXIII, we read: “Anima sconsolata, che pur vai/ giungendo legne al foco ove tu ardi?” (vv. 3–4) In CCLXXVII, it is said in v. 10 that Laura is dead (“è sotterra”), but the first nine verses of the poem present a situation that does not differ from the scenarios of the poems ‘in vita’ (“S’Amor novo consiglio non n’apporta,/ per forza converrà che ’l viver cange:/ tanta paura et duol l’alma trista ange,/ che ’l desir vive, et la speranza è morta;,// onde si sbigottisce et si sconforta/ mia vita in tutto, et notte et giorno piane,/ stanca senza governo in mar che frange,/ e ’n dubbia via senza fidata scorta./ Imaginata guida la conduce,/ ché la vera è sotterra […]”). The difference is that in the poems of the last part of the collection, the imaginary situation is not in opposition to a factual situation, but supplements (in the Derriean sense of ‘supplément’) a possibly factual situation of the past that is no longer possible. See also the first quatrain of CCCXLI: “Del cibo onde ’l signor mio sempre abonda,/ lagrime et doglia, il cor lasso nudrisco,/ et spesso tremo et spesso impallidisco,/ pensando a la sua piaga aspra et profonda.” The most evident proof of the incapacity to distinguish between imagination and reality is perhaps RVF, CCCXXXVI. The lyrical self believes, for a while, that Laura is still alive because of her imaginary presence in his mind (‘mente’), where she will ‘dwell forever,’ as he says; but finally the self has to remind him that Laura, in fact, is no longer among the living (“Tornami a mente, anzi v’è dentro, quella/ ch’indi per Lethe esser non pò sbandita,/ qual io la vidi in su l’età fiorita,/ tutta accesa de’ raggi di sua stella./ Sì nel mio primo occorso honesta et bella/ veggiola, in sé raccolta, et sí romita,/ ch’i’ grido: ‘Ell’è ben dessa; anchor è in vita’,/ e ’n don le cheggio sua dolce favella./ Talor risponde, et talor non fa motto./ I’ come huom ch’erra, et poi piú dritto estima,/ dico a la mente mia: ‘Tu se’ ’ngannata./ Sai che ’n mille trecento quarantotto,/ il di dì spolet ita, in l’ora prima,/ del corpo uscio quell’anima beata.”).  

76 “Se lamentar augelli, o verdi fronde/ mover soavemente a l’aura estiva,/ o roco mormaror di lucide onde/ s’ode d’una fiorita et fresca riva,/ là ’v’io seggia d’amor pensoso et scriva,/ lei che ’l cielo ne mostrò, terra n’asconde,/ veggio, et odo, et intendo ch’anchor viva/ di sí lontano a’ sospir’ miei risponde.// ‘Deh, perché inanzi ’l tempo ti consume?// – mi dice con pietate – a che pur versi/ degli occhi tristi un doloroso fiume?// Di me non pianger tu, ché miei di fersi/ morendo eterni, et ne l’interno lume,/ quando mostrai de chieder, gli occhi apersi.” (CCLXXIX); “Quante fiate, al mio dolce ricetto/ fuggendo altrui et, s’esser pò, me stesso,/ vo con gli occhi bagnando l’erba et ’l petto,/ rompendo co’ sospir’ l’aere da presso!/ Quante fiate sol, pien di sospetto,/ per luoghi ombrosi et foschi mi son messo,/ cercando col penser l’alto diletto/ che Morte à tolto, ond’io la chi amo spesso!/ Or in forma di nimpha o d’altra diva/ che del più chiaro fondo di Sorga esca,/ et pongasi a sedere in su la riva;// or l’ò veduto su per l’erba fresca/ calcare i fior/ comp’un’ donna viva, mostrando in vista che di me le ’ncresce.” (CCLXXI); “Se quell’a’ aura soave de’ sospiri/ ch’i’ odo di colei che qui fu mia/ donna, or è in cielo, et anchor par qui sia,/ et viva, et senta, et vada, et ami, et spiri,// ritrar potessi, or che caldi deseri/ movrei parlando! […]” (CCLXXVI, vv. 1–6); see also CCLXXXII, CCLXXXIII, CCXCI and CCI.
the far-reaching parallels between the encounters “in vita” and those “in morte di madonna Laura,” one might perhaps even question the status of those poems “in vita,” in which the self describes Laura as showing a positive attitude towards him (looking, greeting, smiling). When, after death, her existence cannot be

77 In this context, it must be taken into account, however, that the division of the cycle into poems ‘in vita di madonna Laura’ and ‘in morte di madonna Laura’ is not Petrarch’s, and that the poems on the whole are not in chronological order (see for example CCXI, which deals with the innamoramento and the following CXXII, where we read in the second tercet that the speaker’s sufferings have been going on for twenty years). Nevertheless, there are poems in which it is clear that she is already dead, and others in which she is not dead, but still alive and which, notwithstanding this difference, describe Laura’s attitude in an almost identical way. Cf. e. g. the poem ‘in vita’ LXIII, in which the lyrical self thanks Laura for having greeted him. This poem should be compared with the poems ‘in morte’, such as CCCXLVI, vv. 9–12, CCCXLII, vv. 5–11, CCCXL, vv. 10–14, CCLXI, vv. 9–14, CCLIX, vv. 67–71, and CCCV, vv. 1–8. On the other hand, it must also be related to the (immediately following) poem LXIV, where we read that Laura avoids greeting him. Another one of those poems that might suggest that Laura’s amicicia only exists in the lyrical self’s mind is CLV, where the ‘I’ says: “Piangea madonna”; but adds: “Quel dolce pianto mi depinse Amore,/ anzi scolpio, et que’ detti soavi/ mi scrisse entro un diamante in mezzo ‘l core” (v. 5 and vv. 9–11); see also the quatrains of CLVI, where it is insinuated that Laura’s tears are not real, but rather imaginary or that they originate from a biasing of the self’s memory by his wishes (“I’ vidi in terra angelici costumi/ et celesti bellezze al mondo sole, tal che di rimembrar mi giova et dole,/ ché quant’io miro par sogni, ombre et fumi;/ et vidi lagrimar que’ duo bei lumi,/ ch’àn fatto mille volte invidia al sole;/ et udí’ sospirando dir parole/ che farian gire i monti et stare i fiumi.”). The impression that Laura’s entire ‘existence’ as presented in the cycle is, to a large extent, imaginary, is furthermore reinforced by all those poems in which the lyrical self has visionary encounters, explicitly characterized as such, with the beloved woman when she is still alive; cf. e. g. CXI: “La donna che ‘l mio cor nel viso porta,/ là dove sol fra bei pensier’ d’amore/ sedea, m’apparve; et io per farle honore/ mossi con fronte reverente et smorta.// Tosto che del mio stato fussi accorta,/ a me si volse in sí nuovo colore/ ch’avrebbe a Giove nel maggior furore/ tolto l’arme di mano, et l’ira morta.// I’ mi riscossi; et ella oltra, parlando,/ passò, che la parola i’ non soffersi,/ né l’olose sfavillar degli occhi suoi./ Or mi ritrovo pien di sí diversi/ piaceri, in quel saluto ripensando,/ che duol non sento, né sentí’ ma’ poi.” See also CXXVI, vv. 40–63: “Da’ be’ rami scendea (dolce ne la memoria)/ una pioggia di fior’ sovra l’ suo grembo;/ et ella si sedea/ humile in tanta gloria,/ coverta già de l’amoroso nembo./ […] Quante volte diss’io/ allor pien di spavento:/ Costei per fermo nacque in paradiso./ […]/ e’ l volto e le parole e’ l dolce riso/ m’aveano, et si diviso/ da l’imagine vera,/ ch’i’ dicea sospirando:/ Qui come venn’io, o quando?/ credendo esser in ciel, non là dov’era.”; CXXVII, vv. 71–98 (quoted in n. 74); CXLIII, vv. 1–10 (quoted in n. 74). The etiology, so to speak, of this loss of reality is perhaps best expressed in LXXIII, vv. 24–26: “si possente è ‘l voler che mi trasporta:/ et la ragione è morta,/ che tenea ‘l freno, et contrastar nol pote.”; of the same tenor CXL, vv. 7–11, with an additional hint at the damage of the estimativa (‘chi discerne’): “[…] che ‘l fren de la ragion Amor non prezza,/ e chi discerne è vinto da chi vòle./ E veggio ben quant’elli a schivo m’anno,/ e so ch’i’ ne morrò veracemente,/ ché mia vertú non pó contra l’affanno”; see also CXXI, vv. 5–7: “I’ nol posso negar, donna, et nol nego,/ che la ragion, ch’ogni bona alma affrena,/ non sia dal voler vinta”; see also “[…] ad or ad ora a me stesso m’involo/ pur lei cercando che fuggir devria” (CLXIX, vv. 3–4); “[…] per lo gran desire/ di riveder cui non veder fu ‘l meglio.” (CCXXII, vv. 13–14).
other than imaginary, this purely hallucinatory Laura speaks to him, is full of pity towards him, sits down on his bed, addresses him as “fedel caro mio” (CCCXLI, 12), begins to sigh and even to weep when she sees him.\footnote{78 “Ella, contenta aver cangiato albergo,/ si paragona pur coi piú perfecti,/ et parte ad or ad or si volge a tergo,// mirando s’io la seguo, et par ch’aspecti” (CCCXLVI, vv. 9–12); “Ma chi né prima simil né seconda/ ebbe al suo tempo, et al lecto che io languisco/ vien tal ch’a pena a rimirar l’ardisco, e pietosa s’assiede in su la sponda.// Con quella man che tanto desïai, / m’asciuga li occhi, et col suo dir m’apporta/ dolcezza ch’uom mortal non sentí mai.” (CCCXLI, vv. 5–11); “co la sua vista, over co le parole, / intellecte da noi soli ambedui:// ‘Fedel mio caro, assai di te mi dole, / ma pur per nostro ben dura ti fui’, / dice, et cos’ altre d’arrestare il sole.” (CCCXLI, vv. 10–14); “Ella si tace, et di pietà depinta/ fiso mira pur me; parte sospira,/ et di lagrime honeste il viso adorna:// onde l’anima mia dal dolor vinta, / mentre piangendo allor seco s’adira,/ scioltà dal sonno a se stessa ritorna.” (CCCLVI, vv. 9–14); “I’ piango; et ella il volto/ co le sue man m’asciuga, et poi sospira, et s’adira/ con parole che i sassi romper ponno:/ et dopo questo si parte ella, e’l sonno.” (CCCLIX, vv. 67 –71); “Anima bella da quel nodo scioltà/ che piú bel mai non seppe ordire Natura,/ pon’d al ciel mente a la mia vita oscura,/ da sí lieti pensieri a pianger volta./ La falsa opinion dal cor s’è tolta,/ che mi fece alcun tempo acerba et dura/ tua dolce vista: omaj tutta secura/ volgi a me gli occhi, e i miei sospiri ascolta.” (CCCV, vv. 1–8).}

\footnote{79 Cf. e. g. XLIV, vv. 13–14: “né lagrima però discese anchora/ da’ be’ vostr’occhi, ma disdegno et ira.”; see also CCIII, esp. v. 9 and vv. 12–14; CXXVIII, vv. 10–12. The difference between these passages and the corresponding aspects in Provençal and dolce stil novo texts consists in the fact that the lyrical self of the Canzoniere not only implores the donna for ‘pity,’ but he firmly believes he has succeeded in making her change her attitude to that of a loving donna. This absolute misreading of the donna’s reactions is seldom found in the pre-Petrarchan love lyric.}

\footnote{80 In CXXXV, the lyrical self ‘sees’ Laura, who is already dead, but he sees her in ‘pictures,’ ‘imaginations,’ which he says ‘cannot be false’ (“mirandola in imagini non false,” v. 3). What he ‘sees’ is Laura appearing like the angels (“a li spirti celesti in vista eguale,” v. 4). This perception, however, is based on a picture of Laura that is avertedly imagined so that the text itself (i.e. the Canzoniere as a whole) seems to imply that the beauty of Laura ‘in vita,’ as described by the lyrical self, is not so much a fact as a reflection of her image in the self’s mind.}

\footnote{81 In addition to the material expounded above, I provide a randomized catalogue of a few minor aspects pertaining to my argument. On the level of symptomatology we find, of course,
I should like to conclude with some remarks in a more general tenor. If one accepts the thesis that the lyrical self of the Canzoniere is fashioned according to the contemporary medical concept of hereos, this implies that there is not much that we constant sighing (“Voi ch’ascoltate in rime sparse il suono/ di quei sospiri [...]” [I, vv. 1–2]; “Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi” [V, v. 1]; “[...] un vento angoscioso di sospiri” [XVII, v. 2]; “non o mai triegua di sospir [...]” [XXII, v. 10]; “[...] et quasi in ogni valle/ rimbombi il suon de’ miei gravi sospiri” [XXIII, vv. 12–13]; “per lei soprir la alma, [...]” [XXIX, v. 34]; “[...] oggi à sett’anni/ che sospirando vo di riva in riva/ la notte e ’l giorno, al caldo ed a la neve.” [XXX, vv. 28–30]; “et come spesso indarno si sopira.” [XXXII, v. 14]; “più folta schiera di sospiri accoglia!” [XXXVII, v. 68]; “et voi si pronti a darmi angoscia et duolo,/ sospiri [...]” [XLIX, vv. 12 sq.]; “[...] però ch’ò sopirato si gran tempo/ [...]” [LXX, v. 12]; “[...] quell’accesa voglia/ che m’à sforzato a sopirar mai sempre,/ [...]” [LXXIII, vv. 2sq.]; “[...] per fuggir de sospir [...]” [LXXIV, v. 4]; “[...] et or con gran fatica/ [...] in libertà ritorno sopirando.” [LXXVI, vv. 6–8]; “di sopir’ molti mi sgombrava il petto” [LXXVIII, v. 5]; “Onde piú volte sospirando indietro/ dissi [...]” [LXXXIX, vv. 9–10]; “[...] et or con gran fatica/ [...] de la lunga guerra de’ sospiri” [XCVI, vv. 1–2]), weeping even when the lover is sleeping (“spesso dal somno lagrimando desta” [VIII, v. 4]; “[...] mia speme [...]/ giunse nel cor, non per l’usata via/ che ’l sonno tene a chiusa, e ’l dolor molle” [XXXIII, vv. 9–11]; “Lagrime triste, et voi tutte le notti/ m’accompagnate, [...]” [XLIX, vv. 9–10]; “[...] perché dì et note gli occhi miei son moll?” [L, v. 62]), the unmotivated vacillation (“vaneggiar”) between laughing and weeping (“[...] quella speranza/ che ne fe’ vaneggiar sí lungamente,/ e ’l riso e ’l pianto, [...]” [XXII, vv. 9–11]; “che l’estremo del riso assaglia il pianto” [LXXI, v. 88]; “De’ passati danni piango et rido” [CV, v. 76]; “Pascomi di dolor, piangendo rido” [CXXIV, v. 12]; “Simil fortuna stampa/ mia vita, che morir poria ridendo” [CXXVI, vv. 80–81]; “[...] e’ l cor si lagna/ [...] e’ n vista asciutta et lieta,/ piange [...]” [CL, vv. 9–11]; “Questa humil fera [...]/ in riso e ’n pianto [...] mi rota [...]” [CLII, vv. 1–4]), rapid eye movement (“Gli occhi invaghiro allor sí de’ lor guai,” XVII, v. 5), the desire for solitude (“Solo et pensoso i più deserti campi/ vo mesurando a passi tardi et lenti,/ et gli occhi porto per fuggire intenti/ ove vestigio human l’arena stampi.” [XXXV, vv. 1–4]; see also CCXXXVII, v. 25: “Le città son nemiche, amici i boschi”; CLXXI, vv. 1–3: “Cercato ò sempre solitaria vita/ (le rive il sanno, et le campagne e i boschi)/ per fuggir questi ingegni sordi et loschi”; see also CCLXXXVIII, passim; CCXCVII, v. 4.)), the insistence on adolescence as the onset of the suffering (“Questa mia donna mi menò molt’an/ pien di vaghezza giovenile ardendo,” CXVI, vv. 16–17; see also CCXXVII, v. 25: “Le città son nemiche, amici i boschi”; CCLXXI, vv. 1–3: “Cercato ò sempre solitaria vita/ (le rive il sanno, et le campagne e i boschi)/ per fuggir questi ingegni sordi et loschi”); see also CCLXXVIII, passim; CCXCVII, v. 4.), the insistence on adolescence as the onset of the suffering (“Questa mia donna mi menò molt’an/ pien di vaghezza giovenile ardendo,” CXIX, vv. 16–17; see also CCXVII, v. 13, and passim), a suffering that persists, in its two dimensions, as a violent physical desire and as an endless, weeping lamentation, for decades (“[...] il mio primo giovenile errore/ quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono” [I, vv. 3–4]; “ch’i’ son già pur crescendo in questa voglia/ ben presso al decim’ anno,/ né poss’indovinar chi me ne scigliogia.” [L, vv. 54–55]; “Quel foco ch’i’ pensai che fosse spento/ dal freddo tempo et da l’età men fresca,/ fiamma et martir ne l’anima rinfresca.” [IV, vv. 1–3]); in CCLXXXVIII the duration of the sufferings is enumerated exactly: “Tennemi Amor anni ventuno ardendo,/ [...] poi che madonna e’l mio cor seco inseme/ saliro al ciel, dieci altri anni piangendo.” (vv. 1–4); see also the additional hint at the fact that the “fera voglia,” which later on became the cause of his misfortune, was already virulent in him at a time when Amor (love) had not visited him (“Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade,/ che nascer vide et anchor quasi in herba/ la fera voglia/ che per mio mal crebbe,/ perché cantando il duol si disacera,/ canterò com’io vissi in libertade,/
might consider “individual” about the story narrated in the collection. Nevertheless, it is not beside the point to consider it a document of the rise of subjectivity at

mentre Amor nel mio albergo a sdegno s’ebbe.” [XXIII, vv. 1–6]). Of the same tenor XC, v. 1 (“Erano i capei d’oro a l’aura sparsi”), where the lyrical self says that he bore the ‘tinder’ of love already in his bosom when he met Laura, so that it was not at all ‘miraculous’ that he at once began to ‘burn’ with desire (“’i che l’esca amorosa al petto avea,/ qual meraviglia se di súbito arsi?” vv. 7–8; in this context I would like to mention once again the sexual etiology of hereos: the illness is preceded by a first, purely physical encounter with a random female partner who need not be identical with the donna); the impossibility of overcoming his physical desire (“[…] traviato è ’l folle mi’ desio/ […]/ né mi vale spronarlo, o dargli volta,” VI, vv. 1–7); the praising of the beloved as more beautiful than any other woman (“[…] quanto ciascuna è men bella di lei,” XIII, v. 3; “Non fur già mai veduti sí begli occhi/ o ne la nostra etade o ne’ prim’anni,” XXX, vv. 19–20; “Amor e ’l ver fur meco a dir che quelle/ ch’i’ vidi, eran bellezze al mondo sole,/ mai non vedute piú sotto le stelle,” CLVIII, vv. 9–11). In this context, the self sometimes makes explicit that his appreciation of Laura differs from the communis opinio, but that he does not regard this divergence as his problem, but instead as the problem of the rest of the world, thereby foregrounding the manic dimension of his feelings: “Parrà forse ad alcun che ‘n lodar quella/ ch’i’ adoro in terra, errante sia ’l mio stile,/ faccendo lei sovr’ogni altra gentile,/ santa, saggia, leggiadra, honesta et bella.// A me par il contrario […]/ […]/ et chi no ’l crede, venga egli a vedella;/ sí dirà ben: Quello ove questi aspira/ è cosa da stancare Athene […]/ […]/ Lingua mortale al suo stato divino/ giunger non pote: […]” (CCXLVII, vv. 1–13). See also CCXLVIII, vv. 3–4, the incrimination of those who do not realize that Laura is the ‘only one to be qualified as the sun’ as being ‘blind’: “ch’è sola un sol, non pur a li occhi mei,/ ma al mondo cieco […]”; in other poems we do not find this direct opposition between the self’s view and the communis opinio, but it is frequently made explicit that Laura is the most beautiful woman for the lyrical self (“tal che null’altra fia mai che mi piaccia,” XX, v. 4; “Et se di lui fors’altra donna spera,/ vive in speranza debile et fallace,” XXI, vv. 5–6). – Finally, I would like to mention the lack of interest not only in any other woman (“[…] Anima [i. e. of the lyrical self] […]/ pocho prezando quel ch’ogni huom desia;” XIII, vv. 7–11; “Gli occhi […]/ […] anno a schifo ogni opera mortale;/ […]/ Amor in altra parte non mi sprona,/ né i pie’ sanno altra via, né le man come/ lodar si possa in carte altra persona.” XCVII, vv. 5–14), but in any other sort of ‘diletti’ in favor of his constant obsession with the beloved (“tutti gli altri diletti/ di questa vita ò per minori assai,/ et tutte altre bellezze indietro vanno.” LXXIII, vv. 64–66). Even the point that the ‘desio,’ which originates in the damaged imaginativa, finally communicates its orders to the membra – to the limbs of the body – is to be found here (“et che’ pie’ miei non son fiaccati et lassi/ a seguir l’orme vostre in ogni parte/ perdendo inutilmente tanti passi;” LXXIV, vv. 9–11), and the corresponding context evidences that the weakness, the lassitude expressed passim in the Canzoniere (“oimè, lasso”) is not to be interpreted as a physical, bodily weakness, but as psychic exhaustion and indifference that constitute – along with the hypertrophy of cogitation – the main symptom of melancholy (the aspect of aboulia for example in CXVIII: “Rimansi a dietro il sestodecimo anno/ de’ miei sospiri, […]/ […] Or qui son, lasso, et voglio esser altrove;/ et vorrei piú volere, et piú non voglio;/ et per piú non poter fo quant’io posso;/ et d’antichi desir’ lagrime nove/ provan com’io son pur quel ch’i’ mi soglio,/ né per mille rivolte anchor son mosso.” vv. 1–2 and vv. 9–14). The weariness of life and the indifference towards death, or, rather, towards the death of the soul is to be found, e. g., in CXLI, v. 14: “et cieca al suu morir l’alma consente.” As to metaphorical references to acedia in the sense of melancholy see CLIII, v. 10 (“che ’l nostro stato è inquieto et fosco”); a reference based
the end of the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{82} Even from an archaeological or historicist standpoint, such an interpretation is justified, considering the relationship of the Petrarchan discourse to the theological discourse, a point I do not discuss in this paper.\textsuperscript{83} As regards the love story proper, one should, on the contrary, consider this line of interpretation a hermeneutic potentiality. Its being actualized originates in the complete shift of basic anthropological concepts over the centuries which separate Petrarch from us; that is to say, it is contingent on the course (intellectual) history has taken. But, it cannot be derived from the Petrarchan text as a structure. Designing in one’s mind (“disegno co la mente il suo bel viso,” CXXIX, 29) a picture of the world that differs from the commonsensical view would have to be qualified from a modern standpoint as subjective, or at least as potentially subjective. From the standpoint of Petrarch’s time, it would have to be qualified as pathological. What creates the legitimacy to implement a dimension of subjectivity\textsuperscript{84} into the love story presented in the \textit{Canzoniere} is the fact that the self or the author makes his pathological status productive: by taking literally the description of the patients on humoral pathology in CCXVI; v. 5 (“In tristo humor vo li occhi consumando”). On the level of therapy, besides the aspects already mentioned – the most important of these being the remedy of \textit{mutatio regionis} (“le man bianche sottili, / et le braccia gentili,/ [...]/ mi celan questi luoghi alpestri et feri;” XXXVII, vv. 98–104; “fuggia le tue mani, et per camino,/ agitandom’ i vènti e ’l ciel et l’onde,/ m’andava sconosciuto et pellegrino:” LXIX, vv. 9–11; “O poggi, o valli, o fiumi, o selve, o campi, o testimon’ de la mia grave vita,/ quante volte m’udiste chiamar morte!” LXXI, vv. 37–39) – we find intimations of therapeutical intercourse (“così, lasso, talor vo cerchand’io,/ donna, quanto è possibile, in altrui/ la disïata vostra forma vera.” XVI, vv. 12–14). But since all these therapies prove ineffective, the lyrical self degenerates over the course of the years into a fully developed state of melancholy, into \textit{tristitia}, even \textit{acedia}, perpetual contemplation of his own death, and even the wish to die (“Questa speranza mi sostenne un tempo:/ or vien mancando, et troppo in lei m’attempo. [...]/ Ogni loco m’atrista ov’io non veggo/ quei begli occhi soavi/ che portaron le chiavi/ de’ miei dolci pensier’, mentre a Dio piacque;/ et perché l’uro exilio più m’aggravai, / s’io dormo o vado o seggio,/ altro già mai non cheggio,/ et ciò ch’io vidi dopo lor mi spiacque,” XXXVII, vv. 15–40; “tal ch’io non penso udir cosa già mai/ che mi conforte ad altro ch’a trar guai.” XXXVII, vv. 95–96). Already in LXXIX we read: “ché la morte s’appressa, e ’l viver fugge.” (v. 14; of the same tenor the following poems: LXXX, esp. v. 4 and vv. 23–24, LXXXI, esp. v. 14, and LXXXII, esp v. 5).\textsuperscript{82} As is well-known this reading of the \textit{Canzoniere} was first introduced by Rousseau and continued by Hegel; without mentioning Petrarch, Wack qualifies the introduction of \textit{hereos} as “an important contribution to medieval subjectivity” (Wack: \textit{Lovesickness in the Middle Ages}, p. 59).\textsuperscript{83} See my Philology and Theology in Petrarch. In: \textit{MLN} 122, 1 (2007), p. 133–147. See also \textit{Mundus imago Laurae. Il sonetto petrarchesco Per mezz’i boschi e la ‘modernità’ del Canzoniere}. In: \textit{MLN} 126, 1 (2011), p. 1–28. In this latter publication I attempt to give a theological interpretation of the self’s subjectivized view of the surrounding world. As with every text of the high canon, the \textit{Canzoniere} is extremely complex. It allows for different interpretations of the self’s state as “alma disviata” (CCCLV, v. 7).\textsuperscript{84} Which means to be aware that this is an act of projection and not an archaeological reading.
in the treatises, “flent aut cantant,” and by then interpreting the “cantare” in
the humanist, classical, Virgilian sense, he converts a pathological view into a
poetic discourse. Poetry and literature are considered, from Aristotle to Yuri M.
Lotman, as a discourse that refers to something particular but communicates
the universal or something of general relevance. So, one could be tempted to for-
mulate that Petrarch introduces in his Canzoniere the concept that a subjective
look at the world may be of general pertinence. He introduces the concept later
labeled “perspectivism”; but it is highly improbable that he was aware of this
innovation.

As a second point of these concluding remarks, I will address the question of
historicity. I would propose that there are in the history of Western thought three
models for conceptualizing humans’ most intimate feelings: the Platonic model,
the model of courtly love, and hereos. It will not be necessary to emphasize that
the three models have much in common and that these generalities cover the love
discourses of other cultures, too, as there are aspects one may call anthropological
constants grounded in our belonging to one species. Instead, I will foreground the
differences, while trying to characterize the three models by way of ideal types; as to
concrete textual manifestations, there will be in many cases partial hybridization.

I will not say anything further about hereos. Readers may be astonished by
my rather strict dissociation of hereos and courtly love. Notwithstanding certain
features they share, I would posit that the concept of courtly love is somewhat
different. It is a social ritual. This means that it is a code which implies that it
is a form of communication, an exchange of signals, the meaning of which is
not liable to subjective interpretation. There may be diverging aspirations and
desires, but there is no basic hiatus between the “real” behavior of the donna and
the “reading” of this behavior on her suitor’s part. Understanding courtly love as
a ritual means, thirdly, that the love story is a mise en scène. The feelings exhib-
itied by the persons involved are certainly not superficial only, but they are less
“profound” than the love associated with hereos.

Deepness, trustworthiness, non-ritual, non-codified status, giving promi-
nence to the lover’s personal, subjective view of things – all these features situate
hereos much closer to the love concept of Romanticism than to courtly love. I
would nevertheless maintain that identifying hereos with romantic love might be

85 Poetics 1451a–b; Yuri M. Lotman: The Structure of the Artistic Text. Ann Arbor: University of
86 Mary Wack, in contrast, refers to the canon of courtly literature as another example of the
presence of hereos in literary texts.
87 Concerning the description of courtly love, there is still no better publication than Georges
problematic. The romantic concept seems to me one version of the basic model of Platonic love among the many we have had in the course of Western history. Platonic love does not deny the sensuous dimensions; but, it is characterized by dissociating the sensuous and the spiritual, at least in terms of normative processes (from the pleasure excited by viewing bodily beauty to the pleasure originating in the completely immaterial beauty of pure ideas), and by an evaluative judgment implied in this temporalization. Physical beauty and all bodily aspects of love are ultimately assessed as less dignified.

It is perhaps not necessary to expound why Western culture, at least up until the end of high modernism, has preferred the Platonic model and not the courtly one, let alone that of hereos. The traditional ideology (in the sense of world model) of Western civilization is Christian. As Hegel claims in his Lectures on the Philosophy of History, this implies a tendency towards interiorization and subjectivity that was in the end unfavorable to ritualized concepts of behavior. With regard to body and mind or soul, it favors dissociation and ensuing hierarchization. These were unfavorable conditions for the establishment of a love discourse like hereos, which was not autochthonous. Nevertheless, it is this ideologically marginalized concept that was the basis for some of the texts about love which the Western tradition holds in highest esteem, from Petrarch’s Canzoniere to Cervantes’ Quijote, which gives a parodistic version of the theme. And it may be that the prestige of these texts is linked – at least to a certain extent – to the fact that they impart a concept of love that the official ideology of Western culture is (or, rather, was) hardly able to articulate: the knowledge that what we call love is ultimately corporeal, material; but that our somewhat objectionable and irrational bodily needs may bring forth our most refined feelings, the most intense psychic sufferings, and perhaps may even lead to such basic innovations in our conceptualizing of the world as perspectivism, the rise of which we can observe in the two texts to which I have just referred.

As a codicil to these concluding remarks, I would like to add a few words with reference to the broader conceptual frame of this paper as indicated by its title. The reception of ideologically exotic texts (from classical pagan or from Muslim cultures) never posed a serious problem within the rising Occidental civilization, as long as those texts focused primarily on parts of the discursive field that held the status of lacunae within the theological discourse of Christianity. Mathematics, pre-concepts of natural science, logic – all these topics were eagerly received by a West whose Holy Book and whose patristic interpretive

88 See Symposion 210a ff.
tradition did not care about these sections of the field. Things became less irenic as soon as a heterogeneous material had potential repercussions on a section that was considered a stronghold of religious orthodoxy: namely, moral philosophy. Regarding hereos, the problem involved is linked to the concept of free will (liberum arbitrium). If sinful behavior (actual or imaginary luxuria) is the consequence of a corporeal dysfunction, it is hardly to be categorized as imputable. The only solution to the problem to be found within the limits of Christian theology is a strictly interpreted Augustinian concept of predestination,89 which became acceptable in parts of the early modern West only after three hundred years of a fierce ideological battle and after thirty years of a most bloody struggle in the literal sense. For the period I have been discussing, the solution was proscription. The famous anti-Averroist decree of 1277 promulgated by the Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, condemned as n. 136 of 219 incriminated positions the following: “Quod homo agens ex passione coacte agit.”90 (“that a human being who acts under the impact of passion acts compulsively”). From this time onward, the life of the treatises I presented was a secret one, as far as the non-disciplinary discourses are concerned. It is one of the most salient elements of Occidental culture, however, to have from the very beginning91 tolerated texts that are by definition bound to convey something ‘general’ underneath a surface apparently recounting only ‘particular’ events or facts. Thus, the fictionalized

89 To avoid misunderstanding I would like to stress that within Augustinian theology the sins committed under the imperative of a ‘negative’ predestination, are, of course, imputable. The paradox of servum arbitrium and guilt, however, has erosive implications for the believers’ loyalty. It is not without reason that the Church which postulates to be the “common” one rejects the concept of unwilling sinful behavior even today. As to Petrarch, I should like to stress that in terms of theology he is a strict Augustinianist (thereto see my Das Schweigen der Veritas. Zur Kontingenz von Pluralisierungsprozessen in der Frührenaissance (Überlegungen zum Secretum). In: Poetica 23 [1991], p. 425–475). From such a standpoint, a persona as presented in the Canzoniere – mired in sin, conscious of being mired in sin, but unable to do anything about it – would be perfectly coherent.


91 The situation is in fact a bit more complex than stated above. Also in the West the theoreticians of literature (Dante and Petrarch, in the first place) had to fight astutely in order to preserve and expand the discursive margins for texts such as the ones they wrote (see my Zu einigen Aspekten der Dichtungstheorie in der Frührenaissance. In: Andreas Kablitz/ Gerhard Regn (eds.): Renaissance – Episteme und Agon. Für Klaus W. Hempfer anlässlich seines 60. Geburtstags, Heidelberg: Winter 2006 [Neues Forum für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, 33], p. 47–71). But one must put this controversial discussion in perspective. It is to be assessed in
life of a non-repentant sinner\textsuperscript{92} was able to become the discursive instrument to secretly vehiculate the idea of love-as-nothing-but-corporeal to a period in which anthropological materialism became once again a widely accepted view. The fact that, to date, this ‘secret’ has remained largely undetected testifies to the impression that not only amateur reading, but also humanistic scholarship is much more committed to its ‘horizon of expectations’\textsuperscript{93} than to the actual structures of the text.

\section*{Bibliography}

\subsection*{Primary Literature}


comparison to cultures which until recently (or even: throughout the present day) were (are) not ready to concede such discursive licenses. All this can hardly be claimed as a specific ‘merit’ of Western culture (let alone of its present-day heirs); it is a feature produced by different theological frames: in this case, by the difference between written language as God’s own language on the one hand, and written language as a post-Babylonian phenomenon; that is, an instrument which is (morally and linguistically) corrupt anyway.

\textsuperscript{92} In accordance with a broad stream of scholarship, I have questioned the seriousness of the attitude expressed in the last three pieces of the \textit{Canzoniere}. My argument is, however, not based on any assumptions concerning the author’s state of mind or his biography; it refers to the formulations of which he makes use in these poems, which seem to destabilize the explicitly-articulated repentance (see my Palinodia e polisemia nella canzone alla Vergine del Canzoniere (con alcune brevi considerazioni sulle condizioni della differenza tra arte classica ed arte moderna). In: Klaus W. Hempfer/ Gerhard Regn (eds.): \textit{Letture petrarchesche}. Florence: Le Lettere 2004 [Quaderni petrarcheschi, 14], p. 147–190).

\textsuperscript{93} Concerning this category, introduced by reader-response criticism (\textit{Rezeptionsästhetik}), see Hans Robert Jauss: \textit{Literaturgeschichte als Provokation}. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag 1967 (Konstanzer Universitätsreden. 3). It needs to be stressed that my reading of the \textit{Canzoniere} as expounded above is a consequence of mere contingency, in the literal sense of the term. During a medievalists’ conference at Stanford in the early nineties of the last century, I overheard two colleagues talking about a recent publication on lovesickness. I then took a look at Wack’s book, and while teaching a graduate course on Italian poetry one or two semesters later, I began to reflect according to the lines detailed in this essay.
Secondary Literature

Monographs and Anthologies


Articles and Papers


