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PUBLIÉE PAR

SYLVIE LEFÈVRE ET JEAN-RENÉ VALETTE

SOUS LE PATRONAGE DE L'ACADÉMIE DES INSCRIPTIONS ET BELLES LETTRES

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NOVELLAS OF WALTER AND GRISELDA: THE CIRCLE OF OBEDIENCE AND THE AESTHETICS OF UNCERTAINTY*

Introduction

In 1373, barely a year before his death, Petrarch translated into Latin the novella of Walter and Griselda, the last tale of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (10.10). He enclosed it within the third letter of Book 17 of his *Rerum Senilium Libri* (*Letters of Old Age*)[1]. By the end of the 14th century, Petrarch's version of the tale had been copied into dozens of manuscripts and translated into French, Catalan, English, even retranslated back into Tuscan[2]. Obedience is one of the central motifs of the novella during its early reception. Indeed, obedience, alongside patience, became the conventional descriptor of Griselda's exceptional virtue. Despite this apparently easy consensus, obedience is in fact a complex notion with

* This article has its roots in the research I did as a Marie-Sklodowska Curie Fellow at Queen Mary University of London, School of Languages Lingustics and Film, under the supervision of Adrian Armstrong (2013-2015). I want to express my deepest gratitude to Adrian Armstrong, Simon Gaunt, María de las Nieves Muñiz Muñiz, Henry Ravenhall, and Fabio Zinelli for their careful reading of various drafts of this article.

1. See Guido Martellotti, « Momenti narrativi del Petrarca », in *Studi petrarcheschi*, t. 4 (1951), p. 7-33, now in *id.*, *Scritti petrarcheschi*, ed. Michele Feo and Silvia Rizzo, Padua, 1983, p. 179-206 (from which I quote). On the date of composition of both Petrarch's translation of *Dec.* 10.10 and of *Sen.* 17, see Kenneth P. Clarke, « On Copying and not Copying *Griselda*: Petrarch and Boccaccio » in *Boccaccio and the European Literary Tradition*, ed. Piero Boitani and Emilia di Rocco, Rome, 2014, p. 57-71. Laura Refe, *I "fragmenta" dell'Epistola "Ad Posteritatem" di Francesco Petrarca*, Messina, 2014, and Monica Bertè and Silvia Rizzo, « *Valete amici, valete epistole*: l'ultimo libro delle Senili », in *Studi medievali e umanistici*, t. 12 (2014), p. 71-108, shows how Petrarch projected book 17 as the very last of the *Letters of Old Age*.

2. Gabriella Albanese, « Un volgarizzamento della *Griselda* latina in un codice dei Ricci di Firenze », in *Codici latini del Petrarca nelle biblioteche fiorentine. Catalogo della mostra* (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 19 maggio-30 giugno, 1991), ed. Michele Feo, Firenze, 1991, p. 432-435. The work of Albanese on the novella is crucial to understand the specific weight of Petrarch's 'translation' on Italian and European Humanism. Among her publications, the following has been particularly important for this article: Gabriella Albanese, « Fortuna umanistica della Griselda », in *Quaderni petrarcheschi*, t. 9-10 (1991-1992), p. 571-627, and *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria*. Il codice Riccardiano 991, ed. Gabriella Albanese, Alessandria, 1998.

Romania, t. 137, 2019, p. 277 à 318.

relevant political implications[3]. It involves staking out both claims to authority, and the limits within which such claims must act. In the case of the story of Walter and Griselda, rather than in any vertical or pyramidal pattern, the narrative depicts obedience and the power relations obedience implies as a circular notion: 1) the obedience owed to Walter, the markis of Saluzzo, by his subjects; 2) the obedience to the laws of the land by which Walter must abide; 3) the obedience that Griselda, Walter's wife, owes to her husband. Far from neutralising the novella's contradictions, this circularity makes the reader contend with the text's oscillation of focus between seeming opposites: ruler and ruled, private and public, individual and collective, exemplary and ordinary, exceptional and contingent[4].

As a translation, Petrarch's version of the novella of Walter and Griselda is part of the textual tradition of Boccaccio's original, as much as it is the initiator of a new 'branch' in the dissemination of the story. Thus, Petrarch breaks his bond with Boccaccio's 'exemplar' in order to impose a new model to follow: in Latin as opposed to the vernacular, and based on a rearrangement of some of its structural and discursive features[5]. Alongside Petrarch's authorial efforts, scribes worked on his story, variously interpreting its form, purpose and morale. Studying scribal rubrics, Charlotte Cook-Morse put them into two categories: those highlighting Griselda's exemplary obedience and faith; and those stressing her patience and steadfastness. At one level, the novella was read as the story of Griselda, the embodiment of wifely obedience and patience, an example for late-medieval manuals of the perfect spouse, or a topic suitable for the artefacts that painters and decorators prepared for their patrons' wedding celebrations. At another level, Griselda was a woman endowed with the wisdom of an old man, providing an « androgynous model of sainthood »[6]. In both cases, the insistence on Griselda's exceptional virtue somehow pushed Walter to the background, paving the way to figural readings of her *persona*: the allegory of soul, the figure of the virgin Mary, and so on. As scholarship has recently pointed

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3. See Charlotte Cook Morse, « What to Call Petrarch's Griselda », in *The Uses of Manuscripts in Literary Studies: Essays in Memory of Judson Boyce Allen*, ed. Charlotte Cook Morse, Penelope Reed Doob and Marjorie Curry Woods, Studies on Medieval Culture, XXVI, Kalamazoo, 1992, p. 263-303.

4. See Michaela Paasche Grudin, « Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* as Political Paradox », in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, t. 11 (1989), p. 63-92: « The obedience and unity of will which lie philosophically at the very heart of political unity may, if pushed to the extreme in practice, conflict irrevocably with the value of the individual » (p. 65).

5. Amy W. Goodwin, « The Griselda Game », in *The Chaucer Review*, t. 29 (2004), p. 41-69, explains how Petrarch's Latin version was in competition with Boccaccio's vernacular original (p. 45-52).

6. Cook Morse, « What to Call Petrarch's Griselda », art. cit., p. 280.

out, Griselda is not just a veneer of corporeality encasing allegorical signification(s). Most importantly, she cannot be separated from Walter[7].

Griselda is bound to Walter, whose role in the novella both charms and stymies Petrarch[8]. Faced « with the violence of the… literal level of the story », Petrarch works on the structure of the story and the portrait of its main characters – particularly on Walter, as we shall see[9]. He exploited the tensions of the narrative to create a form based on uncertainty. Hesitations are carefully displayed in the novella and in the epistolary shrine in which it is preserved. This is apparent when, discussing the nature of the tale itself in both *Sen.* 17.3 and 17.4, Petrarch incessantly swings from its generic definition as *historia* to its classification as *fabula*[10]. And this becomes even more evident in the presentation of the opposite reactions to the tale of the first two readers of his 'translation'[11]. In *Sen.* 17.4, Petrarch gives an account of his Paduan and Veronese friends' responses to their reading of the story: moved to compassion, on the one hand, repulsed and incredulous, on the other. This indeterminacy mirrors a complexity which contributed to the interest the tale generated in readers, and was the basis for its success, which, after Petrarch's reply to Boccaccio's narrative (i.e. the novella included in *Sen.* 17.3), was recurrently embodied by translation[12].

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7. On the fundamental resistance of the tale to allegory, see David Wallace, « *Letters of Old Age*: Love Between Men, Griselda and Farewell to Letters. *Rerum senilium libri* », in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi, Chicago, 2009, p. 321-330 (p. 328). On Walter's central role in the novella, see Vincenzo Pernicone, « La novella del marchese di Saluzzo », in *La Cultura*, t. 9 (1930), p. 961-994, Martellotti, « Momenti narrativi », art. cit., p. 199, Teodolinda Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo or the Griselda Story before it was Hijacked: Calculating Matrimonial Odds in *Decameron* 10.10 », in *Mediaevalia*, t. 34 (2013), p. 23-55.

8. The ambivalent, paradoxical attitude of Petrarch (and Chaucer) to Walter and of the novella has been highlighted by Grudin, « Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* as Political Paradox », art. cit., and, more recently, by Wallace, « *Letters of Old Age* », art. cit., p. 326.

9. See Louise O. Vasvári, « The Story of Griselda as Silenced Incest Narrative », in *La Corónica*, t. 35 (2007), p. 139-156 (p. 140), and Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », art. cit., p. 24.

10. Martellotti, « Momenti narrativi », art. cit., p. 203-06; Goodwin, « The Griselda Game », art. cit., p. 52; Francesco Petrarca, *De viris illustribus. Adam-Hercules*, ed. Caterina Malta, Messina, 2008, p. CXVI-CXX; Bertè and Rizzo, « *Valete amici* », art. cit., p. 102-104; Simone Ventura, « Sulla 'storia' di Griselda e Gualtieri in catalano e in francese alla fine del Trecento », in *Heliotropia*, t. 14 (2017), p. 203-225 (p. 216-218).

11. See Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », art. cit., p. 24; Martin McLaughlin, « Humanist Rewriting and Translation: The Latin Griselda from Petrarch to Neri de' Nerli », in *Hvmanistica. An International Journal of Renaissance Studies*, t. 1, 2 (2006), p. 23-40 (p. 23-25).

12. Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Politics*, Madison, 1989, p. 133; William T. Rossiter, « *Mutata veste*: Griselda between Boccaccio and Petrarch », in *id.*, *Chaucer and Petrarch*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 132-160.

In what follows I will investigate the implications of this indetermination for the way in which the letter and the political potential of the novella are passed down in its 14th-c. afterlife[13]. To do so, I will compare Boccaccio's and Petrarch's respective versions with a corpus of translations of the novella composed over a short period of time (1373-1400). This corpus includes texts in Italian, Latin, Catalan, English and French. The texts are all in prose, except for Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* (*Canterbury Tales* IV) (referred to as *CT*), which is in royal stanzas.

Table 1. Corpus[14]

Author	*Title*	*Siglum*
Boccaccio	*Decameron*	*Dec.* 10.10
Petrarch	*Historia Griseldis*	*Sen.* 17.3
Philippe de Mézières	*Miroir des dames mariees*	*Miroir*
Anonymous	*Livre Griseldis*	*Livre*
Bernat Metge	*Història de Valter e Griselda*	*VG*
Chaucer	*The Clerk's Tale*	*CT*

The French, Catalan and English texts of the corpus are based on Petrarch's Latinised version (*Sen.* 17.3) and not on the original Italian (*Dec.* 10.10).

13. For a political approach to the novella, see Grudin, « Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* as Political Paradox », art. cit., Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », art. cit.; Susanna Bersella, « Tyranny and Obedience: A Political Reading of the Tale of Gualtieri (*Dec.* X, 10) », in *Italianistica*, t. 42 (2013), p. 67-77.

14. The editions and translations used in this paper are as follows: 1) ***Decameron***: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Amedeo Quondam, Maurizio Fiorilla and Giancarlo Alfano, Milan, 2013; English translation: Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Translated and with an Introduction by Wayne A. Rebhorn, New York-London, 2013; 2) ***Sen.* 17.3**: Francesco Petrarca, *Res Seniles. Libri XIII-XVII*, ed. Silvia Rizzo con la collaborazione di Monica Bertè, Florence, 2017, p. 442-475. English translation in *Petrarch's* [Historia Griseldis], *Epistolae Seniles XVII.3 (from Cambridge University, Peterhouse Clle MS 81)*, ed. Thomas J. Farrell, in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. R. M. Correale e M. Hamel, Cambridge, 2002, vol. I, p. 108-129; 3) ***Miroir***: Philippe de Mézières, *Le livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage*, ed. Joan B. Williamson, Washington, 1993, p. 356-377; 4) ***Livre***: Jonathan Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's Clerkes Tale*, Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972, p. 254-292 [reprint [New Haven] Yale University Press, 1942]. English translation in *Le Livre Griseldis*, ed. Amy W. Goodwin, in *Sources and Analogues*, *ed. cit.*, p. 131-167; 5) ***VG***: Bernat Metge, *Valter e Griselda*, in *Obras de Bernat Metge*, ed. Martín de Riquer, Barcelona, 1959, p. 118-153; 6) ***CT***: *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed., Oxford, 1987, p. 137-153. Occasional references will be made to the *Mesnagier de Paris* (*Le mesnagier de Paris*, ed. Georgina M. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier, translation Karin Ueltschi, Paris, 2010). I provide Italian, Latin, Middle English and Catalan texts with a modern English translation. For Boccaccio, Petrarch, and *Livre Griseldis*, I have relied on Rebhorn's, Farrell's and Goodwin's respective translations. For Chaucer's *CT* I have relied on the Harvard's *Interlinear Translations of Some of The Canterbury Tales*, accessible online <http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/clkt-par.htm>. For the Catalan texts, and for Petrarch's and Boccaccio's Latin passages not in works included in the corpus, I have provided my own translations.

In turn, Metge's and Chaucer's renderings of Petrarch's Latin (*VG* and *CT*) were done using one or both of the French prose versions, *Miroir* and *Livre*, as auxiliary translations[15]. While not exhaustive, this corpus is representative of the tale's late 14th-c. reception[16]. Each of these texts exploits in different ways the tale's potential, providing a snapshot of contemporary attitudes to the source text.

The structure of this paper is as follows: in §2. FRAMING THE CASE, I consider how the Italian and Latin 'originals' differ from a structural perspective. I will pay particular attention to Petrarch's insertion of a geographic excursus prologuing the narrative proper. I will summarise the traits of this innovation and explain why it was not fully retained in translation. In §3. WALTER AND HIS MEN, I analyse the semantic fields of the ruler and of the community of the ruled. If the novella of Walter and Griselda is also about power (how to conserve it and how to exert it both in the public and private spheres), the confrontation staged by the novella takes place at a double level: a) the confrontation between Walter and his subjects triggered by the latter; b) the confrontation between Walter and Griselda triggered by the former. While in §3 I will deal with the subjects/Walter confrontation, in §4, WALTER AGAINST GRISELDA, I will concentrate on the relation between Walter and Griselda. To do so, I analyse Walter's existential need to impose obedience on his men and Griselda. Therafter, I focus on Griselda's portrait and how her patience

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15. Severs, *The Literary Relationships*, *op. cit.*, p. 190-211; Amy Goodwin, « Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: Sources, Influences, and Allusions », in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, t. 28 (2006), p. 229-233; Lluís Cabré, « Petrarch's Griseldis from Philippe de Mézières to Bernat Metge », in *Fourteenth-Century Classicism: Petrarch and Bernat Metge*, ed. Lluís Cabré, Alejandro Coroleu e Jill Kraye, London-Savigliano, 2012, p. 29-42; Ventura, « Sulla 'storia' di Griselda e Gualtieri », art. cit., p. 211-214.

16. In this paper, I will not extend my analysis to some important vernacular versions of Boccaccio's novella. Namely the versions that Thomas III di Saluzzo included in *Le chevalier errant* (Tommaso III di Saluzzo, *Il Libro del Cavaliere Errante* (ms. BnF, fr. 12559), ed. Marco Piccat and Laura Ramello, Italian translation Enrica Martinengo, Boves, 2008); Christine de Pizan's in *La cité des dames* (Christine de Pizan, *La Città delle Dame*, ed. Patrizia Caraffi and Earl Jeffrey Richards, Milano, 1997, p. 346-357). Furthermore, I am leaving aside the French dramatic refashioning of Philippe de Mézières's translation: *L'estoire de Griseldis en rimes et par personnages (1395)*, ed. Mario Roques, Genève, 1957, [*TLF*, 74]. For the study of the textual tradition of the French versions, see Elie Golenistcheff-Koutouzoff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France au XIVe et au XVe siècle*, Paris, 1933 (reprinted Genève, 1975) ; *id.*, *Étude sur le 'Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage et réconfort des dames mariées' de Philippe de Mézières, d'après un ms. du XIVe siècle de la Bibliothèque nationale à Paris*, Belgrade, 1937 ; and Severs, *The Literary Relationships*, *op. cit.*, p. 135-189. For the dissemination and Fortleben of the novella, see Albanese, « Fortuna umanistica », art. cit.; Raffaele Morabito, « Per un repertorio della diffusione europea della storia di Griselda », in *La circolazione dei temi e degli intrecci narrative: il caso di Griselda*, Aquila, 1988, p. 7-20; and *L'Histoire de Griselda, une femme exemplaire dans les littératures européennes. Tome 1: prose et poésie*, ed. Jean-Luc Nardone and Henri Lamarque, Toulouse, 2000.

becomes a disruptive practice that stops the confrontation offering a counterpoint to Walter's own agenda (and perversion), while it leaves the door open to new ways of telling the same story and to new translations.

1. *Framing the "Case"*

The novella's plot has two parts followed by a conclusion. The narrative stems from the confrontation between Walter and his subjects over the markis's neglect of his duty to marry and ensure security and dynastic continuity[17]. The outcome of the struggle is Walter's forced agreement to marry. He accepts his men's request but imposes his own conditions. Walter will not take a high-born wife. Instead, he chooses Griselda, the humble daughter of Giannucole, one of the poorest among the poor inhabitants of a village near Walter's palace. The second part of the tale begins the morning after the wedding. While the marriage defuses the immediate crisis between Walter and his subjects, the narrative switches its dual focus: the lord-vassals' confrontation cedes the floor to Walter's testing of Griselda. First, he deprives her of her two children. Then he sends Griselda back to her father's house in order to be free to take another, more suitable, wife. The tale is concluded by the restoration of Walter's authority: Griselda is given back her children as well as her position at court as marchioness and legitimate wife.

Boccaccio and Petrarch exhibit differences in their approaches to the structure of the novella. Boccaccio's transitions from one narrative unit to the other are often abrupt and leave limited room for introspection. However, he builds his novella following the principles of equilibrium and symmetry[18]. In adapting the tale to the epistolary medium, Petrarch removes Boccaccio's narrative framework: namely, Dioneo's initial and final comments on the tale and on Walter. He replaces these with a series of personal and stylistic remarks, accompanied by the insertion of a geographic excursus, which plays the role of a prologue to the narrative proper:

> *Est ad Italie latus occiduum Vesulus, ex Apennini iugis mons unus altissimus, qui vertice nubila superans liquido sese ingerit etheri; mons suapte nobilis natura, Padi ortu nobilissimus, qui eius latere*

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17. « Confrontation » is Bersella's translation (« A Political Reading », art. cit., p. 68-69) of Mario Baratto's Italian felicitous phrase « prova di forza » (*Realtà e stile nel «Decameron»*, Rome, 1996 [3rd edition]), p. 345). For the theological and legal debate around the prerogatives and duties of the prince, see Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford, 1993, p. 88-99.

18. Giuseppe Zaccaria, *Alle origini del romanzo moderno*, Milan, 2014: see chapter V, « Una mise en abyme: la *Griselda* ».

> *fonte lapsus exiguo, orientem contra solem fertur mirisque mox tumidus incrementis brevi spatio decurso non tantum maximorum unus amnium sed « fluviorum » a Virgilio « rex » dictus, Liguriam gurgite violentus intersecat, dehinc Emiliam atque Flaminiam Venetiamque disterminans, multis ad ultimum et ingentibus hostiis in adriacum mare descendit. Ceterum pars illa terrarum de qua primum dixi, que et grata planitie et interiectis collibus ac montibus circumflexis, aprica pariter et iocunda est atque ab eorum quibus subiacet pede montium nomen tenet, et civitates aliquot et oppida habet egregia.* (*Sen.* 17.3.16-17)
>
> [On the western side of Italy, a lofty mountain named Vesulus reaches its peak out of the Apennines and into the rarified air above the clouds. This mountain, famous in its own right, is most renowned as the source of the Po. The river falls from a small spring on the mountainside and, carried toward the rising sun, is quickly swollen in a short space of time by numerous tributaries. Thus it becomes not only one of the great streams but (as Virgil calls it) the king of rivers. It rushes through the Ligurian rapids; from there it bounds through Emilia, Flaminia, and Venice and finally descends to the Adriatic Sea in a great delta. That part of the country about which I spoke first, surrounded by a graceful plain and scattered hills and mountains, is both pleasant and happy. Taking its name from those mountains at whose foot it lies, it contains many towns and notable cities.]

Far from being just a display of geographic erudition, this prologue serves the purpose of introducing the reader to the novella[19]. Facing the majestic landscape of the Alps, the land of Saluzzo is striking for being both warmed by the sun and pleasant. But Petrarch's depiction of the Po river struggling to find its way through the plains of northern Italy seems to prepare us for the conflict of the first part of the novella. Based on Virgil, Petrarch identifies the Po as « the king of the rivers », which (literally) « runs eastwards against the course of the sun ». The Latin prepositional phrase (*contra solem*) suggests both the sense of direction and a bold attitude: flowing toward the Adriatic sea, the Po defies the sun as it « rushes through the Ligurian rapids ». In belligerent terms, Petrarch represents the birth and rising of the Po as the victory of the feeble against the powerful: it falls « from a small spring » on the side of one of the highest mountains, the Monvesino; it seems to disappear « swollen in a brief space by numerous tributaries », just to resurface as « not only one of the great streams but (as

19. Gabriella Albanese, « Griselda in Piemonte: Petrarca e la novella dotta », in *Levia Gravia*, t. 8 (2004), p. 263-295; Marco Piccat, « Griselda di Saluzzo tra Dante e Petrarca: dal 'silenzio' alla 'celebrazione' », in *Francesco Petrarca. L'opera Latina: tradizione e fortuna.* Atti del XVIII Congresso Internazionale (Chianciano-Pienza, 19-22 luglio 2004), ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi, Florence, 2004, p. 335-360.

Virgil calls it) the king of rivers ». It is in this daunting landscape that the Walter will confront his men.

The geography of the prologue is also relevant on another level. It associates the tale with Petrarch's own relations with power and the powerful, namely with the members of the Visconti family, the lords of Milan. As mentioned above, the novella is set in the marquisate of Saluzzo. In the late 14th century, Saluzzo – today part of the Piedmont, not far from the French border – lied between the domains of the Angevins and the territory of Milan. Milan was by then the strongest power in Northern Italy: often referred to as Lombardy[20]. Famously, in 1353 Petrarch made the decision to choose Milan, not Florence, as his Italian residence, after decades spent at Avignon. Seen against the background of the archrivalry between Florence and Milan this biographic event coincides with the worst crisis in the longstanding 'friendship' between Petrarch and Boccaccio[21]. Boccaccio did not take the news well. In the summer of the same 1353, he writes to Petrarch. Under the pastoral allegory, he accused Petrarch of having sold himself to the worst of the tyrants, and of having been inconsistent with what he, Petrarch-Silvanus, had been preaching about the freedom of the intellectual, about the primacy of contemplative and solitary life (a life of *otium*), far from the trouble of active life:

> *Hic solitudinum commendator egregius atque cultor, quid multitudine circumseptus aget? quid tam sublimi preconio liberam vitam atque paupertatem honestam extollere consuetus,* ***iugo alieno subditus*** *et inhonestis ornatus divitiis faciet? quid virtutum exortator clarissimus, vitiorum sectator effectus, decantabit ulterius? Ego nil aliud nosco quam erubescere et opus suum dampnare, et virgilianum illud aut coram aut secus cantare carmen: «Quid*

20. In referring to Walter, 'markis' and 'lord of Saluce', Chaucer praised him as « The getileste yborn of Lumbardye » (*CT* IV. 71-72). See Alison Cornish, « Lombardy: Milan and Pavia », in *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, ed. David Wallace, Oxford, 2015, p. 673-686. John Larner (*Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch 1216-1380*, London and New York, 1980, p. 139) explains the forms the *signoria* took in Piedmont and northern Italy. In particular, « the Marquess of Saluzzo held the upper Po and Varaita valleys and lands extending south of the Po to Carmagnola ».

21. On Petrarch's decision to move to Milan, see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity. Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy*, Stanford, 1997, p. 345-349; Enrico Fenzi, « Petrarca a Milano: tempi e modi di una scelta meditata », in *Petrarca e la Lombardia. Atti del Convegno di Studi, Milano, 22-23 maggio 2003*, ed. Giuseppe Frasso, Giuseppe Velli and Maurizio Vitale, Padua, 2005, p. 221-63; *id.*, « Ancora sulla scelta filo-viscontea di Petrarca e su alcune sue strategie testuali nelle *Familiare s*», in *Studi petrarcheschi*, t. 17 (2004), p. 61-80. Laura Refe, « Boccaccio e Petrarca tra Biografia e Autobiografia », in *Studi Petrarcheschi*, t. 27 (2014), p. 121-144, describes the biographic and literary 'ecosystem' that features Boccaccio-Petrarch relationship especially over their final years.

> *non mortalia pectora cogis | auri sacra fames?»* (Boccaccio, *Epist.* 10.27-29, my emphasis[22])
>
> [This renowed man who praised and cultivate solitude, what is he to do in the midst of the crowd? What is he who used to exalt free life and honest poverty with such elevated praise going to do now that he is subject to a foreing yoke and praised with shameful riches? What is he going to celebrate, this famous man who used to exort virtue but now a follower of vice? I know that I cannot but blush and condemn his actions, and sing those lines by Virgil openly or innerly: «To what crime do you not drive the hearts of men, accursed hunger for gold?»]

In 14th-c. Italy, the Visconti were the heads of a powerful state. They were also at the centre of harsh political, juridical and theological strife over the best form of government; a conflict in which a host of intellectuals – including Petrarch and Boccaccio – were engaged. In the case of Milan, the confrontation was staged between those who depicted the Visconti as tyrants and demolishers of the republican liberty (embodied by Florence), and those, like Petrarch, who articulated a staunch defence of the Visconti, and promoted them as good rulers[23]. As mentioned above, Petrarch's decision marked the lowest point in his relationship with Boccaccio. Eventually, the pair somehow managed to recover their relationship from this crisis. In order to understand how these events may help us to grasp why Petrarch met Boccaccio in the latter's favoured domain, prose fiction, I shall consider two passages: the geographic prologue, and a passage of the letter that immediately precedes the epistle containing the story (*Sen* 17.2).

First of all, the prologue to the novella shows the existence of some interesting textual relations between the tale and the works Petrarch produced while he was plying his trade for some of the most powerful families of his time – namely the Visconti. The Alps are repeatedly present in his work[24]. It is Petrach's landscape: the king Po is the river that flows through the territories of the princes that Petrarch served. This is apparent in *Epyst.* III.6.14-27 (*Ad Arbores Suas*: *Silva, precor, generosa*

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22. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Epistole e lettere*, ed. Ginetta Auzzas, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, Milano, 1992, Vol. V,1, p. 580-581. Boccaccio is quoting *Aen.* III.56-57: see Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI*, English transl. H. Rushton Raiclough revised by G. P. Goold, Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1999, p. 377.

23. Andrea Zorzi, « La questione della tirannide nell'Italia del Trecento », in *Tiranni e tirannide nel Trecento italiano*, ed. Andrea Zorzi, Roma, 2013, p. 11-36.

24. See for example Petrarch, *Fam.* 16.11.11. This is one of the first Milanese letters that Petrarch addresses to Francesco Nelli, one of his closest Florentine friends, in the aftermath of his decision to reside in Milan and his crisis with Boccaccio: Fenzi, « Petrarca a Milano », art. cit., p. 232-237.

ferax per secula, tanti…), a metrical letter written in praise of the Visconti, which stands at the crossroads of the most important biographic event in Petrarch's late years:

> *Maximus ille virum quos suscipit itala tellus,*
> *ille, inquam, aerie parent cui protinus Alpes,*
> *cui pater Apenninus erat, cui ditia rura*
> *rex Padus ingenti spumans intersecat amne*
> *atque coronatos altis in turribus angues*
> *obstupet et dominum hinc illinc veneratur eundem;*
> *Adriaci quem stagna maris Thirrenaque late*
> *equora permetuunt, quem transalpina verentur*
> *seu cupiunt sibi regna ducem; qui crimina duris*
> *nexibus illaqueat legumque coercet habenis*
> *iustitiaque regit populos, quique aurea fesse*
> *tertius Hesperie melioris secla metalli*
> *et Mediolano Romanas intulit artes;*
> *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*

[That great man Italy regards with honor, | He whom the lofty Alps forthwith obey. | The Appenines plow for him; the regal Po, | Foaming, divides his rich fields with its stream, | And stupefied to see on lofty towers | His crowned serpents, venerates him as lord. | The Adriatic sea and the wide Tyrrhenian | Hold him in dread, whom the transalpine realms | Revere and want as chief. Crimes with harsh bands | He snares and with the reins of law restrains; | With justice rules peoples; and is third | To bring a golden age to weary Italy. | He has carried to Milan the art of Rome: | « To spare the subject and war down the proud »[25].]

In both *Epyst.* III.6 and *Sen.* 17.3, Petrarch is quoting the same passage from the sixth book of Virgil's *Aneid* (792-794) that refers to the Po as the king of all rivers (*rex Padus*). Moreover, Petrarch compares the fate of Milan to Anchises's prophecy about Rome's mission (*Aeneid* VI, 853): like Rome, Milan shows mercy to the conquered but subdues stubborn enemies. In both *Epyst*. III.6 and *Sen.* 17.3 the Alps and the Po river are the majestic setting where power dwells.

In the second passage here under consideration, Petrarch alludes with pride to the fact that he never lost his freedom, despite the time he devoted

25. Francesco Petrarca, *Epistulae metricae. Briefe in Versen*, ed. Otto Schönberger and Eva Schönberger, Würzburg, 2004. For the English translation of the text, see David Thompson, *Petrarch: A Humanist among Princes. An Anthology of Petrarch's Letters and of Selections from His Other Works*, New York-Evanston-London, 1971, p. 85-86.

in serving the princes. Boldly, Petrarch says that it was they, the princes, that followed him, and not he the princes:

> *Huc etiam illud affers, bonas me partes temporum sub obsequio principum perdidisse. Hic ne erres, verum accipe: nomine ego cum principibus fui, re autem principes mecum fuerunt. Nunquam me illorum consilia et perraro convivia tenuerunt. Nulla michi unquam conditio probaretur que me vel modicum a libertate et a studiis meis averteret. Itaque, cum palatium omnes, ego vel nemus petebam vel inter libros in thalamo quiescebam.* (*Sen.* 17.2.80-84)
>
> [Moreover you are saying that I would have lost lots of precious time submitted to the princes. For you not to be mistaken, I will clarify this a bit for you. Apparently, it was I who was accompanying the princes; in fact it was the princes that were accompanying me. I was never part of their plots, and rarely seated at their table. I would not accept a condition that would distract me from my personal freedom or from my work, not one fraction. While everybody yearned for the palace, I retired in the woods or remained quiet in my room, among my books.]

Seemingly, this is a reference to the lords he worked for over his final years, and most of all to the Visconti, who had kept him busy « during the most intensive phase of his political life »[26]. And it is also a belated consolatory offering to Boccaccio for the bitter disappointment Petrarch inflicted on him by choosing to settle down in Milan rather than Florence.

From one perspective, Petrarch's prologue helps us to shed light on his approach to the narrative, on the way in which Petrarch constructed the last book of the *Letters of Old Age*: making his life resonate with one of the themes of the story, the relation the characters entertain with power, authority and obedience. Viewed from another angle, the complexities of Petrarch's prologue clarify why subsequent translators either omitted it or kept only a reduced version of this liminal text. The abbreviated version quickly became a conventional scene-setter, and in the case of Chaucer's Clerk, was denounced as « impertinent »[27].

It has been repeated that the novella of Walter and Griselda is staged in a feudal context. In the next section I will focus on this assumption by comparing Petrarch's political vocabulary, with particular attention to the set of words used to designate the community of the ruled and the ruler

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26. Wallace, « Letters of Old Age », art. cit., p. 327.

27. See *CT* IV.43-56: « And trewely, as to my juggement, | Me thinketh it [= the prohemye] a thing impertinent, | Save that he wole conveyen his mateere » (*CT* IV.53-55) [And truly, as to my judgment, | It seems to me a thing irrelevant, | Save that he wishes to introduce his subject matter].

and its authority, with Boccaccio's Italian text and with the translations of my corpus.

2. *Walter and his Men: Political Vocabulary*

Petrarch offers a close-up on Walter just after the geographic prologue, where he illustrates with solemnity the moment in which the people of Saluzzo gather around their lord to beg him to marry and give them an heir (*Sen.* 17.3.17-26):

Inter cetera ad radicem Vesulli terra Salutiarum, vicis et castella satis frequens, marchionum arbitrio nobilium quorundam regitur virorum. Quorum unus primusque omnium et maximus fuisse traditur Valterus quidam, ad quem familie ac terrarum omnium regimen pertineret. 18 *Et hic quidem forma virens atque etate nec minus moribus quam sanguine nobilis et ad summam omni ex parte vir insignis, nisi quod presenti sua sorte contentus incuriosissimus futurorum erat.* 19 *Itaque venatui aucupioque deditus sic illis incubuerat, ut alia pene cuncta negligeret quodque in primis egre populi ferebant, ab ipsis quoque coniugii consiliis abhorreret.* 20 *Id aliquandiu taciti cum tulissent, tandem cathervatim illum adeunt.* 21 *Quorum unus, cui vel autoritas maior erat vel facundia maiorque cum suo duce familiaritas, «Tua», inquit, «humanitas, optime marchio, hanc nobis prestat audaciam, ut et tecum singuli, quotiens res exposcit, devota fiducia colloquamur et nunc omnium tacitas volutates mea vox tuis auribus invehat, non quod singulare aliquid habeam ad hanc rem, nisi quod tu me inter alios carum tibi multis indiciis comprobasti.* 22 *Cum merito igitur tua nobis omnia placeant semperque placuerint, ut felices nos tali domino iudicemus, unum est quod si a te impetrari sinis teque nobis exorabilem prebes, plane felicissimi finitimorum omnium futuri simus, ut coniugio scilicet animum applices collumque non liberum modo*	The land of Saluzzo lies among the others at the root of Vesulus, full enough of villages and castles ruled by the will of certain noble marquises. The first and greatest, it is said, was a certain Walter, to whom the rule of his estate and the whole land belonged. Young and handsome, no less noble in behaviour than in blood, he was in short an admirable man in every way, except that, content with his present lot, he gave no thought to the future. Accordingly he gave himself so fully to hunting and pleasure that he almost ignored everything else. To the even greater discomfort of his people, meanwhile, he also shrank from any mention of marriage. For a while they were silent, but eventually approached him as a group. One of them, either more assured or more eloquent, and better acquainted with his lord, spoke. "Because of your kindness, O great marquis, we dare, whenever the need demands it, to approach you individually and speak in firm confidence. Now let my voice deliver to your ears the silent wishes of all. (Not that I have any special role in this matter, but with many signs you have shown me to be dearer to you than the others.) Certainly, all of your deeds please us, and always have pleased us, so that we consider ourselves fortunate in such a lord. But if you allow one petition, and respond to our intercession, we will surely be the happiest people in all the neighboring lands: I mean that you should turn your mind to marriage and lay your neck, not merely free but imperial, under

sed imperiosum legitimo subicias iugo idque quam primum facias; volant enim dies rapidi et, quanquam florida sis etate, continue tamen hunc florem tacita senectus insequitur morsque ipsa omni proxima est etati. 23*Nulli muneris huius immunitas datur; eque omnibus moriendum est utque id certum, sic illud ambiguum quando eveniat.* 24*Suscipe igitur, oramus, eorum preces qui nullum tuum imperium recusarent.* 25*Querende autem coniugis studium nobis linque; talem enim tibi procurabimus que te merito digna sit et tam claris orta parentibus ut de ea spes optima sit habenda.* 26*Libera tuos omnes molesta solecitudine, quesumus, ne siquid humanitus tibi forsan accideret, tu sine tuo successore abeas, ipsi sine votivo rectore remaneant».*	that lawful yoke, and do so before all else. The rapid days fly by, and even in the flower of your youth, silent and relentless age always stalks that flower: death is near at any age. No one is exempt from this duty; all must die. And while so much is certain, no one knows when death shall come. Leave the work of finding a wife to us, and we shall secure one worthy of your merit, and born of such splendid parents that through her the highest hopes may be fulfilled. Free us all from this nagging worry, lest, if anything mortal should befall, you might leave no heir, and your people be left without a legitimate ruler.

It is interesting to notice, in the first place, how the portrait of Walter and the motive of the sovereign forced to marry by his barons as well as the very description of Walter as a young, gracious and virtous man, hold striking similarities (and some significant differences) with Jean Renart's *Le Roman de la Rose ou Guillaume de Dole*[28]. Famously, in the French romance Conrad is the emperor of the Germans[29]:

En l'Empire, ou li Alemant
ont esté maint jor et maint an,
si com li contes dit, segnor,
ot jadis un empereor.
Corras ot non de par son pere,
qui devent lui fu emperere.

Jean Renart's narrative voice goes on singing the praise of Conrad, mirror of all knightly and courtly virtue (*Mout le tindrent les genz a preu;* | *ne vos avroie hui conté preu* | *quels hom il fu, car ne porroie.* | *Onqes au grant siege de Troie* | *n'ot home si bien entechié*, *ibid.,* v. 37-40). Like for Walter, the claims of youth were for Conrad much more pressing than his barons's concerns about his remaining a bachelor (*ibid.,* v. 121-125 and 134-141):

Qu'il n'avoit encore point de feme
(mes le voeil a ceaus de son regne
en eüst il prochainement)

28. Éd. Félix Lecoy, Introduction, Translation and notes by Jean Dufournet, Paris, 2008.
29. *Guillaume de Dole*, éd. cit., v. 31-36.

mout en parloient tuit sovent
li haut baron li un as autres:
[…] Por ce l'en ont mout arresnié
li plus haut prince de son regne.
Mes genvrece qui en lui regne
ne l'i lessoit pas accorder.
Ainz fet les granz trez encorder,
ses aucubes, ses pavellons
en esté, quant il est sesons
de deduire en prez et en bois.

Walter shared with Conrad the young age, the passion for outdoors games and the careless attitude towards the duty of marriage. But unlike Conrad, Walter did not incarnate the prototype of the perfect knight and perfect courtly lover. We could not apply to Walter the words the narrator of the *Guillaume de Dole*: « Et, son voeil, ne pensast il ja | s'a armes non et a amors, | et s'ot tant autres bones mors | c'onqes tex bers ne fu, s'il vit » (*ibid.,* v. 385-388). Walter, we might say, certainly had all his thoughts on arms (which may include Walter's affection for hunting and hawking). However, neither Boccaccio nor Petrarch show him 'thinking nothing but love'. Walter is a kind of 'secularized' version of Conrad. The markis of Saluzzo incarnates bare power with its contradictions and potential for conflict.

In the Latin of Petrarch, the request of the barons to the lord takes the form of an oration, a form with which he was familiar. Petrarch had composed four speeches during the years he lived in Milan, under the protection of the Visconti[30]. In the novella, he stages a kind of diplomatic envoy in the act of presenting an official petition to their lord. An anonymous spokperson led a group of emissaries, explicitly defined as an elite in Philippe de Mézières's version of the story:

> Ils s'assamblerent en grant quantité, et les plus souffisans vindrent a leur seigneur et par la bouche de l'un pour tous furent dittes telles paroles, « O tu marquis, nostre seigneur… » (*Miroir* 359.23-30)

The anonymous representative of the subjects of Walter is chosen for three reasons: he is authoritative; he is a skilled orator; he is closer to the lord than the other men. Petrarch depicts this spokesman using three

30. See Francesco Bruno Baj, *Petrarca oratore: edizione critica, commento e traduzione delle quattro orazioni per i Visconti*, tesi di laurea Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, 2014-2015. On rhetoric as a public and political act in late medieval Italy, see Enrico Artifoni, « La politique est *in fatti* et *in detti*. L'éloquence politique et les intellectuels dans les cités communales au XIIIe siècle », in *Le pouvoir des mots au Moyen Âge*, éd. Nicole Bériou, Jean-Patrice Boudet, Irène Rosier-Catach, Turnhout, 2014, p. 209-224.

substantives: *auctoritas* (authority), *facundia* (rhetoric skills), *familiaritas* (familiarity). In this group of words, *familiaritas* is relevant both for Petrarch as an author – in 1366 he had published his *Familiar Letters* (*Familiares*) – and because of the political connotations associated with this term. Familiarity entails a range of relations: from consanguinity to friendship, from affinity to alliance. A notion of familiarity as long-standing loyalty and intimacy is picked up by the anonymous translator of *Livre*, who uses the French adjective *privez*, and by Bernat Metge's *VG*, where *familiaritas* is rendered by the substantive *privadesa*:

> Et mesmement ne se vouloit point marier, dont sur toutes les autres choses le peuple estoit courroucié, en tant que une fois tous ensemble alerent a lui, desquelz un de plus grant auctorité, beau parlour et bien privez dudit seigneur, lui va dire: « Ton humanité, sire marquis, nous donne hardiesse que [...] » (*Livre* 1.10-16)

> E specialment no·s curave de pendre muller, de la qual cosa los seus vassalls e sotsmesos eren fort dolents e despagats. Los quals, com molt ho haguessen soferit, anaren ensemps al dit Valter; e la hu de ells, lo qual era de major auctoritat, ho per bell parlar o per major privadesa que havia ab lo dit Valter, dix axí: « Molt noble marquès, la tua humanitat dóna a nós audàcia e gosar que [...] » (*VG* 120.8-14)

> [And particularly he did not care about taking a wife, whereby his vassals and subjects were truly afflicted and unhappy. Having endured this state of affairs for a long time, they gathered and went to Walter. One of them, with the greatest authority, either because of his gracious eloquence or because of him being the closest to Walter, said to him: "My noble marquis, your humanity gives us courage..."]

In these translations, the legate addresses the marquis with the confidence that comes from elective intimacy. In medieval French (and Catalan and middle English as well), *privé* covers a range of meanings. In the sphere of social, interpersonal relations medieval French *privé* qualifies friendship, familiarity and also the intimacy of the members of the sequel (*maisnie*) of the lord[31]. On the one hand, *privé* relates to the private sphere (often connected to friendship and love) as opposed to the public. On the other hand, the request of the anonymous spokesperson, the reply of Walter, and his following conditioned consent are matter of state. The other side of the coin, the private sphere, should be at stake in his life as a married man. However, his cruel testing of Griselda is obviously part – at least in his

31. The *privé* appears as a pivotal figure elsewhere in the history of the novella as a genre. For example in Don Juan Manuel, *Libro de los enxiemplos del Conde Lucanor e de Patronio*, ed. Alfonso I. Sotelo, Madrid, 1990, where the *privado*, the man who has the complete trust and is in the grace of the king or lord, is also the wise (and witty) narrative voice of the *recueil*.

first intention – of Walter's political, hence public, strategy to keep power and freedom.

Compared to Boccaccio, who uses *uomini* (men, vassals) to refer to the community of the ruled, Petrarch deploys a richer vocabulary to designate the public sphere using three terms: *populus* (*Sen.* 17.3.19, see quote above at the beginning of this section), *subiecti* (subjects) (*Sen.* 17.3.29) and *nobiles* (*Sen.* 17.3.71). Latin *populus*, which we find in the passage introducing Walter, can refer to both a mass of people with no precise juridical or political unity, or to an organised body. It is a word that may have had a classical flavour in Petrarch, who could have thought, for example, of Cicero's definition of the republic as *res populi*. It is likely that for Petrarch *populus* had also a 'vernacular' acception, referring to the broad class of artisans and bourgeois, as it was the case in Florence and Siena. At the same time, *populus* had a special place in the institutional and political ferment of the Northern Italian Trecento. Like in Latin, Italian *popolo* meant a variety of things, but it could very much designate the assemblies of the citizens of a city-state (Italian *comune*)[32]. Now in the context of the passage from Petrarch's version of the novella, *populus* is linked with *familiaritas*. His lexical choices denote a conception of the community consistent with the medieval notion of « friendship », which, as Alan Bray remarks, « was significant in the public sphere »[33]. In *Sen.* 14.1, a mirror of the prince in epistolary form written over the same months of *Sen.* 17.3 (the Latin version of Boccaccio's novella), Petrarch reminds Francesco da Carrara, the lord of Padua, that the prince should be surrounded by an elite of *amici* (friends): good and loyal counsellors[34]. In the Italian and Latin 'originals,' Walter addressing his subjects as *amici* in

32. On the notion of *populus* in 14th-c. Italy (particularly in connection with Marsilius of Padua), see Serena Ferente, « *Popolo* and Law: Late Medieval Sovereignty in Marsilius and the Jurists », in *Popular Sovereignty in Historical Perspective*, ed. by Richard Bourke and Quentin Skinner, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 96-114: « A definition of *populs* in Marsilius's Italy [i.e. first half of the 14th century] would immediately incur a crucial ambiguity, which to an extent persists in Western political languages of later eras: *populus* is the whole, but *populus* is also, de facto, a part, which has a tendency to think of itself as a whole. Starting with the 1230s, but most visibly in the 1280s and 1290s, a number of self-governing urban communities in Italy were ruled by so-called *regimi di popolo* and had, as it was said, *stato popolare* » (p. 99).

33. See Alan Bray, *The Friend*, Chicago, 2003, p. 2.

34. Quoting verbatim from the *Historia Augusta* (ed. Jeffrey Henderson, transl. David Magie (Cambridge, 1924), II, *Severus Alexander*, 308) to stress the dangers of « mali principis amici » (the 'bad friends' are more dangerous for the state than a 'bad prince': *Sen.* 14.1.155), Petrarch (see esp. *Sen.* 14.1.182-189) referred to *amicitia* and *veri amici* (as opposed to *ficti*, in *Sen.* 14.1.189) as the 'sweetiest' and the 'holiest' (after virtue) among 'human things' (*Sen.* 14.1.183). On the importance and role played by the (good) counsellors in ruling the state in close relationship with the ruler, see Claudia Storti Storchi, « Francesco Petrarca: politica e diritto in età viscontea », in *Petrarca e la Lombardia*, *op. cit.*, p. 77-121 (p. 84-85), and McLaughlin, « Humanist Rewriting », art. cit., p. 25-26.

response to their request is not just *captatio benevolentiae*: it is part of his first move, a tactical retreat, to respond to their challenge:

A' quali Gualtieri rispose: « **Amici** miei, voi mi **strignete** a quello che io del tutto aveva disposto di non far mai » (*Dec.* 10.10.6, my emphasis)	*Moverunt pie preces animum viri, et: «* ***Cogitis*** *» inquit « me,* ***amici****, ad id quod michi in animum nunquam venit »* (*Sen* 17.3.27)
[In response Gualtieri said: «My friends, you are forcing me to do something I had absolutely resolved never to do»]	[These pious prayers moved the heart of the man, and he said, «You urge me, friends, toward something which never entered my mind»]

The versions of my corpus emphasise the affectionate tones present in Petrarch's lexical choice:

Finees les paroles, le marquis, meu de pitié et d'amour de [ses] **subgiés**, respondi doulcement et dit [ainsi]: « Mes **amis**, vous **me contraigniés** a ce que en mon corage jamais ne pot entrer ». (*Miroir* 360.16-19, my emphasis)	Lors esmeurent les doulces paroles de ses **subgetz** ledit seigneur, et respondi: « Vous **me contraignez**, mes **amis** », dist il, « a ce que je n'euz oncques en pensee ». (*Livre* 259.37-39)	Ladonchs lo dit Valter, mogut per les piadosas pregàrias dels seus, dix: « Vosaltres, amichs, **me forsats** de fer cosa que jamés no fo al meu cor ». (*VG* 122.15-18)	Hir meeke preyere and hir pitous cheere ǀ Made the markys herte han pitee. ǀ «Ye wol», quod he, «myn owene peple deere, ǀ To that I nevere erst thoughte **streyne me**». (*CT* IV.141-144)
		[Then Walter, moved by the pitiful prayers of his men, said: «My friends, you are forcing me to do something that was never in my heart…»]	Their meek prayer and their pitiful manner ǀ Made the marquis's heart have pity. ǀ «You want», said he, «my own people dear, ǀ That which I never before thought to compel myself.»

The stress on the semantics of affection, present also in French *privez* and Catalan *privats*, and in Chaucer's paternalistic phrase, *myn owene peple deere*, collides with Walter's strong vocabulary of confrontation (*contraignier*, *forsar*, *to streyne*). The man forcing Walter to decide against his will is one of his own: the enemy has a friendly face[35].

In dealing with Latin *populus* (*Sen.* 17.3.19), the translations of my corpus show a twofold approach. First, in French, Philippe de Mézières

35. See Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political. Expanded Edition*, ed. George Schwab, Chicago and London, 2007, p. 27-37; Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, London-New York, 2005, p. 170-193 (= Chapter 7, « He who accompanies me »); Heinrich Meier, *The Lesson of Carl Schmitt: Four Chapters on the Distinction between Political Theology and Political Philosophy*, Chicago and London, 2011, p. 26-57.

renders *populus* with the doubling *barons et son peuple*[36]. In an analogous move, Bernat Metge adopts *vassals e sotsmesos*, a doubling evocative of feudal hierarchy (*VG* 120.8-14). Recent scholarship showed that Metge translated Petrarch's text using Mézières's version as an auxiliary translation[37]. If so, the doubling *barons/peuple* might be read in relation to Metge's gloss of Petrarch's *populus* in Catalan: *vassals/sotsmesos*. The two terms of the doublings are not perfectly synonymous. In this case, *barons* and *vassals* are an elite, a subset of the larger set expressed by the second term, Fr. *peuple* and Cat. *sotsmesos*. In its relation with *nobiles* and *subiecti*, to which the feudal terminology of the French and Catalan versions (*barons*, *vassals*) should be connected, *populus* (*peuple*) implies a notion of the 'people' not as an indistinct crowd, but as a body with the capacity to have a voice at least in the single but crucial matter of marriage and dynastic continuity.

The second approach to *populus* is literal. This is apparent in the anonymous *Livre* (257.11-16) and in Chaucer's *CT*, where the Latin is rendered simply by French « people » and Middle English « peple », respectively[38]:

> Oonly that point **his peple** bar so soore
> That **flokmele on a day they to him wente**,
> And oon of hem, that wisest was of lore —
> Or elles that the lord best wolde assente
> That he sholde telle hym **what his peple** mente,
> Or elles koude he shewe wel swich mateere —
> He to the markys syede as ye shul heere:
> "O noble markys, youre humanitee
> Asseureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,
> As ofte as tyme of necessitee, | That [...]"
> (*CT* IV.85-95, my emphasis)

[Only that point his people took so badly | That in groups on one day they went to him, | And one of them, that wisest was in learning – | Or else the one that the lord most readily would consent | That he should tell him what his people meant, | Or else he knew well how to present such a matter – | He to the marquis said as you shall hear: | «O noble marquis, your graciousness | Makes us confident and gives us boldness, | As often as it is time (to do so) by necessity, | That we to you may tell our sorrow.»]

36. *Miroir* 359,23-28.
37. Lluís Cabré, « Petrarch's Griseldis », art. cit., p. 32-34.
38. Chaucer uses also « commune » as a noun to designate the « people »: see *CT* IV.70, and see Chris Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 86 [*Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*].

If we look at this 'literalist' approach to *populus* in its broader context, we will realize it is not without interpretative implications. In the Latin text, the emissaries are presented dynamically, moving in group towards their lord. This is apparent in the adverbial periphrasis: *cathervatim illum adeunt* (they approached him as a group, *Sen.* 17.3.19), which is an innovation of the Latin text, as Boccaccio did not mention it:

> La qual cosa **a' suoi uomini non piaccendo, piú volte il pregaron** che moglie prendesse (*Dec.* 10.10.5, my emphasis)
>
> [[B]ut his vassals were not content with this and repeatedly begged him to get married]

The adverbial phrase *cathervatim illum adeunt* denotes an action more similar to rioting hordes than to the clash between organised troops. Indeed, *caterva* indicated the loose order of barbarian militias as opposed to the disciplined order of the Roman legions. It is interesting to compare Petrarch's locution with the ways it is translated. While Bernat Metge does not gloss the locution, the three other versions deal with *cathervatim*. *Livre* gives up any military overtone and renders the adverbial clause with an explanatory periphrasis: *tous ensemble alerent*. Philippe de Mézières' modal expression, *en grande quantité*, depicts a large crowd moving, both imposing and scary. Chaucer has an adverbial compound, « flokmele ». Formally, this is the closer solution to the Latin source. Similarly to Latin *caterva*, Middle English *flok*'s nuances range from a group of animals or persons, to a gang of evil spirits or a troop of warriors, an army, a host, a squadron[39]. Chaucer's English may be exploiting here the potential of the intersection between the semantics of the military and the sense of flock as a group of animals (e.g. of sheep). Of course, the image of the flock has an evangelical echo (*Cristes flok*), which is consistent with the representation of Walter as a *rector* ('leader, governor')[40]. In Latin, the verb *regere* designates both the act of shepherding a flock and that of ruling: the good

39. See *electronic MED*, *s.v. flok* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED16376> (28/02/2018). For the print edition, *The Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Hans Kurath *et al.*, Ann Arbor, 1954-2001.

40. In his letter to Francesco da Carrara (*Sen.* 14.1), Petrarch refers to the ruler using the following designations: *princeps* (e.g. *Sen.* 14.1.3, 38, 67, 116, 136, 155, 163, 170, 174, 175, 192, 194, 205, 206, 213, 215, 217, 221, 231, 236), *dominus* (e.g. *Sen.* 14.96, 111, 136, 138, 154, 168, 181, 205, 220), *imperator* (e.g. *Sen.* 14.1.158, 166, 200). It is interesting to notice how these terms occur consistently throughout the letter, but their relative frequency increases in the second half of the epistle (this is particularly true for *princeps*). Less frequent but significant is the adoption of *rector* or *rector populum* (e.g. 14.1.28, 37, 96, 129…). Latin *princeps* is practically always in connection to a Roman emperor or Alexander the Great, the latter also disparagingly referred to as *rex Macedum*, *Sen.* 14.1.206 (the sole occurrence of this term [*rex*] in the letter). The metaphor of the *gubernator* (steersman, pilot) appears only once in the letter (*Sen.* 14.1.31).

ruler (or prince) is often compared to the good shepherd – like Christ. It is interesting that Petrarch uses *caterva* to designate a group of people complaining precisely because they were lacking a strong leader. The use of *caterva* implies an inference pushing in a direction contrary to the semantic nuance derived from the nexus *populus-subiecti-nobiles*, and, in the vernacular, *peuple-barons* or *vassals*. Finally, Chaucers' Clerk might be playing with flock's ambiguities. The shift from the people gathering before the prince to the « peple » going « flokmele » to see their lord does not seem to convey an organised group of leading men whose dignity justifies their challenge of authority, rather, without a shepherd, they appear little more than an amorphous flock[41].

Responding to the request of the spokesman, Walter refers to his men as *subiecti*, while applying to himself the etimologically related verb *subicio*:

> *Ceterum subiectorum michi voluntatibus me sponte subicio, et prudentie vestre fisus et fidei.* (*Sen.* 17.3.29)
>
> [Even so, I submit myself freely to the will of my subjects, confident in your prudence and faith.]

The translators (with the exception of *Livre*) do not offer a specific parallel rendering of the term. However, the vernacular for Latin *subiecti* surfaces at various points in the versions of my corpus. In *Miroir* (*de [ses] subgiés*) and *Livre* (*de ses subgetz*) the term appears before the actual start of Walter's speech. As seen above, in the Catalan *VG*, *sotmesos*, in connection with *vassals*, occurs even earlier. Chaucer, who does not translate *subiecti* as such, bases his lines on a set of oppositions inspired by Petrarch's polarised rhetoric:

> «Ye wol», quod he, «myn owene peple deere,
> To that I nevere erst thoughte streyne me.
> I me rejoysed of my liberte,
> That seelde tyme is founde in mariage;
> Ther I was free, I moot been in servage.
> But nathelees I se youre trewe entente,
> And truste upon youre wit, and have doon ay;
> Wherfore of my free wyl I wole assente
> To wedde me, as soone as evere I may».
> (*CT* IV.143-151)

41. Petrarch applies the metaphor of the herd to Boccaccio's readers in his cursory commentary at the beginning of *Sen.* 17.3. And concluding the tale (*Dec.* 10.10.68), Dioneo deprecates those at royal palaces who, in his words, « would be better suited to tending pigs than ruling men ». See Mary J. Carruthers, « The Lady, the Swineherd, and Chaucer's Clerk », in *The Chaucer Review*, t. 17 (1983), p. 221-234; Goodwin, « The Griselda Game », art. cit., p. 45-48.

[«You want», said he, «my own people dear, | That which I never before thought to compel myself. | I rejoiced in my liberty, | That seldom is found in marriage; | Where I was free, I must be in servitude. | But nevertheless I see your true intent, | And trust upon your intelligence, and always have done so; | Therefore of my free will I will assent | To wed, as soon as ever I can.»]

Chaucer's strategy is marked by lexical, syntactic and prosodic figures of contrast, parallelism and symmetry. The semantically-opposed verbal and noun phrases « streyne me » (v. 144) and « free wyl » (v. 150) frame the entire passage. A parallelism expresses the opposite conditions of liberty and servitude in line 146: « Ther I was free, I moot been in servage ». Finally, three terms placed at the end of three consecutive lines draw a symmetrical figure: first, at the two extremes of this triad, « liberte » (v. 145) is negated by « servage » (v. 147); secondly, the medium term, « mariage » (146), in rhyme with « servage », emphasises the connection through cause and effect between the condition of being married and the loss of individual freedom through identity of sound (homeoteleuton).

One of the attributes of Walter's power is the nobility of his lineage[42]. Being the essential policy for the conservation of power during the Middle Ages (and beyond), marriage and dynastic continuity are projections in time. And time, namely the future, is an unavoidable constraint on the ruler (and a condition of politics), as Walter's subjects remind him. Famously, Chaucer's Clerk blames Walter for not taking into account what the future may bring:

I blame him thus, that he considered **noght**
In tyme cominge what mighte him bityde,
But on his lust present was al his thought,
As for to hauke and hunte on every syde.
Wel ny alle othere cures leet he slyde;
And eek he nolde – and that was worst of alle –
Wedde no wyf, for noght that may bifalle.
(*CT* IV.78-84, my emphasis)

[I blame him thus: that he considered not | In time coming what might happen to him, | But on his immediate pleasure was all his thought, | Such as to hawk and hunt on every side. | Well nigh all other cares he let slip away, | And also he would not – and that was worst of all – | Wed any woman, for anything that may befall.]

42. Walter was « sanguine nobilis » (*Sen.* 17.3.18). The link between Walter and his descendants is already qualified as ancient in Boccaccio (« già è gran tempo » *Dec.* 10.10 4).

Walter's decision not to marry and to spend all his time in hunting and hawking[43], makes him a ruler alienated from political action, which was considered not just inappropriate, but also immoral. Walter's inoperant attitude to his duty is qualified as a vice by the *Mesnagier de Paris*, who accomodates Philippe de Mézières' version in his treatise for his young wife:

> **Un vice** estoit en lui [Walter], car il amoit fort solitude et n'acontoit riens au temps à venir, ne en nulle manière ne vouloit pour lui mariage. (*Mesnagier de Paris* 192.107-109, my emphasis)

The French versions of the passage render the time-lineage-power conjunction explicit, particularly in that of Philippe de Mézières[44]:

> Es confines de Pieumont en Lombardie [...] a une contree longue et lee et tres bien habitee d'aucunes cités... laquelle contree et **anciennement seignourie naturele** es tamps passés et aujourd'hui fu **toujours gouvernee** par les marquis de Saluce. Or est ainsi, selonc l'istoire, que jadis entre les marquis en ot un appellé Guatier, **seigneur sans per de celle noble contree**, auquel tous les autres marquis de la dicte region, barons et chevaliers, bourgois et escuiers, marchans et laboureus naturelement obeissoient (*Miroir* 359.11-17, my emphasis)

In this passage, Mézières highlights the status (*seigneur sans per*), antiquity (*anciennement*) of Walter's *seignourie*, and the obedience due to the markis by all the orders of society: the reign, the authority of the ruler and the obedience of the ruled are all defined as « natural ». The phrases

43. *Dec.* 10.10.4: « [Gualtieri] in niuna altra cosa il suo tempo spendeva che in uccellare e cacciare » [Gualtieri who spent all of his time out hawking and hunting].

44. The time-lineage conjunction is implied rather than stated in Petrarch's lexical choices. The land of Saluzzo was an apanage of Walter's family: *Walterius quidam, ad quem familie ac terrarum omnium regimen pertineret* [a certain Walter, to whom the rule of his estate and the whole land belonged] (*Sen.* 17.3.18). Semantically, the Latin verb *pertineo* ('to belong, to be the property of') indicates a possession protracted in time. In this sense, it is not frequently attested in Classical Latin. This verb seems to have started to define property of things only in Late Antiquity. But it was used as a juridical term in connection with property of territory and estate much later. See Jan Frederik Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, Leiden, *s.v.* PERTINERE. Juridical property and definition of the legal status are connected in the phrase *pertinentes homines*, glossed by Du Cange, *Glossarium mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, as *servi* (<http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/> 28/02/2018). A search in the *Corpus corporum* data base online (<http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/index.php?lang=0> 28/02/2018) reveals that the 500 occurrences of the third person singular of the present indicative of the verb (*pertinet*) have a twofold meaning: 1) to be appropriate to something or someone; 2) to be the legitimate property of/to pertain to someone or some body (e.g. a monastic community). But the second sense of the verb seems to become more widespread from the 11th century onwards.

seigneur naturel, *seigneurie naturele* illustrate the legitimacy of the power and supremacy of the lord over his territory[45].

In the modern reception of the novella, Walter has often been called a tyrant. But the first part of the novella revolves around the conditions under which the ruled of Saluzzo can escape from the limitations imposed by the power of the *seigneur*, whose prerogatives can be inferred by the Latin text. The following table, which presents the beginning and end of the passage quoted above (*Sen.* 17.3.17-18 and 26), intends to highlight the use of a technically precise lexis to emphasise the features of a prince's authority (my emphasis in italics)[46]:

<table>
<tr><td>Inter cetera ad radicem Vesulli terra Salutiarum, vicis et castella satis frequens, marchionum arbitrio nobilium quorundam regitur virorum. Quorum unus primusque omnium et maximus fuisse traditur Valterus quidam, ad quem familie ac terrarium omnium regimen pertineret (Sen. 17.3.17-18, my emphasis)</td><td>Libera tuos omnes molesta solecitudine, quesumus, ne siquid humanitus tibi forsan accideret, tu sine tuo successore abeas, ipsi sine votivo rectore remaneant. (Sen. 17.3.26)</td></tr>
<tr><td>[The land of Saluzzo lies among others at the base of Vesulus, with plenty of villages and castles ruled by the will of certain noble marquises. The first and greatest, it is said, was a certain Walter, to whom the rule of his estate and the whole land belonged.]</td><td>[Free us all from this nagging worry, lest, if anything mortal should befall you, you might leave no heir, and your people be left without an avowed ruler.]</td></tr>
</table>

By contrast with Boccaccio (*Dec.* 10.10.4), Petrarch amplifies the vocabulary linked with the semantic field of the act of ruling. Walter is the *primus* and *maximus* among the principal feudal houses in Saluzzo and other regions in Lombardy. He is the « rector votivus » (the avowed governor), which entails a bond between the prince and the elites of his *contree*. Finally, notice the series *rector*, *regitur* and *regimen familie ac*

45. See *DMF*, *s.v. naturel* 2.c <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/> (28/02/2018), and Michel Senellart, *Les arts de gouverner: Du* regimen *médiéval au concept de gouvernement*, Paris, 1995, p. 155-205 (= chapter 4 « *Rector naturalis* »).

46. In introducing his main character, Petrarch plays with a series of indefinite expressions to introduce Valterius: « Inter cetera », « satis », « traditur », « Valterius quidam ». In the choice of his words, Petrarch is consistent with medieval civil jurisprudence: see Serena Ferente, « *Popolo* and law », art. cit., p. 101: « Historians of medieval civil jurisprudence have traditionally traced a theory of sovereignty in legal thought via the fortune of two formulae: 'rex imperator in regno suo' (the king is emperor in his own kingdom) and 'civitas sibi princeps' (a city is itwo own prince) [...] any assertion of sovereignty on the part of [any political actor] (kings and cities, respectively [...]) must consist in appropriating the powers of the Roman law prince and exercising them within the limits of a given jurisdiction. The powers of the *princeps* implied absolute superiority/sovereignty (*superioritas*, *superanitas*), which translated into a rejection of any other overlordship (those kings and cities, indeed, *superiorem non recognoscent*). »

omnium terrarum: in medieval Latin, *regere* (to keep straight, to lead) was in competition with and often preferred to *gubernare* (to govern)[47], a form based on a different metaphor, that of the steersman, the pilot of a boat, and a form obviously destined to win the contest with *regere* in the designation of the management of political business[48].

In the versions of my corpus, *Livre* and *Miroir* choose to double up to render *rector* as *votivus*. In this instance, however, *Livre* is the only one that prefers the marine metaphor of the *gouverneur* (pilot) over the image of the guide/leader:

Fais ceste grace, nostre seigneur, a tes subgés loyaulx, afin que, se de ta noble et haulte personne avenoit autre chose, et tu t'en alasse sans hoir et successour, tes subgés tristes et dolans ne demourassent **sans seigneur et gracieux rectour** (*Miroir* 360.12-15, my emphasis)	Delivres nous doncques, nous t'en prions, de grant cousençon affin que se tu mouroies nous ne demourissions **sans seigneur et gouverneur** (*Livre* 257.14-259.36)	Desliure'ns, donchs, de aquesta trista ància en què som, per ço que si Déu disposave en altra manera de tu, no te'n anasses menys de ledesma successor e nós romanguéssem **sens regidor algú**. (*VG* 122.11-14)
		[Deliver us therefore from this dismal suffering we must endure, so that if God had to dispose of you otherwise, you would not leave without a less legitimate successor (than you), and we would remain without a ruler.]

The implications of this lexical/rhetorical articulation become transparent in Chaucer's *CT*, where the focus shifts to the geopolitical consequences of Walter dying without a successor[49]. Walter's lack of political engagement is leading the *contree* to a political vacuum, which someone else will fill:

Delivere us out of al **this bisy drede**,
And taak a wyf for hye Goddes sake,
For if it so bifelle, as God forbede,

47. No occurrence of *gubernare* in *Sen.* 14.1, where the verbs for the action of ruling are: *(rem publicam) regere* (*Sen.* 14.1.1, 172, 179, 249), *(bene) imperare* (*Sen.* 14.1.166). Other relevant periphrasis and phrase in relation to ruling 'style' (the term is Petrarch's: *Sen.* 14.1.213) are: *cura est, curam habere…* (Sen. 14.1.86, 88, 106, 123) and *curare (quod…)* (*Sen.* 14.1.89). All of these phrases are related to specific aspect public administration: *cura viarum*, *cura paludum*, *cura frumentaria*, *administratio* (*Sen.* 14.1.93), *administrator* (*Sen.* 14.1.111).

48. See Senellart, *Les arts de gouverner*, *op. cit.*, p. 19-59; Storti Storchi, « Francesco Petrarca », art. cit., p. 80-81.

49. See Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », p. 31.

> That **thurgh your deeth your lyne sholde slake**,
> And **that a straunge successour sholde take**
> **Youre heritage**, o wo were us alyve!
> Wherfore we pray you hastily to wyve. (*CT* IV.134-140)

> [«Deliver us out of all this constant fear, | And take a wife, for high God's sake! | For if it so happen, may God forbid, | That through your death your line should die out, | And that a foreign successor should take | Your heritage, O woe would it be to us in our lifetime! | Wherefore we pray you hastily to take a wife.»]

Detail as to the danger of a *straunge* successor is Chaucer's innovation, but this addition just serves to make explicit that which is implicit in other versions of the story[50].

To talk about the power of Walter means to deal with the issue of the relation between the will of the prince and his capacity to exert power. In all the versions of the novella, the analysis of the vocabulary of *volere* (to want to) and of *voluntas* (the will), i.e. of who wants what and how they obtain it, means in practice to embrace the whole at once. Michaela Paasche Grudin, Rossella Bessi, and more recently Silvia Rizzo and Monica Bertè have commented on this aspect, therefore I will not expand on it[51]. Instead I will focus on the use of the word *arbitrium* in the passage quoted above (*Sen.* 17.3.17) to approach the issue of the limitations of the power of the prince.

Latin *arbitrium* may cover the following meanings: in classical Latin, it could denote mastery and dominion over something; in Christian theological reflection on human freedom and morality, it meant free will; in the Medieval legal jargon, *arbitrium* had also the sense of judgment or decision (of an *arbitrator*); finally, as a verb, medieval Latin *arbitrari* (to promise, to undertake of one's own free will, to pledge oneself), has a nuance connected with the political covenant: i.e. the *rector* is given power to decide over his subjects and their properties, but he is also expected to abide by a limited but binding set of obligations. In Saluzzo and over his men, Walter was the *arbitror* and had *arbitrium*. Still his *potestas* (legal power) was not absolute. More than in the Italian novella, in Petrarch's version the tension between widening the scope of power and defining its boundaries is expressed through the rhetorics of paradox. The eloquent legate presents marriage to Walter as a « legitimate ioke »: a duty with which the marquis

50. Before Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer, the barons of Jean Renart were overtly aware of the existential threat of having a sovereign bachelor and without a heir (*Guillaume de Dole*, éd. cit., v. 127-128): « Se ciz bers, qui est mieudres d'autres, | muert sanz hoir, nos somes tuit mort! ».

51. Grudin, « Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* as Political Paradox », art. cit., p. 82-83; Bessi, « La Griselda del Petrarca », art. cit., p. 290-291; Bertè and Rizzo, « *Valete amici* », art. cit., p. 96-97.

must comply not just because of his good will but as an act proper to his *imperium*, proper to his right and power of commanding[52]:

> *ut coniugio scilicet animum applices collumque non liberum modo sed* ***imperiosum*** *legitimo subicias* ***iugo*** *idque quam primum facias; volant enim dies rapidi et, quanquam florida sis etate* [...] *Suscipe igitur, oramus, eorum preces qui nullum tuum* ***imperium*** *recusarent. Querende autem coniugis studium nobis linque* (*Sen.* 17.3.22-25, my emphasis)
>
> [I mean that you should turn your mind to marriage and lay your neck not merely free but imperial, under that lawful yoke, and do so before all else. The rapid days fly by, and even in the flower of your youth, silent and relentless age always stalks that flower: death is near at any age... Therefore receive the prayers of those who have never rejected your authority. Leave the work of finding a wife to us...]

Boccaccio had used the image of the chains to depict Walter's conception of marriage and his hostility to his men's will[53]. And notice that the image of the yoke was used by Boccaccio in the epistle addressed to Petrarch quoted above (Epist. 10.27-29), where he accused Petrarch of having sold himself to a « foreing yoke ». Petrarch's metaphor of the yoke replaces and anticipates Boccaccio's image. In Classical Latin, *iugum coniugii* ('the yoke of marriage') is a traditional image. The signifier (the yoke) reduces the signified (the man submitting to marriage) to a subjugated beast of burden. As we will see, this has relevant implications in the context of this novella[54]. Both the metaphor of the chains and that of the yoke make the first and worst of Walter's fears obvious. Suddenly, after years of carefree dedication to his favourite sports, faced with his responsibilities, the stakes have become (for him) unbearably high.

With the exception of the *CT*, none of the versions of the corpus render the metaphor of the yoke, whereas they all translate *imperium* as command[55]. The image of the yoke reappears in Chaucer, in the passage in which the vassals beseech Walter to get married:

> Boweth youre nekke under that blisful yok
> Of soveraynetee, noght of servyse,
> Which that men clep spousaille or wedlock (*CT* IV.113-5)

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52. See Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 119 supra.

53. *Cf. Dec.* 10.10.8: « Ma poi che pure in queste catene vi piace d'annodarmi » [But since you want to bind me in these chains].

54. The animal simile evokes Dioneo's words in relation to Gualtieri's behaviour towards Griselda, which he defines as « matta bestialità » (insane bestiality) on which I will come back below: see § 4.

55. An exception would be Philippe de Mézières who uses an image, « lyen de mariage » [bond of marriage] (*Miroir* 359.32 34-360), which seems closer to Boccaccio than Petrarch.

[Bow your neck under that blissful yoke | Of sovereignty, not of servitude, | Which men call marriage or wedlock]

From the perspective of Walter's vassals, marriage is not about service but rather a necessary tool for sovereignty. The choice of words is paradoxical: the yoke of sovereignty and not of service is an oxymoron. Indeed the tension between obedience and freedom as *arbitrium* or free-will was part of Christian culture. Saint Paul repeatedly insisted on this point. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul urges the community to embrace the freedom of Christ, and not to let themselves « be burdened again by a yoke of slavery »[56]. Conforming to the Pauline tradition, the image of the yoke helps us to grasp a fundamental point in the novella: Walter's plenitude of power (*potestatis plenitudo*) is at once bound to and fulfilled by obedience (*obedientia*)[57].

With this rhetorical twist, Petrarch frames Walter's obedience as matter of necessity[58]. In case of dire need, the authority can modify or suspend the 'constitutional' order – thereby producing new laws or proclaiming a state of exception. At the same time, as in the novella, subjects may also appeal to necessity to break the political covenant and replace their lord, especially when the ruler is neglecting his subjects' security. In these contexts, necessity is ambivalent: it both magnifies and puts a limit on the power of the authority in question. Petrarch's rhetoric of paradox is connected to necessity, defined as the situation in which the political covenant is exceptionally suspended. Chaucer insists on necessity to define Walter's inherent finitude as a human being:

O noble markys, youre humanitee
Asseureth us and yeveth us hardinesse,
As ofte as tyme of necessitee,
That we […] (*CT* IV.92-95)

[O noble marquis, your graciousness | Makes us confident and gives us boldness, | As often as it is time (to do so) by necessity, | That we…]

56. See *Ad Gal.* 5.1: *Hac libertate nos Christus liberavit; state igitur et nolite iterum iugo servitutis detineri* [It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery].

57. Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, *op. cit.*, shows how the language of paradox is part of medieval legal doctrines of individual power (see particularly chapter 3 « The Power of the Prince in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries », p. 76-118). The conflict between the competing authorities of the prince and of the law represents a problem, which medieval jurists tried to cope with in paradoxical terms. Rooted in the New Testament and developed in patristic theology, this language was inclined to paradox and contradiction nourished the legal and political body of « rhapsodic » doctrine of power (*potestas*) and obedience (*obedientia*).

58. See Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

The *tyme of necessitee* is not the durative time of the passing of generations: rather, the punctual, exceptional time of necessity, where any action is not prospective, but immediate. It is the action human beings undertake under an existential threat: in matters of life and death, *humanitee* rhymes with *necessitee*.

3. *Walter against Griselda: the Torments of Uncertainty*

With his « dark and uncertain » nature Walter was a difficult character[59]. To define Walter's attitude towards his personal and the state's future, Petrarch relies on *curiositas* and the adjective *curiosus*[60]. At the beginning of the novella, Petrarch labels Walter *incuriosissimus futurorum* (*Sen.* 17.3.18). Based on Latin *cura*, *curiosus* denotes the attitude of someone who is full of care. In its negative form, *incuriosissimus* implies a ruler is fully careless. As a man of state, Walter cannot be careless, let alone idle. Once compelled to act, he plots to restore the condition of peace and freedom that he enjoyed before his men forced him to change his *train de vie* and take a wife. Walter's prejudices against marriage and women, his sceptical attitude towards any social and institutional intervention over his 'consoled' life, make a potential enemy out of everyone – including Griselda.

This threat to his own power puts Walter in a state of dire need, since he must react to protect his condition without destroying the state. To do so, Walter is resolved to marry while depriving marriage «and any other social contract – of its power to effect change»[61]. While operating within the norms, he resorted to an exceptional mesure. As a sovereign, Walter had the power to observe the law by suspending its effects. In modern constitutional orders, this power is assimilated to the paradigm of the state of exception. The doctrine on the state of exception is obviously modern[62]. However, the theoretical and practical grounds for this concept

59. See Petrarch, *De remediis* 2.79 and 1.79: « fusca enim et ambigua merx est homo », quoted by Timothy Kircher, « On the Two Faces of Fortune: *De remediis utriusque fortune* », in *Petrarch: a Critical Guide*, *op. cit.*, p. 245-262 (p. 249-250 and note 39). See also Martellotti, « Momenti narrativi », p. 191: « Le libertà che il Petrarca si prende nel tradurre la *Griselda* di Boccaccio … vertono principalmente sulla figura del protagonista, ed è naturale che sia così. Il marchese di Saluzzo è personaggio difficile, che porta con sé una contraddizione, paragonabile entro certi limiti a quella di cui soffre Admeto nell'*Alcesti* di Euripide ».

60. For the history and understanding of curiosity in premodern literature, I mainly relied on Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories,* Wiesbaden, 1998, and *id.*, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany*, Oxford, 2004.

61. Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », art. cit., p. 42.

62. Giorgio Agamben, *Stato di eccezione. Homo sacer, II, 1*, Torino, 2003, p. 21-32, provides a brief history of the state of exception, explaining this legal instrument in light of the exceptional legal provisions adopted in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In a

resonate with the medieval theological, legal and political debate around the relationship between authority and law[63].

At the end of the Latin version of the tale, while rejecting any accusation of *impietas* – the vice of the unjust and cruel ruler –, Walter concedes that his treatment of Griselda took the form of an excessive will to know (*cupiditas ... experiendi*, *Sen.* 17.3.69)[64]. To defend and assert his existential position, Walter needs « to make the right distinction between friend and enemy as the absolute decision about [his] life »[65]. In this anxiety of distinguishing friend from foe, Walter's inquisitive care is about knowing just who Griselda is: *curiositas* as the attitude of the one who is fully inquisitive.

In Augustine, the desire to know is not a vice *per se*[66]. What qualifies curiosity as a vice is an excessive appetite for things other than God. Immoderate curiosity is « one of the three primal motives (along with pride and carnal concupiscence) for iniquity »[67]. Walter is keen to defend himself from any accusation of reckless cruelty, a vice often associated with the sordid cares of the tyrant[68]. Moving

previous text, Agamben, *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla* Lettera ai Romani, Torino, 2000, p. 98-99, commented on the theoretical traits on which the paradigm of exception is grounded.

63. According to Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 1-3, 12th-c. canonists formalized the very problem that the 'figure' of the state of exception was given as an answer to: « when and under what circumstances could the prince [or an authoritative body] set aside, distort, or ignore the rules of the legal system(s) that he was normally obligated to preserve? » Over the 13th century, marriage was at the centre of harsh debates on the authority of the pope: see Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, *op. cit.*, p. 64-65. By making Walter ask for papal permission, hence expanding on Boccaccio's original on this point, Petrarch tried to give sound legal basis Walter's decision to repudiate Griselda. This detail would be of crucial importance for the uses of the novella in Tudor England: Ursula Potter, « Tales of Patient Griselda and Henry VIII », in *Early Theatre*, t. 5 (2002), p. 11-28.

64. Ruediger Hermann Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*, Berlin-New York, 1977, p. 169-190 (chapter 7, « Knowledge as Power »); Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe*, p. 27; Kathryn L. Lynch, « Despoiling Griselda: Chaucer's Walter and the Problem of Knowledge in *The Clerk's Tale* », in *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, t. 10 (1988), p. 41-70.

65. See H. Meier, *The Lesson*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

66. Rossella Bessi, « La Griselda del Petrarca », in *Umanesimo volgare: Studi di letteratura fra Tre e Quattrocento*, Firenze, 2004, p. 279-292 (p. 282), quotes Augustine's *De civitate dei*, 16.23, where there is an interesting etymological word-play based on the verbs of knowledge: i.e. *cognoscere*, *agnoscere* and *innotescere* – this last verb is put by Petrarch into the conclusion (*Sen.* 17.3.143).

67. Joseph Torchia, « Curiosity », in *Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Fitzgerald, Cambridge, 1999, p. 259-261.

68. *Sen.* 14.1.143: *Ignobilis est enim ac pusilli sibique diffidentis animi crudelitas et potestate ultionis oblate nil inultum linguere vitium a natura hominis et presertim principis alienum, cui ulciscendi potestas magna satis est ultio* [a vice alien to the nature of man and especially of a prince] (English translation in Francis Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age. Rerum Senilium Libri I-XVIII*, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, Baltimore and London, 1992), Vol. 2, Books X-XVIII, p. 802.

away from Boccaccio, Petrarch's work on Walter's *persona* creates an egocentric prince, whose self-defence mirrors the battle of consciousness « for a rational perspective in a world whose moral contours become blurred by passional responses »[69]. Menaced by his men, forced to marry, Walter engages in a ruthless effort to reach *perpetua quiete* (*Dec.* 10.10.61). Griselda's unconditional obedience and extraordinary resilience (*patientia*) troubles his plan. By testing her to prove whether she is friend or foe, Walter becomes *cupidus* and *curiosus*. In doing so, he falls from « the peace and stability of divine contemplation into the turbulence and restlessness of temporal existence »[70].

In Dioneo's words, Walter's is a case of « matta bestialità ». As is well known, this is a reference to Dante's *Inferno* (11.79-84), where Virgil explains the moral architecture of Hell to his pupil. According to Dante's reading of Aristotle, bestiality is one of the three dispositions (« disposizioni ») of vice, alongside incontinence, malice, and mindless/reckless bestiality[71]. Neither Petrarch nor his translators explicitly engage with Boccaccio's allusion to Dante (and Aristotle)[72]. In response to Boccaccio (voiced by Dioneo), Petrarch builds his narrative around a cluster of terms: *humanitas*, *cupiditas*, *curiositas*, and the connected verbs *tentare*, *probare*, and *experiri* (respectively: 'to try, to prove, to test'). We have already seen how, in pleading for Walter to take a wife, the anonymous vassal places his trust in his lord's « humanitas ». In Aristotle, humanity stands in the middle ground between bestiality and divine virtue. In the scholastic interpretation of Aristotelian ethics, human beings may

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69. Peter Stacey, « Senecan Political Thought from the Middle Ages to Early Modernity », in *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca*, ed. Shadi Bartsch and Alessandro Schiesaro, Cambridge, 2015, p. 289-302 (p. 297-298).

70. Torchia, « Curiosity », art. cit., argues that for Augustine « curiosity precipitates the soul's movement from a higher contemplative mode of being to an active temporal one. In this connection, Augustine depicts it as a 'natural enemy of peace:' by diverting the soul from the contemplation of eternal reality, curiosity prompts it toward a life characterized by movement and change… As its etymological root *cura* suggests, curiosity entangles the soul in the many cares or concerns which surround bodily life » (p. 259-261).

71. Dante, *Inf.* 82-83 (« incontinenza, malizia, e la matta | bestialitade ») and Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.1 = Book Z 1145a (English version in *Aristotle's Ethics. Writings from the Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Barnes and Anthony Kenny, Princeton, 2014, p. 133). See Barolini, « The Marquis of Saluzzo », p. 26; Anna Hatcher and Mark Musa, « Aristotle's *Matta Bestialitade* in Dante's *Inferno* », in *Italica*, t. 47 (1970), p. 366-372; Susanna Bersella, « I *marginalia* di Boccaccio all'*Etica Nicomachea* di Aristotele (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana A 204 Inf.) », in *Boccaccio in America*. 2010 International Boccaccio Conference, UMAss April 30-May 1, ed. Micheal Papio and Elsa Filosa, Ravenna, 2012, p. 143-155; *ead.*, « Tyranny and Obedience », art. cit.

72. Goodwin, « The Griselda Game », art. cit., p. 47-50, shows how Petrarch's does not get rid of Dioneo's concerns, and his decision «to drop Boccaccio's … allusions to Aristotle» responds to a textual ploy which is at once «strategic and ambitious » (p. 50).

prove to exceed either by sin, in which case they are likened to beasts, or by virtue, in which case they are divine or heroic[73].

At the end of the Italian version of the tale, Walter protests in what seems to be a direct reply to Dioneo claiming, before his wife, the narrator, and all of us, that his was neither cruelty, nor iniquity, nor bestiality:

> Griselda, tempo è omai che tu senta frutto della tua lunga pazienzia, e che coloro li quali me hanno reputato **crudele e iniquo e bestiale** conoscano che ciò che io faceva a antiveduto fine operava, volendoti **insegnar** d'esser moglie e a loro di saperla tenere, **e a me partorire perpetua quiete** mentre teco a vivere avessi: il che, quando venni a prender moglie, gran paura ebbi che non m'intervenisse, e per ciò, **per prova pigliarne, in quanti modi tu sai ti punsi e trafissi**. (*Dec.* 10.10.61, my emphasis)
>
> [« Griselda », he said, « the time has finally come both for you to taste the fruit of your long patience, and for those who have thought me cruel, unjust, and brutish to realize that what I've done I've done with a deliberate end in view. For I wanted to teach you how to be a wife, to teach them how to manage one, and at the same time to beget for myself perpetual peace and quiet for the rest of my life with you. When I was at the point of taking a wife, I really feared I'd have no peace, and that's why I decided to choose one by means of a test and have, as you know, inflicted so much pain and suffering on you ».]

Walter sets out to attain his goals while teaching his men and Griselda a lesson. The pair of Italian verbs « insegnar » and « (per prova) pigliare », is reflected in Petrarchan Latin verbs *temptare* and *probare* (*Sen.* 17.3.143). This vocabulary echoes the theological figure of the 'divine temptation' as is expressed in Augustine, who makes distinction based on the agent: if it is God who tempts, the temptation is to teach and to save; if it is the devil, it is to deceive and condemn[74].

It is striking that the passage of the Latin letter where the relation between tempting and teaching is made explicit was not retained by

73. See Tommaso d'Aquino, *Commento all'Etica Nicomachea di Aristotele*, Vol. 2 Books 6-10, ed. Lorenzo Perotto, Bologna, 1998, p. 105-110 = [*Liber* 7 *Lectio* 1 n. 1-12 <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/ctc07.html> (21/01/2018)]. This is also apparent in a passage of Boccaccio's commentary on *Inferno* 11.82-4, where bestiality is opposed to divine wisdom (« la divina sapienza »): Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, ed. Giorgio Padoan, in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, Milan, 1965. See also Susanna Bersella, « Boccaccio, i tiranni e la ragione natural », in *Heliotropia*, t. 12-13 (2015-16), p. 131-63 (p. 148), who comments precisely in *Esposizioni* on *Inf.* 12, where Boccaccio speaks about tyranny.

74. Bessi, « La Griselda del Petrarca », art. cit., p. 282 who among other important passages, quotes Augustine, *Sermo II. De tentatione Abrahae*, 3, whereby the point about the salvific value of divine pedagogy is made through the figure of parallelism.

the translations of my corpus. For example, in the anonymous *Livre*, while praising Griselda's patience and commenting on the motif of divine temptation, this version reads:

> Lequel [Dieu], comme dist Saint Jaque l'Apostre, ne tempte nul, mais bien appreuve et nous sueffre maintes foiz tres griefment **pugnir**. Non pas qu'il ne congnoisse nostre couraige et entencion devant que soyons nez, mais pour que par jugemens clers et evidens recongnoissions et veons nostre fragile humanité. (*Livre* 289.37-41, my emphasis)

Glossing *et sepe nos multis et gravibus flagellis exerceri sinit* (*Sen.* 17.3.38, Often [God] allows us to be tormented by many, heavy whips) this translator chooses *pugnir* (to punish), a form that departs from both Italian *pungere* and *puncture*, the terms that Boccaccio uses to designate Walter's testing of Griselda, which is likened to physical torture: as it is apparent in the closure of the passage quoted above: « ti punsi e trafissi » (*Dec.* 10.10.61, I stung and transfixed you).

In dealing with Walter's immoderate will to know and to his rigour towards Griselda, Metge and Chaucer offer different approaches:

E aprés un temps que la filla fo deslatada, jatssia que Valter hagués assats provada la fe de sa muller, emperò volchla provar e assayar més avant. (*VG* 132,6-9)
[A while after the child stopped nursing, although he had tested his wife's faith enough, he wanted to test and try her once more.]

Ther fil, as it bifalleth tymes mo,
Whan that this child had souked but a throwe,
This markys in his herte longeth so
To tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse for to knowe,
That he ne myghte out of his herte throwe
This merveillous desir his wyf t'assaye;
Nedelees, God woot, he thoghte hire for t'affraye.
He hadde assayed hire ynogh bifore,
And foond hire evere good; what neded it
Hire for to tempte, and alwey moore and moore,
Though som men preise it for a subtil wit?
But as for me, I seye that yvele it sit
To assaye a wyf whan that it is no nede,
And putten hire in angwyssh and in drede. (*CT* 449-62)

[There happened, as it befalls many times, | When this child had suckled but a short time, | This marquis in his heart longs so | To test his wife, her constancy to know, | That he could not out of his heart throw | This strange desire to test his wife; | Needless, God knows, he intended to frighten her. | He had tested her enough before, | And found her always good; why was it needed | To test her, and always more and more, | Though some men praise its ingenuity? | But as for me, I say that it ill befits one | To test a wife when there is no need, | And put her in anguish and in dread.]

The Catalan version is succinct, this being one of the few cases where Metge skips some of Petrarch's text. This might have arisen due to a defective interpretation of the Latin source, or it could derive from Metge's French auxiliary source[75]. Whatever the case may be, Metge's rendering is not laconic, but pithy. There is no need to expand on Walter. What is said is enough: the story can move on.

Chaucer expands the narrator's reflection, following Petrarch and with the support of *Livre*, with which the English text shares some substantial analogies. Chaucer, Petrarch and *Livre* condemn Walter's behaviour; both play with figures of iteration to characterize his tormented soul. The Clerk condemns Walter for doing something *nedlees*. « Need », a word of the semantic field of necessity, occurs twice, as an adjective and a verb, at the end and at the beginning of the quoted stanzas, whereby creating a tail/head bond between the two strophes. Both stanzas end with words denoting fear: *t'affray* (to frighten, v. 455) and *anguish and dread* (v. 462).

Petrarch exploits the possibilities of *cursus* and prose rhythm to express Walter's obsession with experimenting on Griselda:

> *sed sunt qui, ubi semel* ***inceperint****, non* ***desinant****, imo* ***incumbant hereantque proposito*** (*Sen.* 17.3.98)
>
> [but some people, having begun a course of action, will not desist]

The series of three verbs, all with the same desinence (homeotheleuton), culminates in the *clausula*, structured around the repetition of two units with the same rhythmic pattern (i.e. *cursus tardus*, which presents the scheme xXx xXxx: cretic + cretic).

By contrast, the anonymous *Livre* defines Walter's persistence in his proposition (*dure ymaginacion*) as « merancolie », the medieval term to indicate a mental disorder engendered by an excess of dark bile[76]. In Chaucer's rendering Walter's pathological excess is rendered as *merveillous desir*. The obsession in Walter's mind was already in Boccaccio's text, where *provare* and *esperienzia* are the lexical seeds of Petrarch's series: *probare*, *tentare*, and *experiri*:

> Ella non fu guari con Gualtieri dimorata che ella ingravidò, e al tempo partorí una fanciulla, di che Gualtieri fece gran festa. Ma poco appresso, **entratogli un nuovo pensier nell'animo**, cioè di

75. Philippe de Mézières tries to temper Walter's cruelty (with little success): « Passa le tamps, passerent les jours que la fille du marquise fu sevree. Lors le marquis, qui tant amoit s'espouse pour la tres grant vertu qu'il veoit tous les jours croistre en lui, pensa de l'esprouver et de le fort tempter » (*Miroir* 365.4-7).

76. See *Livre* 279.37-44. Earlier in the text, the anonymous translator uses the phrase *ymaginacion merveilleuse* (*Livre* 269.3-7) to denote a form of exceptional desire (*cf.* Machaut quoted in *DMF*, *s.v. imagination*).

> volere con **lunga esperienzia** e con cose intollerabili **provare** la pazienzia di lei, e' primieramente la **punse** con parole, mostrandosi turbato e dicendo che i suoi uomini pessimamente si contentavano di lei per la sua bassa condizione e spezialmente poi che vedevano che ella portava figliuoli, e della figliuola che nata era tristissimi altro che mormorar non facevano. (*Dec.* 10.10.27, my emphasis)
>
> [She had not lived with Gualtieri very long before she became pregnant and in time, to his great happiness, gave birth to a little girl. But a little while later the strange idea popped into his head to test her patience by subjecting her to constant tribulations and generally making her life intolerable for her. Consequently, he started goading her with words, pretending to be angry and telling her that his vassals were thoroughly disgruntled with her because of her base origin, especially now that they saw her bearing children, and that, furthermore, they were upset about the little girl who had just been born and were doing nothing but grumbling about it.]

In this passage, Walter's decision to test Griselda's capacity to suffer (« la pazienza di lei ») is linked with the vocabulary of corporal torture – i.e. « pungere », « lunga esperienza », « cose intollerabili »[77]. Petrarch uses this metaphor only once, at the very end of the tale, when Griselda is repudiated but to be restored as a wife, and the legitimate lady of the house. Asked to come to Walter's new wedding as a servant, Griselda is introduced to the bride (in fact her own daughter). Whilst Griselda praises the bride, she addresses the following request to Walter (I put the Italian and Latin texts side by side):

ma quanto più posso vi priego che quelle **punture**, le quali all'altra, che vostra fu, già deste (*Dec.* 10.10.59, my emphasis)	Unum bona fide te precor ac moneo, ne hanc illis **aculeis** agites quibus alteram agitasti (*Sen.* 17.3.133)
[I beg you with all my heart not to inflict on her the same wounds you once gave the other spouse you used to have]	[Yet in good faith I ask and urge one thing. Do not sting her with the goads you used on another woman]

As already mentioned, this is the sole instance in which Petrarch deploys Boccaccio's metaphor of the stings. He does so choosing the moment in which it is Griselda that uses the metaphor to allude to the pain Walter had inflicted upon her the one and only time, and accompanied with an overtone of blame. In Italian, *puntura* is typically an insect bite. In

77. This vocabulary, particularly the trio *punture*, *pungere* and *trafiggere*, constitutes one of the key sets of words in the epilogue to the tale (see *Dec.* 10.10.59).

comparison, Latin *aculeus* can refer both to the sting of an insect and the sting (of the whip) used to encourage beasts of burden[78].

In the other translations of my corpus, the passage is rendered to cover a range of possibilities. Philippe de Mézières evokes *aculeis* through a play on words (a polyptoton) on the connection between the noun, *aguillon* (sting of an insect), and the verb, *aguilloner*:

> D'une chose en bonne foy je te veulz deprier et amonester, que tu ne veuillez pas molester la nouvelle espouse des **aguillons** dont l'autre tu as si fort **aguillonné** (*Miroir* 375.15-16, my emphasis).

Bernat Metge omits both *punture* and *aculeis*. Instead, he makes Griselda speak out against her mistreatment, referencing Walter's behaviour:

> Mas de una cosa·t prech e·t amonest: que aquesta no vullas tractar axí com has tractade la altra (*VG* 150.1-2).
>
> [Yet I ask for and urge one thing. Do not treat this one as you used to treat the other one]

Chaucer rewrites the passage to furnish only the roughest gloss on the two terms:

> O thing biseke I yow, **and warne also**,
> That ye ne **prikke** with no **tormentinge**
> This tendre mayden, as ye don mo (*CT* 1037-1039, my emphasis)
>
> [One thing I beseech you, and warn also, | That you not distress with any tormenting | This tender maiden, as you have done to others]

Petrarch may not consistently reproduce Boccaccio's lexis of corporal torture. But his persistent use of the vocabulary of cupidity, care, and temptation, is consistent with the cruel perseverance implied in Boccaccio's corporal language. A good example of this can be found by comparison of the precise classification of Griselda's second test in the *Decameron* and in *Sen.* 17.3, and the other versions. Boccaccio maintains that Walter

78. Such as donkeys or cows, in their tasks: like them Griselda « knows that [her] life consists of either bearing or not bearing »: see Roger Ebert's 2004 review of Robert Bresson's movie *Au hasard Balthasar* (1966): <https://www.rogerebert.com/contributors/roger-ebert> (last access 21.01.2018). Interestingly, the feminin object to which, in the 15th century, Olivier de La Marche symbolically likens the story of Griselda is the 'épinglier' (literally 'pelote d'épingles'): see Golenistcheff, *Histoire de Griseldis en France*, *op. cit.,* p. 145.

pierced Griselda with « maggior puntura » (Dec. 10.10.34), whereas for Petrach and Metge, Walter returns instead to the « usual curiosity »:

Transiverant hoc in statu anni quatuor, dum ecce gravida iterum filium elegantissimum peperit, letitiam patris ingentem atque omnium amicorum. Quo nutricis ab ubere post biennium subducto, ad ***curiositatem solitam*** *reversus pater uxorem rursus affatur et « Olim » ait « audisti* [...] *»* (*Sen.* 17.3.83-84)

Aprés de aquestas cosas que foren passats ·iiii· anys, Griselda se emprenyà e parí un fort bell fill, del qual hagueren gran goig e alagria son pare et tots son amichs. E a cap de dos anys que fo deslatat, Valter, tornant en la **acustumada curiositat**, dix a·ssa muller aytals paraulas... (*VG* 136,14-18)

[Four years passed in this way, until Griselda conceived and bore a most fine son, to the great joy of the father and all his friends. When the child stopped nursing after two years, however, the father returned to his former inquisitiveness, and spoke to his wife again: "For some time you have heard..."]

[Four years after these acts, Griselda was pregnant again and bore a most fine son, for whom his father and all his friends had great joy. After two years the child had stopped nursing, Walter returned to his former inquisitiveness, and said to his wife the following words...]

For Philippe de Mézières, Walter's curiosity is not just extraordinary (« merveilleuse »), it is also dangerous (« perilleuse ») and « estrange », an adjective suggesting an alienated mind[79]:

> Quant l'enfant fu sevré de la nourrice et ot .ii. ans, croissant en grant biauté, le marquis, lors resmeu et esmeu de nouvel **de sa merveilleuse, perilleuse et estrange curiosité**, vint a la marquise et li dit... (*Miroir* 367.23-26, my emphasis)

Chaucer, who does not translate *solita curiositas*, takes Walter's perverse request for obedience and Griselda's patience a step further. First, as noted above, he depicts Walter's troubled state. Secondly, he contextualizes the situation differently. In a bleak reflection on husband-wife relationships, male power (like any power) is 'naturally' inclined to exploit the female's forced position of submission:

> Whan it [the child] was two yeer old, and fro the brest
> Departed of his norice, on a day
> This markys caughte yet another lest
> To tempte his wyf yet ofter, if he may.
> O nedelees was she tempted in assay!
> But wedded men ne knowe no mesure,
> Whan that they fynde a pacient creature.
> «Wyf», quod this markys... (*CT* IV.617-24)

79. The only exception is the *Livre* (273.68-69), where curiosity is not mentioned at all: « Lequel enfant puis qu'il ot deux ans et qu'il fut sevré de la nourrice, le marquis de rechief vint a sa femme et lui dist [...] ».

> [When it was two years old, and from the breast | Of his nurse weaned, on one day | This marquis caught yet another desire | To test his wife yet again, if he can. | O needless was she put to the test! | But wedded men know no moderation, | When they find a patient creature. | «Wife», said this marquis…]

Walter asks for (blanket) unconditional obedience: from his men, from Giannucole and from Griselda. While trying Griselda's patience and steadfastness, Walter also tests his seigneurial subjects' obedience. In so doing, he intends to neutralise his adversaries and strengthen his authority. Yet, Griselda's patience goes beyond the devotion of a good wife. In his conclusion (*Sen.* 17.3.143-144) Petrarch praises Griselda's apparently infinite capacity to suffer as a divine or heroic virtue. As mentioned above, in Petrarch's Latin, Griselda's virtue is founded upon a web of scriptural and patristic (chiefly Augustine) references to Abraham and Job, figures of the obedient and the patient respectively[80]. Abraham and Job share unconditional faith, unbreakable courage and inexhaustible humility. The Pauline phrase 'obedience of faith' sums up patience and obedience as the prerogatives of the believer justified by faith not works[81]. The translators of Walter and Griselda's tale got the relevance of the bond between obedience and faith, as is apparent in one of the addresses to the audience made by the anonymous translator of *Livre*:

> Povoient, je vous prie, a ce seigneur ces **experimens d'obeïssance et de foy** de mariage bien souffrire? (*Livre* 279.25-26, my emphasis)

Obedience, the mother of all virtues, lies at the centre of a constellation of connected virtues: patience, faith, courage and humility[82]. On the one hand, Griselda's exceptional courage, faith and humility allowed for

80. *Cf.* Bessi, « La Griselda del Petrarca », art. cit., p. 281. Like Bessi, Nigel S. Thompson, *Chaucer, Boccaccio, and the Debate of Love: A Comparative Study of the Decameron and The Canterbury Tales*, Oxford, 1996, p. 287-293, identifies several religious references which « link Griselda's patience to that of Job » (p. 287).

81. The expression is St. Paul's, who uses it twice, at the beginning (*Ad Rom.* 1.5) and the second at the very end (*Ad Rom.* 16.26-27) of his letter to the Romans.

82. The Middle Ages made a distinction between « the clusters *obedientia/fides* and *patientia/Constantia* ». These virtues « were interpreted more actively than they generally are now. The greatest difference between *obedientia* and *patientia* arises from the implied relationship of the virtuous person to the world beyond that person. For the religious, *obedientia* and *fides* involved conscious and active willed commitment… When the 'other' is a husband, the charge of gender grows heavy on the obedient and devoted wife, whose dependence was so strongly reinforced by social and legal practice… The other set of virtues, patience and steadfastness, is associated with spiritual martyrdom… patience is the most characteristic virtue of fourteenth-century saints… Suffering makes the sufferer not directly subordinate to but, rather, analogous to Christ. It is … an androgynous model of sainthood » (Cook Morse, « What to Call », art. cit., p. 279-280).

a reading of her *persona* as a model of sainthood, or even the figure of the relationship of the human soul with God[83]. On the other hand, in her textual re-staging, Griselda was not wrapped in the garments of conventional hagiography. Translations cannot be reduced to inert compliance with popular pity and devotion. As examples comparing different versions of the translated tale demonstrate, textual innovations can take various forms (e.g. lexical, rhetorical) and serve different purposes.

In one case, namely in Bernat Metge's Catalan *VG*, the motive of devotion for the ever-patient Griselda was the basis for a remarkable, albeit singular, variation in the narrative dual schema, whereby Griselda gained existential depth only in opposition to Walter's torments. To understand the importance of this element, I will conclude this paragraph comparing the portrait of Griselda in the Latin and Catalan texts, and in Philippe de Mézières's French translation. Introducing Griselda to the reader in a passage with no parallel in Boccaccio, Petrarch describes the poor little village in which she lived with her father, Giannucole (*Sen.* 17.3.40-41). Metge (*VG* 124.13-21) and Mézières follow Petrarch's text, emphasising the poverty and humility of Griselda's family situation. In Philippe de Mézières' version (*Miroir* 361.9-17), we have no less than six occurrences of *povre* and *povreté* in a few lines. Each occurrence amplifies an original formulation that is already affectively charged. For example, the Latin diminutive *villula* becomes a *povre villete*; similarly, the Latin *tuguria* (cottages of shepherds) becomes *povres maisoncelles*, whilst the Latin superlative *pauperrimo* is transformed into *povre et plain de toute misere*.

Apart from Philippe de Mézières' taste for amplifications, his version and Metge's are quite similar between them and both follow Petrarch's text closely; but when it comes to the second part of Griselda's portrait, we observe some substantial differences between the French and the Catalan texts:

Patris senium inextimabili refovens caritate et pauculas eius oves pascebat et colo interim digitos atterebat vicissimque domum rediens oluscula et dapes fortune congruas preparabat durumque cubiculum sternebat et ad summam	Et quant Griseldis au vespre ramenoit les bestes a l'ostel, elle appareilloit a son pere et a lui les povres viandes de fortune, paissoit et nourissoit son pere, en lui levant et couchant sur son povre lit, et, briefment toute l'umanité	E ab inextimabla karitat servia diligentment son pare, e, pasturant algunas poques de ovellas que havia, filave cascun jorn, e puys, tornant-se'n en casa, aparellave cols o spinachs o altres viandes covinents a la sua condició, e feÿa

83. Bessi, « La Griselda del Petrarca », art. cit., p. 292; Bertè and Rizzo, « *Valete amici* », art. cit., p. 96; McLaughlin, « Humanist Rewriting », art. cit., p. 24-25.

angusto in spatio totum filialis obedientie ac pietatis officium explicabat. (*Sen.* 17.3.43)	et service que fille doit faire a pere doulcement elle faisoit. (*Miroir* 361.23-27)	lo llit a·sson pare. E ffinalment tot son temps despenia en pietat e obediència filial. (*VG* 124.21-26)
[Cherishing her father's age with ineffable love, she tended his few sheep, and as she did it, wore her fingers away on the distaff. Then, returning home, she would prepare the little herbs and victuals suited to their fortune and make ready the rude bedchamber. In her narrow station, in short, she discharged all the offices of filial obedience and affection.]		[And with boundless charity she diligently served her father, and, tending his few sheep, she used to spin every day, and then, returning home, she prepared cabbages or spinach, or other foods suited to their condition, and made the bed for her father. And in the end she spent all her time behaving as a pitiful and obedient daughter.]

After coming home from the pasture, Griselda is shown preparing a frugal supper for her poor father. It is worth observing the metamorphosis of the Latin word *oluscula* from Petrarch's text (*oluscula et dapes fortune*) into the French *povres viandes de fortune* and the Catalan « cols o spinachs ». *Oluscula*, mostly used in the plural, is a diminutive for *(h)olus* (vegetables). Petrarch may have found this diminutive in Cicero's letters to Atticus[84]. However, the word is well attested in the works of Christian authors, including Jerome, Tertullian and Prudentius. Since *olus* was the basic nourishment of peasants, both *olus* and *olusculum* are consistent with the lexical field of poverty threading through the whole passage[85]. In a narrower sense, though, *olus* might also indicate a variety of vegetables characterized by large and wide leaves, e.g. *lactuca* (lettuce) and *rapum* (turnip). Amongst other options, *olus* might be a synonym for *brassica* or cabbage. For example, we find *oluscula* translated as *chouz ou autre maniere d'erbettes* (cabbage or other kind of greens) within the anonymous *Livre Griseldis* (216.15-16). This does not necessarily mean that Metge had access to the anonymous *Livre*. Both Metge and the anonymous French translator may have separately translated *oluscula* recalling one of its possible meanings[86]. Metge throws into relief a detail

84. See *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon*, ed. Giacomo Facciolati, Egidio Forcellini, and Jacob Bailey, London, 1828, Vol. 2, col. 38b.

85. See *Thesaurus linguae latinae*, *s.v.* (VI, iii, 2861-2): « holus…est cibus vilis, rusticus, aegrotorum, carne vescenda abstinentium » [holus…is poor food, rustic, for poor people, for those who lack meat to eat].

86. David Barnett – Lluís Cabré, « Creative Translation in Medieval Catalan: Bernat Metge », in *Translation Review*, t. 87 (2013), p. 6-17: « Metge has here picked up on the tonal implications of the diminutive [i.e. *oluscula*], which are often employed in Latin and

issuing in a variation on the theme not without a small but significant structural effect. If the cumulative repetition of lexemes from the semantic field of poverty in Petrarch, or of diminutives and couplets of synonyms in Philippe de Mézières' French prose, were expected to produce an affective, sympathetic reaction in the reader, Metge did not expand on it. Rather he short-circuited the repetition of iterative figures to draw a scene of everyday peasant life. Metge's move allows the reader a glimpse of Griselda's life *before* wearing the garments of the wife of Walter, in an independent temporal and spatial dimension. This naturalistic touch in Metge's version is, I believe, also an innovation in the narrative technique. In cinematic terms, we might say that Metge shot and mounted the scene differently. In Petrarch and Mézières the scene is taken from above, statically. The aim is to represent the Griselda's and Giannucole's context. The elements of the framework are functional or merely preparatory for the further sequences: the meeting of Walter with Griselda and her father, the subsequent marriage, and so forth. In Metge's hands the camera is dynamic. With a sort of 'crane shot' technique, Metge's eye moves slowly downwards from the first 'scene-setter' sequence (similarly to what we can read in Petrarch and Philippe de Mézières), to the second hearth-level sequence. Metge's closing up on Griselda's ordinary life provides us with a portrait full of composure and dignity.

Conclusion

The parallel reading of different versions of the novella that I have undertaken in this article leads to the following conclusive observations. It has often been said that Petrarch's translation was an attempt, mediated by allegorisation, to 'neutralise' Boccaccio's version of the story. Undoubtedly Petrarch and his followers paid special tribute to Griselda and to her moral exemplarity. In the tradition Griselda certainly acquired a status close to that of a saint, but for all her exceptional virtue, she is not the saint that you might expect. Griselda is a lame kind of example[87]. Concluding letter *Sen.* 17.3, Petrarch praises Griselda for her extraordinary character, but he also claims that she is a model impossible to be imitated. Petrarch's words are akin to a declaration of doubt, if not scepticism. It

in Romance languages not only – or not at all – to denote reduced physical size, but also—or rather—to create an affective bond with the reader. The diminutive in Petrarch's version is, therefore, not necessarily just indicating that the vegetables were meager but also conveying the affection with which Griselda prepares them. Metge's substitution of 'cols o espinacs' echoes this in a way the French translation [i.e. Philippe de Mézières'] does not » (p. 9).

87. François Rigolot, « The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity », in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, t. 59, 4 (1998), p. 557-563. Rigolot's paper (p. 557) wittily starts with a quote from Montaigne: « Tout exemple cloche » (Every example is lame), from « De l'expérience », in *Les Essais*, éd. Pierre Villey, Paris, 1978, Vol. III, p. 1070.

is precisely this margin for doubt that is key to the understanding of the nature of Petrarch's 'translation' and of the success of his latinised version.

At the end of his life, Petrarch was still concerned about what had happened twenty years before between him and Boccaccio. He was also preoccupied with how posterity would perceive his ambivalent relationship with power and the powerful. Petrarch dealt with these issues as he usually did: through brilliant manipulation. In his urge to allegorise the novella through a rich Biblical and exegetical subtext, Petrarch exploited the ambiguities of a tale whereby « anyone can play all the parts, imagine himself into all the subject positions: Petrarch is Walter and Boccaccio, Griselda; Galeazzo Visconti is Gualtieri di Saluzzo and Petrarch is simple-hearted, poor living Griselda »[88]. The very attempt to allegorise the tale led to hermeneutic profusion. Far from being a flaw in Petrarch's rendering of the tale, it is this semantic uncertainty that allows Petrarch (and his followers) to deal with (rather than obscure) the political kernel of the novella and use it for the widest variety of purposes[89]. Marrying Griselda, Walter makes his supreme act of authority. But while Walter apprehends her boundless capacity to obey, his authority finds an ethical unbreakable border precisely in Griselda's patience and moral virtue. From this perspective, the tale of Walter and Griselda is also an investigation on the circular nexus between power and obedience, politics and ethics, and hence on the limits in the exercise of institutional and individual power.

Famously classical literature, and most notably poetry, represented for Petrarch the only alternative to the troublesome world of political action. The use of Latin for his version of the story was inherently linked with this view. Nonetheless, Petrarch's novella, alongside the letters of *Sen.* book 17, incarnate the struggle between the transcendental dimension posited by 'true' *exempla* and the contingency of the politics of the 'true' world. Petrarch realised that his attempt at moralising Griselda and rendering her more perfect through classical rhetoric did not have the capacity to transcend or remove the contingency that weighed upon her as upon any example. From this point of view, we might say that Petrarch's novella has some of the main elements of the so-called Renaissance not capitalised: renaissance crisis of exemplarity[90]. Grounded on human

88. Wallace, « *Letters of Old Age* », art. cit., p. 328. As Wallace argues (*ibid.*), Griselda has been identified with Mary, Abraham, Job, and so forth; Walter with a tyrant, a Trecento humanist employed by despots (alter ego of Petrarch), and even with God the father.

89. According to Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, *op. cit.*: « [t]he tale's appeal […] lies precisely in its positing an interpretive problem; for each translation – each literary treatment – provides an interpretation, implicit or explicit of a question: how can the outrageous relationship between Walter and Griselda be explained? » (p. 132-133).

90. See François Rigolot, « The Renaissance Crisis of Exemplarity », art. cit., p. 560, and the articles of the same monographic issue of the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

fortune, Boccaccio's novella was crude evidence for the precarious nature of literature as an alternative to the 'real' world, i.e. the world of unstable, uncertain action. Griselda resists Walter as much as her story resists its 'confinement' to the geometrical game of role-attribution presupposed by allegory. On the one hand, Petrarch and his followers initiated a textual tradition, while also fostering a cultural code in which storytelling was to be inscribed. The personal and political dimensions implied by the Italian and Latin novellas constituted a contingent and therefore untranslatable 'ecosystem.' On the other hand, Boccaccio's and Petrarch's versions of the story were open constructions. Rather than a parable whereby a single point was made, the story of Walter and Griselda became part of a procedure. Within the limits of a formal set of conventions, the audiences are presented with a case, suitable for pondering, discussion, memorisation and ultimately re-telling.

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