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On the Threshold of Poems: a Paratextual Approach to the Narrative/Lyric Opposition in Italian Renaissance Poetry

Federica Pich

Summary

This contribution focuses on the presence and function of prose rubrics in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century lyric collections. On the one hand, this understudied paratextual component can be analysed as a specific form of self-commentary; on the other, it offers a privileged perspective on the relationship between the narrative and the lyric in early modern poetry. The chapter is arranged into three sections, each moving from a pivotal book in the Italian lyric tradition (Dante's *Vita Nova*, Petrarch's *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, and Pietro Bembo's famous 1501 edition of the latter work), and combines a historical-genealogical approach with a number of theoretical questions raised by the interaction of prose captions and verse in a lyric and self-exegetical context. Throughout the chapter, the issue of lyric 'narrativity' is examined both at the level of individual texts and at the macrotextual level.

In Renaissance manuscripts and printed books, lyric poems are sometimes introduced or accompanied by short prose headings (*rubriche*, 'rubrics') charged with an informative, explanatory, or more clearly exegetical function. When set up by authors or in agreement with them, these textual frames might be interpreted as forms of self-commentary. In the Italian tradition, *rubriche* can overlap with similar paratextual devices, namely *argomenti* (brief expositions of the 'content' of the relevant texts) and prose glosses such as *dichiarazioni* ('explanations') and *esplicationi* ('explications'), involving a form of explanatory glossing of the relevant text.¹ A

¹ See *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, founded by S. Battaglia and under the direction of G. Bàrberi Squarotti (Turin: 1961–2002), *ad vocem* 'argomento' ('materia di un'opera letteraria', 'breve esposizione del contenuto che precede l'opera') where an example from Lorenzo de' Medici's *Comento de' miei sonetti* clarifies the difference between 'esposizione' and 'argomento'. I quote from *The Autobiography of Lorenzo de' Medici the Magnificent: a commentary on my sonnets*, critical text of *Il comento* by T. Zanato, trans. J. Wyatt Cook (Binghamton: 1995) 54–55: 'verremo alla esposizione de' sonetti, fatto prima alquanto di argomento, che pare necessario a questi primi quattro sonetti' ('we shall pass on to the exposition of the sonnets, having first made whatever argument seems necessary to these first four'). A preliminary reflection on these and further terms such as '*osservazione, dichiarazione, avvertimenti, annotazioni, [...], considerazioni, interpretazioni*' in the context of commentaries has been proposed by Stierle K., "Les lieux du commentaire", in Mathieu-Castellani G. – Plaisance M., *Les commentaires et la naissance de la critique littéraire* (Paris: 1990) 19–29 (25).

minor and perhaps marginal component of the Renaissance paratext, rubrics have never been the object of a systematic study, despite some excellent contributions on specific authors, such as Olimpo da Sassoferrato, Torquato Tasso, and Celio Magno.² A general discussion about the status and possible functions of these textual thresholds should address – to a greater or lesser extent – the relationship between lyric form and its content, and the position of the poetic text with regard to given events, times and places, whether they be true or imaginary. My particular concern in the pages that follow will be to start thinking about how authors may have wanted to *model that relationship* and *set that position* through their self-commentary in the form of prose rubrics.

In doing so, my approach will be mainly historical and genealogical. I will sketch a tentative history of authorial rubrics, which is in no way intended as exhaustive – rather, as a preliminary reconstruction built around three turning points in the lyric tradition, such as Dante’s *Vita Nova*, Petrarch’s *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, and Pietro Bembo’s Aldine edition of Petrarch’s *Cose volgari* (1501). In the first part of my chapter, I will refer to the structure of Dante’s *prosimetrum* – and in particular to the different components of its prose sections – in order to start addressing the relationship between the poems and the events that allegedly inspired them and to introduce the much-debated issue of lyric ‘narrativity’. With the help of recent contributions in the areas of narratology and literary theory, I will then evaluate how and to what extent the opposition between ‘lyricity’ and ‘narrativity’ can be used to interpret the relationship between lyric texts and prose rubrics. The same opposition will form the basis of the following two sections, devoted to the presence and possible functions of rubrics in post-Petrarchan lyric collections. In the fifteenth century, the dominant function of rubrics is to identify given circumstances and subjects, whereas the specific arrangement of contents into the lyric form is normally overlooked. However, in a post-Bembian context, the fortune of rubrics proves more complex, nuanced, and structurally ambivalent, contributing

² Rossi A., “Indicatori di lettura nelle *Opere* di Olimpo di Sassoferrato”, and Martignone V., “Esemplarità e distacco: l’autoesegesi tassiana alle rime d’amore”, in Danzi M. – Leporatti R., *Il poeta e il suo pubblico. Lettura e commento dei testi lirici nel Cinquecento* (Geneva: 2012) 483–498 and 399–406; De Maldé V., “Torquato Tasso. Auto-commento alle *Rime* (1591)”, in Caruso C. – Spaggiari W., *Filologia e storia letteraria. Studi per Roberto Tisconi* (Rome: 2008) 239–250; Tomasi F., “Strategie paratestuali nel commento alla lirica del XVI secolo (1530 – 1570)”, in Id., *Studi sulla lirica rinascimentale* (Padua: 2012) 95–147; Brusca R., “Paratesti del petrarchismo lirico cinquecentesco”, in Alfonzetti B. et alii (eds.), *Per civile conversazione: con Amedeo Quondam* (Rome: 2014), vol. I, 273–290; and Comiati G., “Componente paratestuale e didascalie nelle ‘Rime’ di Celio Magno”, in Arancibia P. et alii (eds.), *Questioni filologiche: la critica testuale attraverso i secoli* (Florence: 2016) 143–159. See also Bossier Ph. – Scheffer R. (eds.), *Soglie testuali. Funzioni del paratesto nel secondo Cinquecento e oltre / Textual Thresholds. Functions of Paratexts in the Late Sixteenth Century and Beyond. Atti della giornata di studi, Università di Groningen, 13 dicembre 2007* (Rome: 2010).

both to the unity and the dissolution of individual lyric collections. On the whole, the proliferation of prose rubrics reflects, by contrast and paradoxically, the inescapable singularity of Petrarch's lyric book.

From *prosimetrum* to *canzoniere*: Dante and Petrarch

The origin of prose headings as a form of lyric commentary can be plausibly traced back to medieval *chansonniers*, scribally compiled anthologies of troubadour poetry in which attributive rubrics were visually marked – in red ink, as the word *rubrica* itself suggests – and clearly separated from texts. The expansion of the biographical or pseudo-biographical component of these miscellanies through the addition of prose biographies of troubadours (*vidas*) was key to the process leading from multi-authored collections to individual poetry books, and so was the use of *razos*, explanatory commentaries in prose illustrating the circumstances of composition of poems.³ According to Maria Luisa Meneghetti, the function of *vidas* and *razos* should be understood in the context of the transition from a model of reception focused on performance to a model focused on writing and reading. The gradual separation of the text from the performance – in which the poem was a contingent object to be enjoyed there and then, even regardless of its author – placed a greater emphasis on the individual poetic personalities and ‘the intriguing pseudo-biographical events that were seen as reflected in their texts, rather than on single poems, as it used to be’.⁴ With regard to the poet and poetic content, *vidas* and *razos* therefore contributed to undermine the distinction ‘between textual and extratextual reality’.⁵

Provençal *vidas* and *razos* notoriously exerted a significant influence on the prosimetrical structure of Dante's *Vita Nova* (c. 1295), in which a number of sonnets and *canzoni* are inserted in a complex narrative and exegetical framework, constituting the book's most innovative feature.⁶ Most crucially, however, in

³ See Holmes O., *Assembling the Lyric Self. Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book* (Minneapolis: 2000) 1–24; and Meneghetti M.L., “La tradizione della lirica provenzale ed europea”, in *Intorno al testo. Tipologie del corredo esegetico e soluzioni editoriali. Atti del Convegno di Urbino: 1–3 ottobre 2001* (Rome: 2003) 77–99.

⁴ Despite their technical complexity, lyric poems were considered occasional fragments, related to contingent circumstances and performances, in the first place by their authors. See Meneghetti M.L., “La forma-canzoniere fra tradizione mediolatina e tradizioni volgari” *Critica del testo*, 2 (1999) 119–140 (128).

⁵ ‘Since Zumthor, critics have generally seen the function of the *vidas* and *razos* as those of identifying the universalizing poetic “I” with a historical composer and of furnishing the nonreferential *canso* genre with “realistic” historical referents, thus breaking the boundary between textual and extratextual reality’ (Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self* 28).

⁶ At least according to Domenico De Robertis, *Il libro della ‘Vita nuova’*, 2nd ed. (Florence 1970) 6. The bibliography on *Vita Nova* is far too vast to be summarised here, see for

Dante's book the author of the poems is one with the author of the prose sections, so that the interaction between verse and prose can be interpreted in the perspective of self-commentary, although by no means exclusively.⁷ For each lyric insertion, the relevant prose section includes three elements:⁸ an episode that is part of the wider backdrop narrative framing the whole work (the overarching story of Dante the character falling in love with Beatrice, etc.); the equivalent of a *razzo* referred to the inserted poem (with the specific term 'ragione' occurring in paragraphs 24-29); and a straightforward, content-based analysis of the poem (the so-called 'divisioni', 'divisions'), performed through the subdivision of the text into its parts, according to the distribution of content.⁹ The distinction between the former two components of Dante's prose framework and the latter was so evident to Giovanni Boccaccio that, in copying the *Vita Nova*, he extracted the 'divisions' from the main body of the work and placed them in the margins, as if they were authorial glosses ('chiose'):

instance Alighieri Dante, *Opere*, vol. I, *Rime, Vita Nova, De vulgari eloquentia*, ed. C. Giunta – G. Gorni – M. Tavoni (Milan: 2011). On the important connections between Dante's *prosimetrum*, the *accessus ad auctores* tradition, and *vidas* and *razos*, see Todorovic, J., *Dante and the Dynamics of Textual Exchange: Authorship, Manuscript Culture, and the Making of the Vita Nova* (New York: 2016) 102–131 (106–108).

⁷ On the strong (and relatively unique) integration of verse and prose in the *Vita Nova*, examined in the light of *prosimetrum* as a form, see Trovato P., "Per il testo della *Vita Nuova*. Due edizioni a confronto", in Comboni A. – Di Ricco A., (eds.) *Il prosimetro nella letteratura italiana* (Trento: 2000) 13–56. Claudio Giunta observed that the information conveyed by Dante's prose includes also elements that have nothing to do with the poems, suggesting the prose does not have a merely paraphrastic function. Cf. Giunta C., *Versi a un destinatario. Saggio sulla poesia italiana del Medioevo* (Bologna: 2002) 438. For Dante's *ragioni* and *divisioni* in the perspective of self-commentary and self-authorisation, see Ascoli, A. R., "Auto-commentary: Dividing Dante", in Id., *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: 2008) 175–228 (178–200).

⁸ In seven instances out of twenty-eight, the third element ('divisions') is missing. For a useful map of 'divisioni', which either follow (1–17) or precede (18–30) the relevant poems, see the section "Tipologia delle divisioni" in Dante, *Vita nova*, ed. G. Gorni (Turin: 1996) 285–286.

⁹ Botterill S., "Però che la divisione non si fa se non per aprire la sentenza de la cosa divisa" (*V.N.*, XIV, 13): the *Vita Nuova* as Commentary", in Moleta V. (ed.), *La gloriosa donna de la mente: A Commentary on the Vita nuova* (Florence: 1994) 61–76, remarked that 'the analytical principle on which the *divisioni* are based is one wholly concerned with, and operative upon, the individual poem's content; questions of form (or what the twentieth century would recognize as form) are entirely disregarded' (67). With regard to *Vita Nova*, XIV, 3, he argued that 'First, it shows that the purpose of *divisione* is simply to "open up the meaning" of a text, that is above all an exposition of content, or rather of form-as-structured-content (*forma tractatus*). Second, it shows that the end of *divisione* need not necessarily be achieved through *divisione* as a means' (ibidem, 74–75). In other words, exegetical prose can be 'narrative', as in *ragioni*.

le divisioni de' sonetti manifestamente sono dichiarazioni di queglii: per che più tosto chiosa appaiono dovere essere che testo; e però chiosa l'ho poste, non testo, non stando l'uno con l'altre bene mescolato. Se qui forse dicesse qualcuno "e le teme de' sonetti e canzoni scritte da lui similmente si potrebbero dire chiosa, con ciò sia cosa che esse sieno non minore dichiarazione di queglii che le divisioni", dico che, quantunque sieno dichiarazioni, non sono dichiarazioni per dichiarare, ma dimostrazioni delle cagioni che a fare lo'ndussero i sonetti e le canzoni.

(since the divisions of the sonnets are clearly declarations of them, it appears that they should be gloss instead of text, and so I have placed them as gloss, not text, since the one is not well mixed with the other. If someone were perhaps to say that the explications of the sonnets and *canzoni* he wrote could similarly be called glosses, because they are no less declarations of them than are the divisions – I say that, insofar as they are declarations, they are not declarations made to declare, but rather demonstrations of the causes that led him to write the sonnets and *canzoni*.¹⁰)

However, in each paragraph these components were originally conceived as a tightly-knit continuum, as the earliest manuscripts seem to confirm.¹¹ Strictly speaking, there are no rubrics in the literal sense, even though there is a strong echo of their visual and material existence, first of all on a metaphorical level. The book of memory, from which Dante the author is copying, has its own 'rubrics' and 'paragraphs', as famously suggested by his incipit:

In quella parte del libro della mia memoria dinanzi alla quale poco si potrebbe leggere, si trova una rubrica la quale dice *Incipit Vita Nova*. (I[1])

(In that part of the book of my memory before which there would be little to read is found a chapter heading which says: 'Here begins a new life'. (I[1])¹²)

¹⁰ I quote Boccaccio's postilla from Dante, *Vita nova*, ed. Gorni, XXVIII, and the English translation from Eisner M., *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature. Dante, Petrarca, Cavalcanti and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge: 2013) 54. See Stillinger T.C., 'Dante's Divisions: Structures of Authority in the *Vita Nuova*', in Id., *The Song of Troilus. Lyric Authority in the Medieval Book* (Philadelphia: 1992) 44–72 (in part. 57–59). As Sherry Roush argued, 'the primary distinction between the two manifestations of self-commentary ([which she terms] prosimetrical and glossorial) resides in the more pronounced hierarchical relationship between verse and prose found in the self-gloss form. The verse occupies the central place on the page, while the prose gloss is displaced to the margins'. Cf. Roush S., *Hermes' Lyre: Italian Poetic Self-Commentary from Dante to Tommaso Campanella* (Toronto: 2002) 11.

¹¹ See Alighieri Dante, *Vita nuova*, ed. M. Barbi (Florence: 1932). Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self* 121, observes that in ms. K 'the narrative portions, or "ragioni", and the analytic portions, or "divisioni", are not distinguished from each other in any way'.

¹² I quote the Italian text from Gorni's edition and the English translation from Dante, *La Vita Nuova*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by M. Musa (Oxford: 1992), I [1] (3). See also I[11]: 'scripte nella mia memoria sotto maggiori paragrafi', '[words] which are written in my mind under more important headings' (ibidem, II, 5).

In the introductory essay to his edition of Dante's *prosimetrum*, Guglielmo Gorni defines 'ragione' (*razzo*) as 'prosa narrativa, didascalica di contorno' ('narrative prose, marginal caption') and, in the plural, 'i motivi dichiarati, le occasioni addotte a illustrare il contenuto dei testi poetici' ('the stated reasons, the *occasions* put forward to clarify the *content* of poems').¹³ Gorni's labels highlight a number of elements that are relevant to my analysis of prose rubrics as a combination of narration, reference to contingencies, and identification of poetic themes. In fact, the *Vita Nova* raises at least two points that are central to any discussion of how self-commentary addresses the relationship between the lyric text and the extratextual event that allegedly 'generated' it, and more broadly between the form of the text and its content. The first point concerns the chronological relationship between an external, referential order of events, and the poetry inspired by them, and, additionally, between the composition of verse and that of the narrative-exegetical prose surrounding them. The critical debate is ongoing as to the possibility that Dante might have written a number of poems – or even all of them – from scratch for the *Vita Nova*, which would subvert the idea of its prose as a structure built around pre-existing poems.¹⁴ A similar kind of question comes to the fore for virtually any book of poetry in which texts are accompanied by rubrics, even though in most cases it is safe to assume that rubrics were written *after* texts (for instance for a dedication manuscript, or, in the case of printed books, in the second or third edition of a collection) or at the earliest *at the same time as* the texts. The second point regards the different ways in which the prose introducing the lyric text might handle its content and the circumstances of its composition. For instance, in *Vita Nova*, 24 [4], the sonnet is said to include everything that has been narrated in the 'ragione', which in this case makes 'divisions' unnecessary:

E però propuosi di dire uno sonetto nel quale io parlassi a.llei, e conchiudesse in esso tutto ciò che narrato è in questa ragione. E però che per questa ragione è assai manifesto, no.llo dividerò.

(Thereupon I decided to write a sonnet in which I would address her and would include in it all that I have narrated in this account. And since through this account it is sufficiently clear, I shall not analyse it.¹⁵)

¹³ Dante, *Vita Nova*, ed. Gorni, XLI (my emphasis). Eisner, *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature* 60, has highlighted the connection between Dante's use of 'ragioni' in the *libello* and *Vita Nova* 16 [8].

¹⁴ See Leporatti R., "Ipotesi sulla *Vita Nuova* (con una postilla sul *Convivio*)", *Studi italiani* 7 (1992) 5-36 and Id., "Io spero di dicer di lei quello che mai non fue detto d'alcuna' (*V.N.*, XLII, 2): la *Vita Nuova* come *retractatio* della poesia giovanile di Dante in funzione della *Commedia*", in Moleta V. (ed.), *La gloriosa donna* 249–291.

¹⁵ Dante, *Vita Nova*, ed. Gorni, 24 [4]; and Dante, *La Vita Nuova*, ed. Barbi, XXXV, 71.

In lyric books, the extension and internal articulation of prose rubrics offer a great variety of options, so that they can share the function of the non-synonymic ‘dichiarationi’, ‘esplicationi’ and ‘argomenti’: possibilities range from a single, title-like sentence, capturing the occasion or main subject of the poem (say, ‘on the journey of the lady to the countryside’), to an extended narrative, which can focus either on the events that inspired the text and that can be partly echoed in it (for instance, ‘the lady travelled to the countryside and got lost etc.’), or on the composition proper (say, ‘the author/I composed this poem on the occasion of the lady’s journey to the countryside’), or on both.

Both the points I raised with the help of Dante’s *Vita Nova* are strongly related to the problematic definition of the relationship between narrative and lyric. After a long silence on the subject, narratologists have recently started to examine lyric texts under the lens of ‘narrativity’, but results have so far proven unsatisfactory for pre-modern poetry.¹⁶ On the one hand, these studies show a clear imbalance in favour of modern and contemporary examples; on the other hand, they invariably downplay the role of prosody and metres,¹⁷ and some of their arguments are hardly applicable to medieval and Renaissance texts. Generally, the relationship between the poem and its content is tackled through the paradigm of ‘telling’, that is, it is interpreted as a relationship between some form of ‘primary material’ and ‘the message-text’.¹⁸ The combined analysis of prose rubrics and poems seems to foreground this issue even further. In fact, in most cases, rubrics address the ‘primary material’ that is allegedly at the origin of the relevant lyric text, either concisely pointing to the subject or re-‘telling’ with a higher degree of ‘narrativity’ what is told in the poem – be it ‘something that happened’, something ‘that is’, something ‘that is thought’, or a combination of the three. The latter three definitions can be inferred from James Phelan’s much-debated attempt at clarifying the distinction between ‘narrativity’ (‘somebody *telling* somebody else on some

¹⁶ See Hühn P., “Plotting the Lyric: Forms of Narration in Poetry”, in Muller-Zettelmann E. – Rubik M. (eds.), *Theory into Poetry* (Amsterdam: 2005) 147–172; and Hühn P. – Sommer R., “Narration in Poetry and Drama”, *The Living Handbook of Narratology* (2012) < <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de> > [Accessed 19 August 2016]. The scope and complexity of the current theoretical debate on the concept of ‘lyric’ is attested to by Hillebrandt, C. et alii, “Theories of Lyric”, *Journal of Literary Theory* 11, 1 (2017) 1–11 and the diverse range of contributions collected in the same monographic issue.

¹⁷ This is particularly evident in the case of DuPlessis R., “Manifests”, *Diacritics* 26 (1996) 31–53, whose notion of ‘segmentivity’ was then taken up in the theory of poetic narrative tentatively sketched in McHale B., “Beginning to Think about Narrative in Poetry”, *Narrative* 17, 1 (2009) 11–30. At the same time, any rigorous attempt at defining ‘liricality’ against ‘narrativity’, should ‘avoid unwarranted identification of poetry with either verse or its typographical representation’. Cf. Heiden B., “Narrative in Poetry: A Problem of Narrative Theory”, *Narrative* 22, 2 (2014) 269–283 (270).

¹⁸ Heiden, “Narrative in Poetry” 272.

occasion and for some purpose(s) *that something happened*) and ‘lyricality’ (‘somebody *telling* somebody else [...] on some occasion for some purpose *that something is* [...] or about *his or her meditations on something*’).¹⁹

Despite its obvious limits, the distinction between ‘narrativity’ and ‘lyricality’ proves pragmatically more appropriate for the analysis of the relationship between texts and their rubrics than Peter Hühn’s detection of ‘narrative’ in the lyric expression of emotions, which conversely might help illuminate the difficult process of ‘authorisation’ of the lyric genre in late-sixteenth-century poetics.²⁰ First of all, Phelan’s definitions take into account addressers, addressees and occasions (‘somebody... somebody... on some occasion’), whose role is prominent in pre-modern poetry.²¹ Second, they bring to the fore the dominant temporal focus of rubrics (the past – ‘something *happened*’) and poems (the present – ‘something *is* or *is thought* or *felt*’). What should be emphasised more, though, is that the lyric present often voices a reaction to and a meditation on the event narrated in the rubric, or, more rarely, re-enacts it from a subjective perspective, while details mentioned in the prose heading are omitted in the verse. In other words, as Jean-Jacques Marchand has suggested, the role of analepsis in Renaissance lyric poetry is very limited, with the partial exception of *capitoli*, which can have a stronger narrative component.²² While further significant exceptions to this trend can certainly be detected, from the Middle Ages to the late Renaissance, it seems fair to highlight a correspondence between rubrics, use of the past tense, and ‘narrativity’ on the one hand, and poems, use of the present, and ‘lyricality’ on the other.

The gradual development of the individual lyric collection as a form involves also a different dimension of ‘narrativity’, arising from the interaction of a number of carefully arranged texts, namely a narrative articulated by means of a lyric sequence. According to Marco Santagata, the poems included in the *Vita Nova* display intertextual connections in and of themselves, that would set up an ordered unity even without the prose sections.²³ However, the most significant contribution to the individual book of poems in the Italian tradition must be attributed to Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch, 1304–1374), whose legacy is crucial to the European lyric tradition as a whole. Despite the significance of precedents such as Guiraut

¹⁹ Phelan J., *Experiencing Fiction: Judgements, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* (Columbus: 2007) 3 and 22 (my emphasis).

²⁰ Hühn P., “The Problem of Fictionality and Factuality in Lyric Poetry”, *Narrative*, 22, 2 (2014) 155–168.

²¹ See, for example, Giunta, *Versi a un destinatario* 62–65; and Alpers P., “Apostrophe and the Rhetoric of Renaissance Lyric”, *Representations* 122, 1 (2013) 1–22.

²² Marchand J.-J., “Le ‘disperate’ di Antonio Tebaldeo dall’elegia al racconto dell’io”, in Crivelli T., *Feconde venner le carte. Studi in onore di Ottavio Besomi* (Bellinzona: 1997) 160–171.

²³ Santagata M., *Dal sonetto al canzoniere: ricerche sulla preistoria e la costituzione di un genere* (Padua: 1979).

Riquer and Nicolò de' Rossi,²⁴ Petrarch's sophisticated use of anniversary poems is unique in tracing a '*canzoniere* of a lifetime' as opposed to a '*canzoniere* of a youth', and the dominant mode of his poetry book promotes a shift from the lyric text as 'poetic letter', outward-looking and focused on the addressee, to the poem as 'poetic diary', more introverted and self-reflexive.²⁵ In the case of Petrarch, introversion itself fuels the narrative dimension through a strong and pervasive emphasis on time as a theme and as a structuring principle.²⁶

Significantly, we find no rubrics as such in the autograph-idiograph manuscript of his *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (ms. Vat. Lat. 3195). However, in the so-called *codice degli abbozzzi* (ms. Vat. Lat. 3196), a manuscript in which the poet kept track of his progress and which was not meant for circulation, one can find several indications, in Latin and in the vernacular, relevant to the times and circumstances of compositions, dated transcriptions and texts sent to friends and admirers.²⁷ If *vidas*, extended prose rubrics and even miniatures in *chansonniers* can be interpreted as additions gravitating around the biographically-oriented, particularising pole of the lyric spectrum, it comes as no surprise that Petrarch left neither rubrics nor plans for illustrations to his book of poems, despite his extraordinary control of *mise en page*.²⁸ His choice would be consistent with the creation of an exemplary poetic autobiography, in which individualising details are deleted to the advantage of symbolic and universalising possibilities,²⁹ and narration is entirely entrusted to a sequence of poems that 'reflect the inner life of the subject, in its dialectic of

²⁴ See Holmes, *Assembling the Lyric Self* 149.

²⁵ Giunta, *Versi a un destinatario* 449–453.

²⁶ To my mind, the most insightful pages on time in Petrarch's *canzoniere* can be read in Barolini T., "The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch's "Rerum vulgarium fragmenta"", *Modern Language Notes* 104 (1989) 1–38. A different but no less valuable investigation of the connections between issues of narrativity, temporality, and lyric 'voice' in the *Fragmenta* is Soldani A., "Voce e temporalità nel Canzoniere", in Id., *Le voci della poesia* (Rome: 2010) 49–65.

²⁷ See Petrarca Francesco, *Trionfi, rime estravaganti, codice degli abbozzzi*, ed. V. Pacca – L. Paolino (Milan: 1996). Stefano Carrai noted that Petrarch's *postille* in ms. Vat. Lat. 3196 at times constitute rubrics proper. Cf. Carrai S., "Il commento d'autore", in *Intorno al testo* 223–241 (226).

²⁸ On the 'graphic revolution' of Petrarch's autograph see Storey W.H., *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric* (New York: 1993). On the absence of illustrations in ms. Vat. Lat. 3195, Battaglia Ricci L., "Illustrare un canzoniere: appunti", *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, Número Extraordinario (2005) 41–54.

²⁹ Here I am essentially following the interpretation of Rico F., "Rime sparse, Rerum vulgarium fragmenta. Para el título y el primer soneto del Canzoniere" *Medioevo Romanzo* 3 (1976) 101–138; id., "Prologos al Canzoniere (Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, I-III)", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa*, s. III, 18 (1988) 1071–1104; and Santagata M., *I frammenti dell'anima. Storia e racconto nel Canzoniere di Petrarca* (Bologna: 1992), which however needs to be integrated with Bettarini's commentary – Petrarca Francesco, *Canzoniere*, ed. R. Bettarini (Turin: 2005).

reflection and memory', for which, by contrast, the *Vita Nova* largely relied on the prose sections.³⁰ In fact, as Gorni pointed out, the theoretical status of a *canzoniere* supplied with authorial rubrics is contiguous to that of a *prosimetrum*.³¹

Prose rubrics in fifteenth-century 'poesia cortigiana': Gasparo Visconti and Filenio Gallo

It has long been acknowledged that mid- and late-fifteenth-century lyric poets, who write in the vernacular and consciously build on Petrarch's *Fragmenta*, in fact do not keep too strictly either to his structural choices or to his linguistic selection.³² While confirming and even furthering Petrarch's focus on the amorous theme, they open the lyric field to a wider range of situations and occasions, on the model of Latin elegy.³³ Concurrently, prose headings reappear, in some significant cases being certainly inserted and controlled by poets themselves. The use of rubrics is consistent both with the widening of the spectrum of lyric situations and with the social context in which these poets operate. The poetry of authors such as Gasparo Visconti, Angelo Galli, and Serafino Aquilano was produced mainly at the courts and for the courts, in a context in which one-off live performances, often improvised, and the private reading of dedicated copies coexisted. An exemplary case is that of rubrics reading *A l'improvista*, that is to say 'improvised', composed on the spur of the moment: on the written page of a dedication manuscript, such a rubric signals and paradoxically records the ephemeral nature of the relevant poem. Far from hiding it, this form of self-annotation emphasises the contingent origin of the poem as springing almost without artifice or second thought from a concrete occasion – of which it constitutes a celebration or a concise chronicle. The ever-growing gulf between the actual events that originated the composition and performance and the isolated text written on the page could account for the need to provide a background and keep the memory of those circumstances alive for later

³⁰ Giunta, *Versi a un destinatario* 453.

³¹ Gorni G., "Le forme primarie del testo poetico", in Asor Rosa A. (ed.), *Letteratura Italiana*, III/1, *Le forme del testo. Teoria e poesia* (Turin: 1984) 439–518 (513).

³² Santagata M. – Carrai S., *La lirica di corte nell'Italia del Quattrocento* (Milan: 1993). For an updated catalogue of fifteenth-century poetry books, see Comboni A. – Zanato T., *Atlante dei canzonieri volgari del Quattrocento* (Florence: 2017).

³³ Rossi A., *Serafino Aquilano e la poesia cortigiana* (Brescia: 1980). Further examples of rubrics are found, for example, in the collections of Giovan Antonio Petrucci (ibidem, 103), Bernardo Accolti (131), Diomedede Guidalotti (143), Antonio Ricco (149), and Guidotto Prestinari; for the latter poet, see Dilemmi, G., "Agli antipodi del Canzoniere: le Rime di Guidotto Prestinari. Varia struttura di un libro d'autore", in Lo Monaco, F. – Rossi, L. C. – Scaffai, N. (eds.), *"Liber", "fragmenta", "libellus" prima e dopo Petrarca* (Florence: 2006) 239–250.

readings of the same poems. Of course a number of events recorded by rubrics may have never taken place, but it remains a significant choice in terms of self-commentary for a poet to privilege a fiction of contingency and historicity over a symbolic or allegorical set-up. Regardless of the actual circumstances of composition, the stronger ‘narrativity’ of prose glosses reinforces the allegedly causal relationship between the event and the poem, ensuring the connection is not missed. The abundance of rubrics in the so-called *poesia cortigiana* attests to the habit of connecting verse to detailed contexts and situations – as if that connection were essential to the experience of reading poems and to the pleasure that could be gained from them.

One might wonder whether the Petrarch commentary tradition exerted any specific kind of influence on the presence and development of these paratextual structures, at a time when commentaries were produced for the court and responded mainly to the expectations of the court itself.³⁴ A striking if anomalous example is the extraordinary Incunabulum G. V. 15, of the Queriniana library in Brescia, an illuminated and dedicated copy of the *princeps* of Petrarch’s *Rime and Triumphs* (Venice, Vindelino de la Spira: 1470) whose miniatures and glosses have been dubiously attributed to the Venetian poet and courtier Antonio Grifo. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti argued that the illustrative corpus places the situations of Petrarch’s poetry book in a scenery that is very similar to that of the Milanese court, extracting from his poems whatever they allowed, no matter how little, to replicate the ‘referentiality’ typical of the poetry of Grifo’s times.³⁵ In other words, Grifo adopts a late-fifteenth-century approach to Petrarch’s *fragmenta*, which seems consistent with the poetry of his contemporaries, suggesting a similar interest in embedding poems in ‘detailed circumstances’ and ‘everyday life settings’.³⁶ This attitude is confirmed, for instance, in the *canzonieri* of Gasparo Visconti (1461–1499), of a cadet branch of the Visconti family, active at the court of Ludovico il Moro in Milan and certainly familiar with Grifo himself. Bongrani’s critical edition of the *canzonieri* for Beatrice d’Este and Bianca Maria Sforza – the latter collection

³⁴ The courtly destination and biographism of the main fifteenth-century commentaries are discussed, among others, by Marcozzi, L., “Tra Da Tempo, Filelfo e Barzizza: biografia sentimentale e allegoria morale nei commenti quattrocenteschi al Canzoniere di Petrarca”, *Italianistica* 33, 2 (2004) 163–177 (164).

³⁵ I paraphrase from Tissoni Benvenuti A., “Il commento per la corte”, in *Intorno al testo* 195–222 (209). See Mariani Canova G., “Antonio Grifo illustratore del Petrarca Queriniano”, in Frasso G. – Mariani Canova G. – Sandal E. (eds.), *Illustrazione libraria, filologia e esegesi petrarchesca tra Quattro e Cinquecento. Antonio Grifo e l’incunabolo queriniano G V 15* (Padua: 1990) 147–200.

³⁶ As pointed out by Tissoni Benvenuti, “Il commento per la corte” 209–210, in fifteenth-century love poetry, events are realistically embedded in detailed circumstances and set in everyday life settings, building on the tradition of Latin elegy.

being a reprise and extension of the former – suggests that the rubrics formed an integral part of Visconti’s poetic project.³⁷ In the dedication manuscript of the *Canzoniere* for Beatrice d’Este (Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms. 2157), initials and rubrics are given great emphasis through decoration,³⁸ and in the so-called manuscript A (Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms. 1093) there is autographic evidence of the author’s direct intervention on the rubrics proper, ranging from minor amendments to more substantial additions.

In the presence of a high number of rubrics (for about 66% of the poems, 143 out of 216 in Bongrani’s edition), clearly controlled by the author, it is possible to draft a classification of rubric types and explore how each of them acts as a self-exegetical frame. Rather than trying to force each rubric into a given category, I have broken them down into their basic components, which are recurrent but can be combined in several different ways. Normally, the short prose fragments placed on the threshold of poems include references to one or more of the following elements: the poem’s addressee, be it historical or conventional (‘Al s(igno)re Ieronimo Tuttavilla’; ‘Ad una bellissima donna che poco stima faceva de virtù’, ‘To a very beautiful lady who did not attach much importance to virtue’);³⁹ the addresser, by which I mean the addresser ‘inside’ the book, who is not necessarily one with the poet (‘Uno amante a la amata che più del solito se monstrava austera’, ‘A lover to his beloved, who looked more stern than usual’; ‘Un capretto parla, de la cui pelle si era facto un paro di guanti’, ‘A kid [young goat] speaks, from whose skin a pair of gloves had been made’);⁴⁰ the topic and/or occasion (‘Questi sei sonetti sequenti furno facti per un ventaglio’, ‘The following six sonnets were written for a fan’);⁴¹ and the metre. Many different combinations are possible, for instance metre and addressee (‘Sonetto al suo medesimo core’, ‘Sonnet to his own heart’)⁴², addressee and occasion (‘A la p(refa)ta ill(ustrissi)ma Duchessa, per exposition d’un certo recamo’, ‘To the above-mentioned most illustrious Duchess, as an explanation of a certain embroidery’; ‘A la duchessa Isabella per la morte del duca Io(anne) Galeaccio suo marito’, ‘To duchess Isabella, for the death of her husband, the duke Io(anne) Galeaccio’),⁴³ or just a concise reference to the fact that the poem was

³⁷ Visconti Gasparo, *I canzonieri per Bianca Maria Sforza e Beatrice d’Este*, ed. P. Bongrani (Milan: 1979), XXXV–XXXIX and XLVI–LXV.

³⁸ The manuscript was transcribed in Milan around 1495–1496 (ibid. XXIII–XXIV). See <http://manus.iccu.sbn.it/opac_SchedaScheda.php?ID=50174; <http://graficheincomune.comune.milano.it/GraficheInComune/immagine/Cod.+Triv.+2157,+piatto+anteriore> > [Accessed 31 July 2016].

³⁹ Visconti, *I canzonieri* XXI (11); XL (25). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, LXXXIII (62); CXIX (206).

⁴¹ Ibidem, XII (175).

⁴² Ibidem, XCV (69).

⁴³ Ibidem, CLXXXIX (141); CX (84).

commissioned by someone ('Risposta per comission', 'Answer on commission').⁴⁴ It is fair to say that, by pointing at addressee, addresser and circumstances, introductory glosses provide the basic coordinates to locate the lyric text in time and space, to anchor it to a net of events and relations, grounding it with details that often could in no way be extracted from the text itself. In the perspective of both patrons and poets, this form of self-commentary ensures both the effectiveness of the poetic record and its potentially endless survival.

In rubrics, the distinction between topic and occasion is predictably the least clear-cut. Glosses mainly focusing on the subject of the poem may identify it either concisely ('In pictam tabellam', 'On a painted panel'; 'In laude de Amore', 'In praise of Love')⁴⁵ or expand on it in a more developed prose, at times extended to the point of resembling a long *argomento* or a short *novella*:

Sonetto facto per una molto virtuosa, bella e galante dama che, essendo stata per caso veduta una matina prima che ella si avesse acconzia la testa né posti li soliti ornamenti, mostrò averne alquanto di erubescenzia. Nel qual s(onetto) se gli dice che come una facella che se accenda non leva il lume dal fuoco che l'ha accesa, e come il sole alumina le stelle senza minuire il lume suo, così la p(refa)ta dama non solamente non cresce le sue bellezze cum ornamenti, ma infonde ad epsi molto lume senza minuire alcuna minima parte del splendor di se stessa.⁴⁶

(Sonnet composed for a very virtuous, beautiful and gallant lady, who one morning, being seen by chance before she had her hairdressing done and adorned herself with the usual ornaments, blushed quite violently. In the sonnet she is told that, just as the lighting of a small flame does not deprive the fire that lit it of its light, and just as the sun lights up the stars without losing any of its own light, so the above mentioned lady not only does not improve her own beauties with ornaments, but actually infuses them [i.e. the ornaments] with a great deal of light without diminishing her own radiance in any way.)

In this case, beside alluding to the occasion that inspired the sonnet ('essendo stata per caso veduta una matina...'), the prose refers to the content of the poem proper, indirectly identifying the lady as its addressee ('se *gli* dice'). The juxtaposition between *ragioni* ('Sonetto facto...') and *divisioni* ('Nel qual sonetto se gli dice...') foregrounds the difference between, on the one hand, the explanatory act implied in the definition of the circumstances that originated the composition ('Sonetto facto...'), and, on the other, the self-exegetical process of stating what the poem actually says with respect to those circumstances ('Nel qual sonetto se gli *dice*...'). Conceptually, the whole rubric comes *after* the sonnet, as it obviously looks back on the poem as an accomplished object (regardless of when the verse and the prose

⁴⁴ Ibidem, CVII (81). See CLXXVII (132) *Risposta per commission*.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, III (188); CXXXVIII (108).

⁴⁶ Ibidem, CLXVI (169).

were actually composed), but the two sections of self-commentary focus respectively on the time before the sonnet and on the internal time of the sonnet proper, replicating the opposition between past and present that I discussed with reference to Phelan. The distinction between *ragioni* and *divisioni* becomes even more evident when considering the following poem, where the ‘protagonist’ and the subject do not change, but the diction is different, as in a variation (‘Sonetto di quella medesima e d’un medesimo subiecto, ma *dicto per altro modo*’, ‘Sonnet on the same lady and on the same subject, yet *phrased differently*’).⁴⁷

About 40% of the rubrics in Visconti’s *Canzonieri* introduce texts in which the poet lends his voice to other subjects, a process that in the fifteenth century was not at odds with the idea of collecting an authorial poetry book, or even a ‘canzoniere’ clearly marked by significant poems at both ends, as is the case for Visconti.⁴⁸ Moreover, as Stefano Pezzè has suggested, his extension of the amorous matter to a diverse range of surprising or risqué ‘cases’ unknown to Petrarch seems to respond to the tastes of the Milanese court and, I add, to the need to entertain the same elegant audience that we see reflected in the garrulous miniatures attributed to Grifo.⁴⁹ In the case of sonnet CXLVII (111), the rubric states that the sonnet has been composed for a lover who is distinct from the poet and who is voiced in the text: ‘S(onetto) facto per uno povero amante al qual la innamorata era facta monaca. Lo amante parla’ (‘Sonnet composed for a wretched lover, whose beloved had become a nun. The lover speaks’).⁵⁰

Again, the event that is identified as the origin of the poem (the beloved’s decision of taking orders) is not one with the content of the poem, which only briefly hints at the fact (‘quel mio bene è imprigionato’, ‘that love of mine [i.e. the lady, more literally ‘my good’, ‘my dear’] is imprisoned’) and then moves on to express the lover’s painful condition in the present. In a particularly sophisticated example, the poet claims to be writing ‘in the persona of a young man’, on the very sheet that the man’s beloved lady sent to him:

⁴⁷ Ibidem, CLXVII (170) (my emphasis).

⁴⁸ If we consider Visconti’s preface, he refers to his own amorous experience and the way poetry helped him to cope with the suffering by giving vent to his burning heart: ‘questi poetici studii dove alquanto exercitato, ben che non con molto fructo, per disfogare il core ardente talora componendo, tra le altre mie compositure ho facto quelle che qui seguono’ (ibidem, 7).

⁴⁹ Pezzè S., *Per un commento al Canzoniere per Bianca Maria Sforza di Gasparo Visconti*, MA Thesis (Università di Ca’ Foscari, Venice: 2012–2013) 19–20.

⁵⁰ Visconti, *I canzonieri*, CXLVII 111.

Una galante si sforzava de persuader a un giovane che ella molto lo amava, e per farlo più certo di questo cum novo advedimento li mandò un foglio di carta bianca, in sul quale in persona del giovane se scrivono li sequenti dui s(onetti).⁵¹

(A gallant lady was trying to convince a young man that she loved him very much, and, in order to make him more assured of this, she sent him a sheet of white paper, onto which the following two sonnets are written, in the persona of the young man.)

When the characters evoked in the rubric are distinct from the persona of the poet, the opposition between the narrative and the lyric handling of the same ‘primary material’ comes centre stage, and so does the act of writing undertaken by the poet-ventriloquist. The lending of the poet’s voice to other subjects can remain implicit or be more or less explicitly emphasised. Here is an example of the ‘implicit’ kind:

Uno amante vede una seggia vacua ne la quale più volte avea visto seder la innamorata sua; per suo amore va a sedere in quella medesma, e subito si sente avampare.

In questa seggia ove suavemente
viddi posar mia donna alta e gradita,
 a riposar mei membri Amor me *invita*,
 [...]

 Ma, oimè, che novo e che strano accidente
 è questo, [...]?
 Che foco immenso e che fiamma infinita
 è questa, che ’l mio corpo intorno *sente*?⁵²
 [...]

(A lover sees an empty chair, on which several times he had seen his beloved sitting; on account of his love for her, he goes and sits down on that chair and immediately feels himself burning.

On this chair, on which I *saw* my noble and pleasant lady gracefully sit, Love *invites* me to rest my limbs, [...] But, alas, what an unexpected and strange accident *is* this [...]? What immense fire and infinite flame *is* the one my body *feels*?)

As usual, the rubric provides the premise in the form of a short narrative, whereas the poem is spoken in the person of the lover and articulates his reaction as if it were set in the present, and voiced as it is happening. After the reference to the past occasions on which he saw her sitting there (‘viddi’, ‘I saw’), verbs shift to the present, re-enacting the scene from a subjective perspective.

Here are two instances of the ‘explicit’ kind, in both of which the lover is clearly distinguished from the poet and identified with the speaker:

⁵¹ Ibidem, XXXIII (18).

⁵² Ibidem, IX (189), ll. 1–3, 5–8 (my emphasis).

In questi due sequenti s(onetti) *uno amante lauda una felicissima nocte*.⁵³

(In the following two sonnets *a lover praises a very happy night*.)

Una dama con dolci sguardi et altri acti amorosi aveva indutto un povero giovane non solo ad amarla, ma in extrema passione; e come ella più presto si accorse del misero stato ove esso era conducto, ella mostrosse non altramente seco come se li fusse stato inimico mortalissimo. *In persona d(ell) giovane se scrive questo s(onetto)*.⁵⁴

Come arcier reponendo la saetta
non sana altrui la facta già ferita
[...]
così l'anima mia [...]
de le piaghe d'amor non è guarita
ben che la vista tua li sia interdotta.
Abassa il sguardo e fugge quando vò
[...]
ché mai non mi potrai oltregiar tanto
(perfin che dura la mia vita e poi)
ch'io non adori il tuo bel lume santo.

(With sweet glances and other amorous acts a lady had persuaded a miserable young man not only into loving her, but into extreme passion; as soon as she realised the condition to which he had been driven, she started behaving towards him as if he had been her worst enemy. *This sonnet is written in person of the young man*.)

As an archer does not heal someone's wound by putting his arrow aside, [...] so my soul [...] has not recovered from the wounds caused by love, even though it is not permitted to see you. Lower your gaze and escape whenever you like, [...] because you will never be able to offend me (as long as I live, and beyond) to the extent that I would not adore your beautiful and celestial light [i.e. gaze].)

The latter sonnet seems to voice an inner condition and challenge the lady rather than translate into verse the backdrop story narrated in the rubric, while the importance of the 'ventriloquising' process is attested to by the autographic correction Visconti made to the rubric: his intervention transformed the original 'il giovane scrive' ('the young man writes') into '*i(n) p(er)sona d(ell) giovane se scrive questo S(onetto)*' ('this sonnet is written in person of the young man'), making the shift of voice clearer.⁵⁵ Without rubrics, it would be almost impossible to identify these 'ventriloquised' poems, so at least in these cases we can assume the prose has the function of ensuring the original commission and occasion – or *the fiction of an occasion* – are not deleted or forgotten.

⁵³ Ibidem, LVI (217) (my emphasis).

⁵⁴ Ibidem, XCI (66), ll. 1–2, 5–9, 12–14 (my emphasis).

⁵⁵ This same rubric has other minor variants in the dedicatory manuscript 'P' (Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms. 2157), see ibidem, LXXIV.

In terms of self-commentary, thematic rubrics direct the reader to a topic and situation, ruling out a number of interpretations that the freestanding poem might suggest. At the same time, they provide contextual information that does not merely ensure acknowledgment of names and facts, but also enhances the ‘narrativity’ of poetry. As I have just shown, the distribution of materials between the rubric and the poem is very significant in this respect: in most cases, the actual poems do not follow the narrative sketched, *ex post*, in the rubric; rather they voice the reaction to the events described in the rubric, which therefore provides an essential backdrop for the narrative understanding of the poem.

If we move from the level of individual poems to that of the *canzoniere* as a whole, rubrics seem to work towards different possible effects, depending on the more or less unitary structure of the book itself. When love poems voiced by the poet-lover proper are interspersed with amorous poems written in the person/voice of others – at times openly on commission – the overall structures of a unitary love story fall apart, undermined by a myriad of micro-narrations unconnected to each other and amplified by prose headings. This can happen despite the presence of an overall design, clearly marked by an opening and closing poem, and of intertextual connections that ensure the poetic sequence is thought-through and meaningful, as in the case of Visconti’s *canzonieri*. In setting the scene for the poems, rubrics seem to highlight the absence of a unitary lyric narration – of the kind held together by overarching symbolic or chronological structures, as in Petrarch’s book. No doubt with some simplification, we could compare this kind of poetry book to a collection of short *novelle*, as opposed to a longer, unitary proto-novel.

Conversely, when the identification between the poet and the poetic persona runs through the entire book of poems, rubrics give substance to the figure of the poet-character and reinforce the narrative breadth of the story. In the case of the Tuscan Filenio (pseudonym of Filippo) Gallo (d. 1503) and his *canzoniere* for Lilia, a lady from the region of Venice, once again manuscript evidence confirms the distinctive role conferred to rubrics by the author.⁵⁶ The modern editor, Maria Antonietta Grignani, observed that rubrics, which in the London *esemplare di dedica* are penned in red and blue ink, convey information that could not possibly be inferred from the poems. As opposed to what happens when poets do not control these prose frames, in authorial rubrics the gap between the information provided in the paratext and in the text is planned and in a sense necessary. The strategy in place seems to be that of providing more information to the reader – even the special reader that is the dedicatee or more generally a local courtly environment – probably so that their enjoyment of poems may be enhanced by the re-evocation of given

⁵⁶ Gallo Filenio, *Canzonieri*, ed. M. A. Grignani (Florence: Olschki, 1973). See Quintiliani M.M., “Filenio Gallo”, in *Atlante dei canzonieri volgari del Quattrocento* (forthcoming).

circumstances, places, and people, which is very much in line with what Mariani Canova conjectured for the illustrations attributed to Grifo. The lyric book of a friend of Filenio's, Giuliano Perleone, better known as Rustico Romano and active at the Aragonese court in Naples, includes rubrics and a sort of introductory 'table of contents', which seems to encourage a thematic and discontinuous approach to the collection:

Qualunque si dilectarà in lo presente Canzoneri e prenderà piacere haver notitia de tucti li sugecti e le materie tractate non se indigne trascorrere ante omnia la sequente Tavola et ad quella quando bisogna per sua introduction ricorrere.⁵⁷

(Whoever will enjoy the present songbook and be pleased to have information on all the subjects and matters dealt with [in the book], should not disdain to look at the following table first of all and make use of it whenever an introduction is needed.)

However, one important feature of Filenio's *canzoniere* for Lilia is that *all* of its 129 texts are accompanied by rubrics and *all* of the rubrics include the name of the poet-character Filenio, performing 'a clear function of narrative-diaristic connection'⁵⁸ and implying a more consistent narration. The regular presence of rubrics gives them a stronger structural role, as in a thoroughly prosimetrical set, all the more so because most of the rubrics end with the third-person verb 'dice' ('says'), with the grammatical subject of the statement being Filenio himself. For example:

Filenio a la sua anima andata via con madonna Lilia *dice*
(Filenio *says* to his soul, who left with lady Lilia);

Filenio parlando al suo core el quale è con Lilia *dice*
(Filenio, speaking to his heart, which is with Lilia, *says*);

Filenio volendo dimostrare esser tutto di madonna Lilia *dice*⁵⁹
(Filenio, so as to show that the whole of his self belongs to lady Lilia, *says*).

The verb bridges the gap between the rubric and the poem by placing the verse in a situation. In other cases, the text as an object – composed, sent or exchanged – becomes part of the 'story' told by the rubrics:

⁵⁷ Perleone Giuliano, *Compendio di sonetti et altre rime de varie texture intitulado lo Perleone...* (Napoli: Ariolfo de Cantono, 1492), fol. A1v. The transcription is quoted from Vecce C., "Echi contiani nella Napoli Aragonese", in Pantani I. (ed.), *Giusto de' Conti di Valmontone. Un protagonista della poesia italiana del '400* (Rome: 2008) 297–315 (306). On Perleone's rubrics see Rossi, *Serafino Aquilano* 102–103; and on his friendship with Filenio, see Corti M., "Per un fantasma di meno", in Ead., *Nuovi metodi e fantasmi* (Milan: 2001) 325–367 (355–357).

⁵⁸ See Gallo, *Canzonieri*, ed. Grignani, 50.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 13, 15 and 29 (my emphasis).

Filenio avendo vista Lilia con due altre nobili compagne ricamente ornate fa a llor compiacenza *questa canzone*
 (Filenio, having seen Lilia with other two noble companions, richly adorned, presents them with *this canzone*);

Filenio mandando e' sopra scritti versi a Lilia *a essi versi dice*
 (On sending the above-written verse to Lilia, Filenio says *to the verse*⁶⁰).

Both the meta-textual strategies I described attribute a role to the poems within an overarching love narrative, no matter how tenuous. Details of space and time are still there – but the much rarer instances of ‘ventriloquising’ produce a more cohesive narration, more akin to the unity of an amorous *canzoniere*.

On the whole, in the prose rubrics of both Gasparo Visconti and Filenio Gallo, the identification of topics and circumstances largely dominates over the description of the poems’ content proper. In fact, the balanced combination of *ragioni* and *divisioni* in Dante’s *Vita Nova* is hardly repeated in the history of the lyric genre, with one prominent and illustrious exception: the self-commentary in prose that Lorenzo de’ Medici, the Magnificent (1449–1492), arranged around his sonnets in his *Comento de’ miei sonetti*.⁶¹ While the extensive prose sections of this work (a *prosimetrum* proper) cannot be compared to rubrics, a closer look at their structure may shed light on the relationship between lyric form and its content as articulated in the rubric-poem nexus. Lorenzo’s book of poems consists primarily of love sonnets, referred to the persona of the poet-lover to the extent that it has been treated as an autobiography.⁶² A rather regular pattern underpins the prose sections: a short introduction or general premise; a sort of detailed *razzo*, which narrates the situation that inspired the verse and is normally connected to the introduction by a rhetorical and thematic bridge; finally, a more analytical exposition of the content of the poem proper (*divisioni*). For example, chapter XXVII is devoted to a diptych of sonnets ‘on the lady sleeping beneath an oak tree’.⁶³ Immediately after the poems,

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 6 and 12 (my emphasis).

⁶¹ See de’ Medici Lorenzo, *Comento de’ miei sonetti*, ed. T. Zanato (Florence: 1991). Tomasi, “Strategie paratestuali” 96, connects the exceptionality of Lorenzo’s experiment to his intention to put forward ‘a radical redefinition of the reasons of vernacular lyric poetry in the light of the sapiential acquisitions of Florentine Neoplatonism’.

⁶² According to Roush *Hermes’ Lyre* 79, by ‘remaking’ *Vita nova* Lorenzo assumed he would have ‘the best opportunity of communicating his poetic message concerning love, wisdom, death, and the possibility of transcendence’. In his attempt at reconstructing the chronology of the book, Zanato gives credit to the ‘didascalie’ [in his edition of *Comento de’ miei sonetti*] [page?](#)

⁶³ The sonnets are number 113 (‘Più dolce sonno o placida quiete’) and 114 (‘Odorifera erbetta e vaghi fiori’) in the *canzoniere*, with rubrics ‘*In dormientem sub quercu*’ and ‘*In eandem*’ respectively.

the introduction refers to the ‘amorous history’ of the poet and his beloved, then the *razzo* connects the sonnets to an occasion, which is the one mentioned in the rubric. Finally, divisions engage with the way in which the lyric form accommodates content through its constraints. In particular, the distinctive brevity of the sonnet is said to account for the omission of two details (the meadow and the breeze), which could not be included in the first poem and are hence mentioned in the second:

Se io potessi a uno a uno gli atti e amorosi accidenti della donna mia proseguire, certamente molto maggiore ornamento ne riceverebbe questa nostra amorosa istoria e molto più laude la donna mia. [from the ‘introduction’]

(If I could in an orderly fashion go on with the acts and amorous qualities of my lady one by one, certainly this amorous history of ours would gain greater ornament, and my lady would receive much more praise from it);

Era, come nel precedente sonetto abbiamo detto, la donna mia <absente>, come monstra averla io cercata assai cogli occhi e solo trovatola col pensiero. [...] Questo atto amoroso intendendo io, giudicai degno delli sopra scritti due sonetti, delli quali el primo contiene che, poi che la natura concesse sonno agli occhi umani, più dolce sonno o più quieto riposo non serrò occhio mortale, né anche il sonno mai chiuse più belli occhi che quelli della donna mia. [*razzo*]

(My lady, as we have said in the preceding sonnet, was absent, as my having so diligently sought her with my eyes but having only found her with my thoughts reveals. [...] I, having knowledge of this amorous act, judged it worthy of the two sonnets written above, the first of which suggests that, since nature granted sleep to human eyes, no sweeter sleep nor quieter repose ever sealed a mortal eye, nor also did sleep ever close more beautiful eyes than those of my lady);

E perché nel primo sonetto non è fatta menzione alcuna del praticello sopra el quale giaceva la donna mia, né dell’aura soavissima, due cagioni, secondo abbiamo detto, assai efficaci di quello bellissimo sonno, perché è difficile fare capace la brevità del sonetto di molte cose, se ne fa menzione nel seguente che comincia: “Odorifera erbetta”, etc. [from *divisioni*]

(Because the first sonnet makes no mention of the little meadow upon which my lady reclined, nor of the most gentle breeze (two very effective causes, as we have said, of that most lovely sleep), [and] because it is difficult to have room in the brevity of a sonnet for many things, I mention them in the following sonnet that begins “O fragrant little plants” etc.⁶⁴).

The latter sentence implies a subtle but crucial shift from the mere identification of content – through the analytical mapping of its distribution – to the meta-textual description of its specific integration into the lyric form. In the later developments of the genre, the analytical drive of divisions was normally downplayed in favour of the narrative component of *ragioni*, but – as we will see – the self-exegetical legacy of

⁶⁴ *The Autobiography of Lorenzo de’ Medici* 200–205.

divisions re-emerged, significantly transformed, in the second half of the sixteenth century.

Prose rubrics after the Aldine Petrarch (1501)

In his study of paratexts in printed editions of the poetic works of Olimpo da Sassoferato (Caio Baldassarre Olimpo degli Alessandri, 1486–post 1533),⁶⁵ Antonio Rossi has noted the proliferation of headings of various subject and length, contrasting this hyperbolic expansion to the absence of any form of prose gloss in the famous Aldine editions of Petrarch (1501, *Le cose volgari*) and Dante (1502) edited by Pietro Bembo (1470–1547). In Olimpo’s books, on the one hand, frequent prose frames and printed *maniculae* turn collections of poems into overcrowded repertoires of oddities and variations, to be navigated randomly and at one’s own pleasure. The aim of these rubrics seems to be that of entertaining readers and arousing their curiosity, while clearly marking beginnings and endings, and identifying poems by their metre and genre, so as to make texts easy to find and ‘consume’ on any occasion. Consistently, comments on formal aspects of poems do not seem to reflect a more sophisticated stylistic awareness on the side of the poet, rather a marketing strategy based on the boasting of quantity and variety (‘beautiful *strambotto*’, etc.). On the other hand, the ‘naked’ model adopted by Bembo in his editions and in his own *Rime* (1530) is both faithful to Petrarch’s own choices and consistent with the strong emphasis on the text derived from Bembo’s identification of the *Fragmenta* as the perfect model for vernacular poetry in his *Prose della volgare lingua* (1525).⁶⁶

Bembo’s Aldines constitute an elegant and influential model for subsequent printed editions of both individual lyric books *in ottavo* and collective anthologies, such as those published by Giolito between 1545 and 1560, where rubrics are used only to identify authors and addressees.⁶⁷ However, rubrics and *argomenti* are not absent from mid- and especially late-sixteenth-century poetry books and

⁶⁵ See Rossi, “Indicatori di lettura” 483–498. The paratextual frames in Olimpo’s works are not stable across different prints and cannot be attributed to the author with the same certainty. Rubrics are present at multiple levels – at book level, at series level and at the level of single compositions – and they include references to: times, places and occasions of composition; subject matter and motifs; information on revisions and additions; metres and genres; techniques of composition and tropes.

⁶⁶ For the subsequent evolution of Bembo’s lyric collection, up to the 1548 posthumous edition, see Albonico S., “Come leggere le “Rime” di Pietro Bembo”, in Id., *Ordine e numero. Studi sul libro di poesia e le raccolte poetiche nel Cinquecento* (Alessandria: 2006) 11–28.

⁶⁷ See Cannata N., *Il canzoniere a stampa (1470–1530). Tradizione e fortuna di un genere fra storia del libro e letteratura* (Rome: 2000) 71–73; and Bianco M. – Strada E. (eds.), *I più vaghi e i più soavi fiori’. Studi sulle antologie di lirica del Cinquecento* (Alessandria: 2001).

anthologies;⁶⁸ on the contrary, they tend to reappear and even increase in number and prominence. With a view to a more comprehensive study, even a preliminary survey of collections printed in the second half of the *Cinquecento* will suffice here to suggest that the new success of rubrics is inseparable from the transformations of the lyric book as a form and, more broadly, from the evolution of the lyric genre in the last decades of the century. At a superficial glance, the short headings or longer prose glosses present in the individual collections of poets as different as Alessandro Piccolomini, Anton Francesco Raineri, Giovan Battista Pigna, Diomede Borghesi, and Muzio Manfredi – to name but a few – might seem fundamentally comparable to the rubrics attested in the pre-Bembian *poesia cortigiana*, their main function being that of identifying themes and occasions for each poem:

Quando l'Autore s'innamorò la seconda volta.

(When the Author fell in love for the second time.)

Nel ritorno suo di Roma a Siena, a la sua Donna.

(On returning from Rome to Siena, [the author] to his Lady.⁶⁹)

Trovandosi ove la donna faceva ricci i capegli di Renata Nigrisuola, dama di madama Leonora di Este, descrive questo fatto; e mostra che a lei fosse ornato il capo, e a lui levata l'anima.

([The poet], finding himself where the lady was curling the hair of Renata Nigrisuola, lady of madama Leonora da Este, describes this process and shows that her [Renata's] head was adorned and his soul was stolen.⁷⁰)

Mentre che la Donna dello Svegliato [Diomede Borghesi], con gran diletto de gli ascoltanti, cantava dolcissimamente, fu da una vespa aspramente ferita nel collo.

(The lady loved by the Svegliato [lit. 'the Awoken'] was singing most sweetly, for the

⁶⁸ For instance, annotations are present in the anthologies edited by Girolamo Ruscelli (1558) and Dionigi Atanagi (1565), significantly at a time when the kind of Petrarchism promoted by Bembo was already giving way to new forms. See Zaja P., "Intorno alle antologie. Testi e paratesti in alcune raccolte di lirica cinquecentesche", in Bianco – Strada (eds.), *I più vaghi e i più soavi fiori* 113–145; and Tomasi F., "Le ragioni del 'moderno' nella lirica del XVI secolo tra teoria e prassi", in Id., *Studi sulla lirica* 3–24.

⁶⁹ Piccolomini Alessandro, *I cento sonetti*, ed. F. Tomasi (Geneva: 2015) 43 and 77.

⁷⁰ Pigna Giovan Battista, *Il ben divino*, ed. N. Bonifazi (Bologna: 1965) CIV; the poem is annotated in *Lirici Europei del Cinquecento. Ripensando la poesia del Petrarca*, ed. G. M. Anselmi – K. Elam – G. Forni – D. Monda (Milan: 2004) 485–486. The translation is adapted from the one provided by Anthony Newcomb in Luzzaschi Luzzasco, *The Complete Unaccompanied Madrigals, Part 4. Il primo libro de' madrigali a cinque voci (Ferrara, 1571), Secondo libro de madrigali a cinque voci (Venice, 1576)*, ed. A. Newcomb (Middleton: 2010) lxi, note 39.

great pleasure of her listeners, when her neck was harshly stung by a wasp.⁷¹)

Le morì un babuino bellissimo.
(A most beautiful baboon of hers died.)

Ogni volta che l'Autore la scontrava, ella diveniva rossa.
(Whenever the Author ran into her, she blushed.⁷²)

On closer inspection, though, the structural and conceptual reasons for their presence seem to tell a more nuanced story. To some extent, the social and encomiastic role of 'ephemeral' poetry can still account for rubrics briefly alluding to specific circumstances. At this stage, the printing press has partly changed the scene of writing and reading, but the practice of commissioning verse to be recited or exchanged on specific occasions is still common.⁷³ Besides ensuring that the celebratory and memorial function of poetry is performed fully, in the context of the wider circulation allowed by the printed book, these rubrics seem to sketch an episodic narrative revolving around the social persona of the poet, a sort of selective record of the author's poetic and social achievements. This is particularly evident in the case of Anton Francesco Raineri's *Cento sonetti* (1553), accompanied by a 'very short exposition of their subjects' ('brevissima Esposizione de i soggetti loro').⁷⁴ The exposition is attributed to the author's brother, Girolamo, who claims a great familiarity with the author, and in particular with his successful practice as an

⁷¹ Borghesi Diomede, *Rime amorose del Sig. Diomede Borghesi Gentilhuomo sanese, et accademico intronato. Novellamente poste in luce. Con alcuni brevi argomenti di M. Cesare Perla* (Padova: Pasquati, 1585) 71, with reference to 26. The 'brevi argomenti' added in this edition are attributed to Cesare Perla.

⁷² Manfredi Muzio, *Cento donne cantate da Mutio Manfredi il Fermo Academico Innominato di Parma. Al serenissimo principe di Mantova* (Parma, Viotti: 1580), with reference to the madrigals 'Accorto animaletto' (103) and 'Basta pur troppo il foco' (118) respectively. In the short prose 'To the readers' ('A' lettori) that precedes the closing index ('Tavola delle rime'), where some *incipit* are accompanied by 'argomenti', Francesco Tebaldini claims that he asked the author to explain ('dichiarare') the texts that seemed to need some clarification and then presented those explanations in a shorter form, for the benefit of the readers: 'mi ho di mano in mano fatto dichiarare tai passi, et questi, con la occasione della detta Tavola, gli ho similmente à voi dichiarati con quella maggior brevità però, c'hà comportato il non volere accrescer troppo il volume' (fol. Liiijr).

⁷³ See Richardson B., *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: 2009); and Id., "The Social Connotations of Singing Verse in Cinquecento Italy", *The Italianist* 34, 3 (2014) 362–378.

⁷⁴ Raineri Anton Francesco, *Cento sonetti, altre rime e pompe. Con la brevissima esposizione di Girolamo Raineri*, ed. R. Sodano (Turin: 2004). For Raineri's poetry, see Gorni G., "Un'ecatombe di rime. I "Cento sonetti" di Antonfrancesco Rainerio", *Versants* 15 (1989) 135–152; and Casu A., "Romana difficultas. I 'Cento Sonetti' e la tradizione epigrammatica", in Cremante R. (ed.), *La lirica del Cinquecento. Seminario di studi in memoria di Cesare Bozzetti* (Alessandria: 2004) 123–154.

admired poet, to whom lords and princes commissioned poems on given subjects.⁷⁵ However, it is reasonable to believe that the prose was penned by Anton Francesco himself.⁷⁶ Some of the longest and most detailed entries in the exposition cast Raineri as a much sought-after poet and a member of refined elites, so that readers might be able to reconstruct a sort of ‘public biography’ of the author, through vignettes, by binding together all the occasions and commissions mentioned in the ‘esposizione’. The structure of the book places the exposition at some length from the poems. On the one hand, the separation of glosses from texts allows for the *cento sonetti* to be read in a clean, empty format, along the lines of Bembo’s editions; on the other, the clear order of the entries in the *brevissima esposizione*, which follows the sequence of the collection, encourages a prompt reconstruction of contexts, while the table provided at the end makes the whole work easy to navigate.⁷⁷ Significantly, the reading of these poems that the dedicatee, cardinal Innocenzo de’ Monti, is invited to enjoy in his idle time is described as a ‘praiseworthy and honourable game’ (‘giuoco lodevole et honorato’),⁷⁸ a pastime in which the exposition and table offered the entry point for a discontinuous experience of the lyric book.

A different form of ‘social’ narrative involving the poet is set up by the rubrics of *Il ben divino*, one of the manuscript lyric collections of Giovan Battista Pigna (Giovan Battista Nicolucci, 1529-1575), in which the amorous and celebrative dimensions of poetry coalesce. The main story of the poet’s love for Lucrezia Bendidio (hence the book’s title, literally ‘the divine good’) is placed against the wider backdrop of life at the court of Ferrara, so that the chronicle of love and the enumeration of social occasions go hand in hand.⁷⁹ The rubric referred to the third

⁷⁵ Raineri, *Cento sonetti* 119.

⁷⁶ Cf. Tomasi, “Strategie paratestuali” 136.

⁷⁷ A similar ‘double’ outcome was achieved by the Venetian poet Celio Magno in his *Rime* (1600), which include a number of short prose captions placed in the alphabetical index of poems (for about 40 out of 137 texts). For a thorough study of these captions and their function see Comiati, “Componente paratestuale” 153–155. Magno decided to remove the ‘argomenti’ (in verse) that he had originally placed before each poem in response to advice received from his friend and collaborator Ottavio Menini, whose comments can be read in Erspamer F., “Lo scrittoio di Celio Magno”, in Santagata M. – Quondam A. (eds.), *Il libro di poesia dal copista al tipografo* (Modena: 1989) 243–250 (247). The rich implications of Menini’s comments deserve a very detailed analysis, which I aim to carry out in a more comprehensive study of prose rubrics in lyric books.

⁷⁸ Raineri, *Cento sonetti* 119.

⁷⁹ On this collection, which would deserve a chapter of its own, see Tomasi F., “Osservazioni sul libro di poesia nel secondo Cinquecento (1560–1602)”, in Metlica A. – Tomasi F. (eds.), *Canzonieri in transito. Lasciti petrarcheschi e nuovi archetipi letterari tra Cinque e Seicento* (Milan-Udine: 2015) 11–36 (30–31). Tomasi’s excellent contribution provides a

sonnet in the book establishes a comparison between the poet's love and Petrarch's love, while marking a significant distinction:

Dimostra in che sia conforme e differente l'amor suo con quello e da quello del Petrarca: l'uno e l'altro principiò del mese di aprile, ma questi di donna d'un luogo vile di Francia, nel Venerdì Santo, quegli nella corte di Ferrara, di donna altamente allevata e ne i dì del tremuoto, ch'erano pieni d'ogni divozione.⁸⁰

([The poet] shows in what his love is similar and different from that of Petrarch: both loves began in the month of April, but the latter for a woman from a humble place in France, on Good Friday, the former at the court of Ferrara, for a highly-bred lady and in the days of the earthquake, which were filled with every devotion.)

The shift in the geographical and chronological setting is one of importance, because the solitude of Vaucluse is replaced by the animated scenery of the Este court, and the universalising, symbolic implications of Good Friday are reshaped in the particularising reference to a local dramatic event. In fact, Pigna's collection allows for the multiplication of themes and circumstances, while displaying traces of an overarching design and a distinctive attention to the contents as articulated in the poems proper. This combination attests to the tense coexistence of a peak in the socially-driven production of poetry and a growing authorial control over book structures, working against ephemerality.⁸¹ In this context, rubrics and more generally paratextual elements have convincingly been interpreted as features meant to enhance 'macrotextual cohesion'.⁸² If we read Pigna's prose sections in their sequence, they tend to form a narrative or at least to provide frequent connections between a number of episodes set in Ferrara. At the same time, *Il ben divino* makes room for a proliferation of motifs akin to the *poesia cortigiana*, although interpreted in a more decidedly bizarre way,⁸³ verging on the 'concettoso', and often supported by a paraphrastic focus on what poems actually say:

Prima che s'affezionasse alla donna, avea cantato d'un neo, che sta nel volto di Anna, sorella di lei. Ora scrivendo ad essa donna, dice che quel poco detto da lui per quel neo, fu quasi un presagio di quel molto che dovea cantare di lei; la quale, perché meritava più degno scrittore, potrà fare concetto, della debolezza

thorough and updated bibliography on the subject of late-sixteenth century books of poetry.

⁸⁰ Pigna, *Il ben divino*, III.

⁸¹ This tension has been analysed most effectively by Brusciagli R., "La preponderanza petrarchista", in Da Pozzo G. (ed.), *Storia letteraria d'Italia, Il Cinquecento*, vol. 3, *La letteratura tra l'eroico e il quotidiano. La nuova religione dell'utopia e della scienza (1573–1600)* (Padua-Milan: 2007) 1559–1615 (1567).

⁸² Tomasi, "Osservazioni" 16.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 31.

di queste rime, fatte nel soggetto del neo, ch'egli non sia per riuscire nel celebrare le altissime bellezze sue.⁸⁴

(Before he fell in love with the lady, he [the poet] had sung of a mole on the face of Anna, her sister. Now, writing to the lady, he says that the few lines he had written about the mole were a sort of presage of the many lines he was to sing about her [the lady]; the lady, since she deserved a worthier writer, will be able to conclude, from the weakness of these poems composed on the subject of mole, that he will not be able to celebrate her excellent beauties.)

Canzone sopra il salasso nel piè della donna. Nella prima parte, chiamando Amore ch'intravenga a quell'atto, propone di cantarne. Nella seconda descrive il piè, la gamba e la vena, e come il barbiere non tirasse sangue al primo colpo. Nella terza pone le circostanze del salasso eseguito. Nella quarta richiama Amore che soccorra alla donna addolorata; mostrando che il caso voglia ch'ella muti il nome di Lucrezia in quello di Euridice. Nella quinta replica pur ad Amore che fermi il sangue e lo svenimento che appare in quegli occhi, col rimetterle il proprio spirito di lei, perché per altro non potrebbe pigliar vita. Nella sesta prega pur Amore che non lasci cadere in terra una sola goccia di quel sangue. Nella settima gli dice che raccogliendol nella benda, e spiegandola, sarà vittorioso di ogni cuore. Nell'ottava e nell'ultima gli fa conoscere che la donna medesima gli servirà di benda, non in accecare, ma in allumare il mondo. Nella chiusa comanda alla canzone che debba dire alla sua donna che nel volto di lei sì come Amore s'estinse, così s'avivò.⁸⁵

(*Canzone* on the bloodletting from the foot of the lady. In the first part, calling on Love to intervene, [the poet] proposes to sing about it. In the second, he describes the foot, the leg and the vein, and how the barber did not [was unable to] drain blood on his first attempt. In the third, he sets the circumstances of the bloodletting. In the fourth, once again he calls upon Love, begging him to help the lady in pain, showing that, as the situation dictates, she could change her name from Lucretia to Eurydice. In the fifth, again he addresses Love, asking him to stop the blood and the fainting that is apparent in her [the lady's] eyes, by returning her own spirit to herself, for she could not regain life through another. In the sixth, he begs Love not to let a single drop of her blood fall to the ground. In the seventh, he tells him [Love] that, by gathering her blood in a strip of bandage and then unfolding it, he will triumph over every heart. In the eighth and final part, he tells Love [traditionally represented as blindfolded] that the woman herself will serve as a bandage, not to blind but rather to illuminate the world. In the closing lines, he commands the *canzone* to tell his lady that in her face Love was both

⁸⁴ Pigna, *Il ben divino*, XIV. The following eight texts (XV–XXII) are precisely the ‘eight madrigals composed on the subject of the above-mentioned mole’ (‘otto madrigali composti in materia del sopra detto neo’).

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, XXXVI.

deprived of life and brought to life again.)

In the latter case, the distribution of content into the different sections of the text is analysed explicitly, as in ‘divisions’, but the distance of this prose from Lorenzo’s *Comento* and Dante’s *Vita Nova* could not be more evident. Here, each stanza of the *canzone* could be seen as a poem in its own right or even as a variation on the same theme, due to an extremely extended treatment of a minimal subject. The same pattern of invention could in fact give rise to long sequences of poems explicitly presented as variations. For instance, the second part of the *Rime* (1581) of Annibal Guasco features a long polymetric series devoted to the departure of a beautiful lady from Alessandria, including two *canzoni*, twenty sonnets – twelve of which arranged into a *corona* – and one madrigal. In this case, the continuity of the subject is established through multiple prose annotations listed in the ‘breve dichiarazione’:

Nella presente canzone, nella quale il primo verso di tutte le stanze è tolto da una canzone del Petrarca, di soggetto molto differente, loda l’Autore una bellissima gentildonna, et si duole della partenza di lei d’Alessandria, dove haveva parecchi giorni albergato. [...]

Questi sette sonetti sono anch’essi fatti alla partenza di detta Gentildonna. [...]

Questi dodici sonetti tessuti in una corona indirizzati al S. Giuliano Goselini furono parimente composti dall’Autore al partir che fece quella Signora d’Alessandria per andar a Milano, dove esso Sig. Goselini si ritrovava. [...]

Fu questo sonetto mandato al Sig. Filippo Binaschi insieme con la copia della corona scritta al S. Giuliano, per la medesima occasione [...]

In lode della istessa Signora, dolendosi pur della partenza di lei.

Fu composto il presente madrigale pure al medesimo proposito.⁸⁶

(In the present *canzone*, in which the first line of each stanza is taken from a *canzone* by Petrarch on a very different subject, the Author praises a most beautiful lady and laments her departure from Alessandria, where she had spent several days. [...]

These seven sonnets are themselves composed on the departure of the aforementioned lady. [...]

These twelve sonnets, interwoven in a wreath and addressed to S. Giuliano Goselini, were equally composed by the Author on the departure of that lady from Alessandria to Milan, where Goselini himself happened to be. [...]

This sonnet was sent to Sig. Filippo Binaschi alongside a copy of the wreath addressed to S. Giuliano, for the same occasion [...]

In praise of the same lady, lamenting her departure.

The present madrigal was composed on the same topic.).

⁸⁶ *Il primo volume delle Rime del Signor Annibal Guasco alessandrino, academico affidato, ristampato, e riveduto dall’autore, e insieme il secondo volume* [Pavia, Girolamo Bartoli, 1579, ad istanza di Gio. Andrea Viano], *pur delle rime d’esso Signor Guasco, con una breve dichiarazione de i concetti loro. Appresso una oratione, un discorso sopra la bellezza, e un’apologia sopra un suo sonetto del medesimo auttore* (Pavia, Viani: 1581) 7–8.

Elsewhere, the topic of a sequence is identified through a single annotation, as in the case of the lengthy prose referring to forty sonnets inspired by the letters that the poet received from a lady ([...] l'Autore si pose à celebrar quelle lettere et palesar l'allegrezza, che ne haveva presa con questi quaranta sonetti', [...] the Author committed himself to celebrating those letters and showing the joy he had gained from them with these forty sonnets').⁸⁷ Guasco pushed this practice to an extreme in his 'Cento madrigali a due sue figliole, *tutti d'un medesimo soggetto*' ('One hundred madrigals addressed to two daughters of his, *all on the same subject*').⁸⁸ This process reveals a loss of interest in the occasion or theme per se, while the degree of 'narrativity' of the textual unit composed by the poem and its rubric decreases in favour of a more abstract 'lyricality', dominated by the ingenuity of the poetic experiment. In terms of self-commentary, this suggests a clear shift of emphasis from the 'primary material' to its poetic handling, including references to literary models. Consistently, both Pigna and Raineri acknowledge their sources for specific poems, as Torquato Tasso himself will do.⁸⁹

The interchangeability of themes paradoxically coexists with – and gives way to – the interchangeability of *texts*. Namely, the motif exposed in the rubric can constitute a mere pretext and at the same time provide the main access to the poem itself, due to a different arrangement of lyric collections. For instance, in the collective *Gareggiamento poetico* (1611), the index of subjects precedes the index of authors.⁹⁰ At this stage, rubrics make up a sort of repertoire of types and situations, through which collections can be enjoyed randomly by readers and used instrumentally by other poets. Alessandro Martini has pointed out the climax of the process of reversal by which themes rather than authors become the guiding principle of a collection: the creation of thematic repertoires explicitly identified as such.⁹¹ The paratextual subversion of the traditional relationship between the text and its subject can also be detected in a transformation that affects rubrics themselves. Namely, a shift from 'argomenti' to titles, from short narrative proses to

⁸⁷ Ibidem, 10.

⁸⁸ Guasco Annibal, *Opera del sig. Annibal Guasco in ottava rima, per la Natività del Signore* (Alessandria, Ercole Quinciano: 1599).

⁸⁹ Cf. Martini A., "Amore esce dal caos. L'organizzazione tematico-narrativa delle rime amorose del Tasso", *Filologia e critica* 9 (1984) 78–121; and De Maldé, "Torquato Tasso. Auto-commento alle *Rime* (1591)" 249–250.

⁹⁰ Therefore, the hierarchy between authors and themes is subverted; cf. Tomasi, "Osservazioni" 24.

⁹¹ Martini A., "Rilievi sul *Tesoro di concetti poetici* di Giovanni Cisano", in Quondam A. (ed.), *Petrarca in Barocco. Cantieri petrarcheschi. Due seminari romani* (Rome: 2004) 11–32 (15).

non-narrative labels, such as ‘GELOSIA’ (‘jealousy’) or ‘DONNA BELLA E POVERA’ (‘beautiful and poor lady’).⁹²

Most post-Bembian lyric collections supplied with rubrics can be described as polycentric, centrifugal structures, whose internal variety is normally held together by a thematic arrangement or by a merely numeric criterion (*Cento*, ‘one hundred’, for instance, is a number frequently adopted in their titles). However, in the poetry of Alessandro Piccolomini, Ludovico Domenichi, Girolamo Muzio and Anton Francesco Ranieri, the broadening of the thematic palette was not at odds with the survival of a fundamentally unitary structure of the *canzoniere* and was part of a project aimed at advocating the moral utility of poetry, precisely in the decades in which the first theories of the genre were developed in Italy.⁹³ Conversely, the dissolution of the authorial book of poetry into thematic subgroups performed by later poets such as Torquato Tasso, Battista Guarini and Giovan Battista Marino encouraged and accelerated the pulverisation of lyric books into repertoires.⁹⁴ To some extent, this brings us back to the situation that preceded the rise of the authorial poetry book, although in completely different historical conditions. If Petrarch’s *Fragmenta* bore no rubrics, after more than two centuries of Petrarchism, rubrics seem to stand alone, while a proper *canzoniere* is nowhere to be found.

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⁹² Martini A., “Ritratto del madrigale poetico tra Cinque e Seicento”, *Lettere italiane* 33, 4 (1981) 529–548.

⁹³ In Piccolomini’s own words, ‘Buona parte de miei Sonetti [...] vedrete fondata in diverse materie morali e piene di gravità, ad imitazion d’Orazio, il quale ammiro grandemente e tengo in pregio’ (‘A significant number of my sonnets [...] as you will see, is based on several moral and serious subjects, in imitation of Horace, whom I greatly admire and praise’). Cf. Piccolomini, *I cento sonetti* ed. Tomasi. On this topic, see Refini E., “Le ‘gioconde favole’ e il ‘numeroso concerto’: Alessandro Piccolomini interprete e imitatore di Orazio nei *Cento sonetti* (1549)”, *Italique* 10 (2007) 15–57.

⁹⁴ The dissolution of the ‘forma-canzoniere’ in the seventeenth century has been interpreted as a crisis determined by the ‘abundance’ and ‘overproduction’ of lyric poems by Giunta, C., “Sulla morfologia dei libri di poesia in età moderna”, in Lo Monaco, F. – Rossi, L. C. – Scaffai, N. (eds.), *“Liber”, “fragmenta”, “libellus”*, 445–457 (449).

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