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READING, WRITING, AND REWARD:
DIALOGUE AND IDENTITY IN PETRARCH'S *SECRETUM*

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O Tite, si quid ego adiuro curamve levasso
Quae nunc te coquit et versat in pectore fixa,
Ecquid erit praemi?

(Titus, if I can help in any way
or lift the weight of worry that torments
and troubles your heart, and leaves you never
free, will there be a reward?)¹

Petrarch seems to have drawn a screen separating the *Secretum* and his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (*RVF*), composing the former in Latin prose and the latter in vernacular verse. The *Secretum* is veiled in at least one other way as well, for it is far from being as self-contained as *RVF*; on the contrary, the intertext of the conversation between Agostino and Francesco demands much of its reader, particularly because the scholarly pair dispute not only by citing authorities, but also by arguing that the original context supports their side of the issues.²

In the milieu they generate, Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* enjoy great admiration from both the poet and his spiritual father. But though *Tusculan Disputations* is prominent within the dialogue and

¹"These verses are quoted by Cicero from the *Annals* of Ennius....The passage concerns another Titus, the consul Titus Quinctius Flaminius, who was helped by a local peasant to find a hidden vantage-point from which he subsequently attacked and defeated Philip V of Macedon." Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Old Age* [*De senectute*], trans. Frank O. Copley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 91; my emphasis.

²In his introduction to Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), J. E. King notes that Cicero, too, quotes often, and that this speeds up his writing: "he says...in a letter to Atticus ["Ad Atticus," xii.52.3]...verba tantum adfero, quibus abundo" (vii), that is, "there's plenty which I report."

in modern scholarship on the *Secretum*, some very important elements of Petrarch's framework derive from Cicero's "De senectute."

Reading Petrarch's prose dialogue by comparing it to "De senectute" shows that many of the *Secretum*'s rhetorical qualities are in imitation of, or in reaction against, those of the Latin orator and rhetorician. The two authors write in comparable situations, for instance: whereas Petrarch composes the last revisions of his *Secretum* after the high point of his life as a poet,³ and after his personal disappointment over the failed attempt to restore the Papacy to Rome, Cicero, once again in exile, writes "De senectute" and the *Tusculan Disputations* out of the "disappointment and grief [which] drove him to philosophy, as a source of consolation and hope."⁴ It is worth noting that some part of this grief resulted from the death of Tullia, his wife, for Petrarch's own Laura assuredly did not vanish from the poet's memory.⁵

Loneliness and retirement may seem to have caused different responses in Petrarch and his Latin forbear, yet here, too, the differences stem from the poet's adaptation of Cicero's situation to his own purpose. The Roman, used to composing in the monologic genres of oration and invective, decides to write both "De senectute" and the *Tusculan Disputations* as dialogues. Frank Copley comments that

This was the form much preferred by both the Greeks and the Romans for argumentative discourse. Not only did the give and take of an imaginary conversation provide them with a lifelike ve-

³According to Hans Baron, "this dialogue was intended by its author to testify to his state of mind at a specific turning point in his development—the time after the completion of the first draft of the *Africa*, and after his return from his Roman coronation and from Italy." "Petrarch's *Secretum*: Was It Revised— And Why?" in *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni: Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 51. Though Baron notes that the work, like most others, underwent significant revisions from its first draft in 1342 until "1358 [when] Petrarch had the final copy made" (51–2), he explains that such changes were limited; for instance, the structure of the text depends upon its proem, and thus after the proem was completed, it limited some of the possibilities for revision (62).

⁴Frank Ernest Rockwood, trans., *Cicero's Tusculan Disputations, I and Scipio's Dream*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), xxvi.

⁵As evidence that Petrarch's thoughts abide with Laura, note S. Augustine's statement on the second day: "Therefore you will easily understand how often you are deluded by that glory you hope for from your eloquence and how your pride therein rests but upon a foundation of *wind*." Francesco Petrarch, *Petrarch's Secret, or, the Soul's Conflict with Passion: Three Dialogues Between Himself and S. Augustine*, trans. William H. Draper (Westport: Hyperion, 1991), 51; my emphasis. English translations of the *Secretum* are Draper's except when otherwise noted.

hicle for the presentation of reasoned argument; in addition, it appealed to their innate love of the dramatic and carried them back, so to speak, to the endless conversations in portico and forum, for which they seem to have had an insatiable appetite.⁶

Certainly this statement clarifies the form's appeal for a displaced orator: Cicero, no longer permitted to participate in these "endless conversations," constructs his own. In sum, it is a desire for the social intercourse required by his occupation, his culture, and his human nature that motivates him to write "De senectute."

Consonant with his social need, Cicero asserts that he writes for another: his friend and fellow thinker, Atticus the Epicurean:

Novi enim moderationem animi tui et aequitatem, teque non cognomen solum Athenis deportasse sed humanitatem et prudentium intelligo....Nunc autem visum est mihi de senectute aliquid ad te conscribere

(I know that you brought home from Athens not only your name—"Titus the Athenian"—but also a general understanding of the lot of man, and a sound stock of philosophic principles...I should like to write down *for you* a few thoughts on the subject of old age)⁷

On the contrary, Petrarch says he composes the *Secretum* for himself:

Hoc igitur tam familiare colloquium ne forte dilaberetur, dum scriptis mandare instituo, mensuram libelli huius implevi. Non quem annumerari aliis operibus meis velim, aut unde gloriam petam (maiora quedam mens agitat) sed ut dulcedinum, quam semel ex colloquutione percepi, quotiens libuerit ex lectione percipiam. Tuque ideo, libelle, conventus hominum fugiens, mecum mansisse contentus eris, nominis proprii non immemor

(That this discourse, so intimate and deep, might not be lost, I have set it down in writing and made this book; not that I wish to class it with my other works, or desire from it any credit. My thoughts aim higher. What I desire is that I may be able by reading to renew as often as I wish the pleasure I felt from the discourse itself. So, little Book, I bid you flee the haunts of men and *be content to stay with me*⁸

⁶Copley, xiv.

⁷Francesco Petrarch, *Secretum*, in *Prose*, ed. G. Martellotti (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1955), 26; my emphasis. All references will be quoted from this edition.

⁸Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Cato Maior: A Dialogue on Old Age*, ed. and trans. Evelyn Shuckburgh (London: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 1-2; my emphasis; translation from

Here, a technique of rewriting by reversing and personalizing standardized techniques appears clearly, for though many authors would consider including the envoy in their prefatory remarks, Petrarch renders the envoy formally, but within the form states his opposition to sending the text anywhere. In this fashion, the "anti-envoy" marks Petrarch's text as intimate, in sharp contrast to Cicero's essay "ad te."

If the common ground appears to vanish because of Petrarch's essential distinction between "personal" and "public" styles of expression, this is a matter of appearances only, for Cicero confesses:

Sed mihi, cum de senectute vellum aliquid scribere, tu occurrebas dignus eo munere quo uterque nostrum communiter uteretur. Mihi quidem ita iucunda huius libri confectio fuit ut non modo omnes absterserit senectutis molestias, sed effecerit mollem etiam et iucundam senectutem.

(When I decided to write about old age, you occurred to me as the one person worthy to receive a gift that I intended for our mutual benefit. *For my own part, the joy that I have derived from the writing of this essay has been so great that it has not only obliterated all the troubles of old age, but has made it a source of comfort and delight*)⁹

Thus it is through a personal enjoyment of writing, and in the concept of "benefit," that Cicero transforms his perspective on old age, anticipating with pleasure Atticus's rediscovery of the same delight in philosophical discourse.

In both cases, "dialogue" serves as a vehicle for more than "reasoned argument." The artifice of dialogue also admits of paradox, for it is a social event—bearing social pleasures—for the solitary reader. Moreover, when Petrarch translates dialogue from the outer social world to the confines of a "secret" book, he can "renew" this pleasure whenever he wishes. In a sense, Petrarch's record of dialogue circumvents the necessity of others' voices in spoken dialogue, thus replacing transient human relations with an unchanging, more reliable "source of comfort and delight."

Though both writers confess that the production of the text has some relation to their own pleasure, their motivation to produce prose dialogues are in neither case entirely positive. In the introduc-

Copley, 3. All references to "De senectute" will be from Shuckburgh (hereafter cited DS); translations will be taken from Copley unless otherwise noted.

⁹DS, 2; Copley, 4; my emphases.

tion to his translation of the *Secretum*, William H. Draper suggests that

the *Secretum* gives us...the picture of Petrarch as he was in the crisis of his idle years...finding that the sheer march of time and experience of manhood are forcing him now to see things with more mature vision.¹⁰

Draper's anatomy of Petrarch's mood applies as well to the pressure Cicero outlines at the beginning of "De senectute," where he explains that he and his friend must soon face burdensome old age.¹¹ In fact, future infirmity is anticipated in both introductions, but with the distress there is also the desire for continued friendships that will make age easier to bear: Cicero's with Atticus, and Petrarch's with his books.

Of course, the source of anxiety, for both, is death. Petrarch makes this quite clear in the first sentence of his preface, saying "Attonito michi quidem et sepissime cogitanti qualiter in hanc vitam intrassem, qualiter ve forem egressurus" ("Often I have wondered with much curiosity as to our coming into this world and what will follow our departure.")¹² Apparently he has begun with a salient point, for it is echoed when Augustine opens the conversation on the first day:

Quid agis, homuncio? quid somnias? quid expectas? miserarium ne tuarum sic prorsus oblitus es? An non te mortalem esse meministi?

(What have you to say, O man of little strength? Of what are you dreaming? For what are you looking? *Remember you not you are mortal?*)¹³

Cicero, too, immediately introduces death as his topic in the *Tusculan Disputations*, endeavoring in Book 1 to prove that it is not an evil, but a blessing:

Quia, quoniam post mortem mali nihil est, ne mors quidem est malum, cui proximum tempus est post mortem, in quo mali nihil esse concedis: ita ne moriendum quidem esse malum est: id est enim, perveniendum esse ad id, quod non esse malum confitemur.

¹⁰Draper, xxi.

¹¹Copley, 3.

¹²*Secretum*, 22; Draper, 1.

¹³*Secretum*, 28; Draper, 7; my emphasis.

(Because, inasmuch as after death there is no evil, death, which is at once succeeded by time in which by your admission there is no evil, is not an evil either: it follows that to have to die is not an evil either, for it means having to reach a condition which we admit is not an evil.)¹⁴

Their similar expectations of their works, and their desires to address similar topics, predispose the two to make some of the same formal choices. For example, both adhere to a very traditional device of naming the participant characters throughout. Cicero tells Atticus that

Omnem autem sermonem tribuimus non Tithono, ut Aristo Chius, parum enim esset *auctoritatis in fabula* sed M. Catoni seni, quo maiorem auctoritatem haberet oratio

(I have not made Tithonus my chief speaker as Aristo of Ceos did: a purely mythological character would have lent very little weight to my discourse. Rather, I have assigned that role to Cato the Elder, in the hope that my dialogue might gain a greater ring of authority)¹⁵

Petrarch, too, decides to give his dialogue the ring of authority, though he includes both a mediator of truth and Truth herself:

tres pariter conседimus. Tum demum, illa de singulis in sedulo iudicante, submotisque procul arbitris, ultro citroque sermo longior obortus

(We all three [the characters Petrarch, Saint Augustine, and Truth] sat down. Then while Truth listened as the silent judge, none other beside her being present, we held long converse)¹⁶

¹⁴*Secretum*, 20; Draper, 7. Unfortunately the question is not so easily resolved, and Cato's auditor immediately requests less intricate arguments. To allow himself to be convinced more readily, he suggests "Sed nihil te interpellabo: continentem orationem audire malo" ("But I shall not interrupt you: I wish to hear a continuous speech"), stubbornly handing over the "discussion" to one speaker. Petrarch's vexation seems to be generated by just this sort of duplicity. Rockwood comments that through this self-prohibitive statement, "Cicero passes from the true Socratic dialogue with question and answer to the Aristotelian form...connected discourse with only few interruptions on the part of the hearers" (16-17). Moreover, the term "continentem" has nuances that could attract Petrarch's attention and serve to convey his thought, for while it may be read "continuous," its definition by extension is "controlled."

¹⁵*DS*, 2; Copley, 4; my emphasis. It is worth noting that the word chosen here, "fabula," does not imply "mythological" in the sense of "stories expressing cultural truths," but rather that which is fabricated, and in many cases, "the conversational."

¹⁶*Secretum*, 26; Draper, 5.

In fact, this choice gives Petrarch's dialogue either all authority—as it is conducted under the auspices of Truth—or no authority whatsoever, if Truth becomes a “purely mythological character.” The duality of the decision, or rather the refusal to clarify one way or another, complements Petrarch's desire for a flexible text, one that is susceptible of multiple readings over time, according to his stated plan to enjoy the work again and again.

Petrarch states that to further enhance his enjoyment, he has borrowed from Cicero the method of distinguishing speakers:

Ego enim ne, ut ait Tullius, «inquam et inquit sepius interponerentur, atque ut coram res agi velut a presentibus videretur» collocutoris egregii measque sententias, non laio verborum ambitu, sed sola priorum nominum prescriptione discrevi. Hunc nempe scribendi morem a Cicerone meo didici

(To avoid the too frequent iteration of the words ‘said I,’ ‘said he,’ and to bring the personages of the Dialogue, as it were, before one's very eyes, I have acted on Cicero's method and merely placed the name of each interlocutor before each paragraph)¹⁷

Yet A. E. Douglas, in his introduction to *Tusculan Disputations II and V*, notes that it is clear the device is not Cicero's:

Since Pohlenz explored the question, it has been clear that the initials M and A representing the main speaker and his interlocutor appear only spasmodically and inconsistently in the Mss, and were probably imported in about the sixth century.¹⁸

Glossing the spurious initials, Frank Earnest Rockwood explains that

the letters *A* and *M* are found in the text in place of personal names. *A* has been variously interpreted as *Atticus*, *Aulus*, *adolescens*, but is now taken for *auditor*, from the clause *qui audire vellet*...*M*, at first supposed to stand for *Marcus*, is now explained as *magister*, to correspond with *auditor*.¹⁹

So in “imitation” of Cicero's model, Petrarch chooses the participants carefully, working toward some calculated effect. The nature of this effect is clarified given these two sets of names: Petrarch feels that he emulates Cicero by providing names at the beginning of each

¹⁷*Secretum*, 26; Draper, 6; my emphasis.

¹⁸A.E. Douglas, trans., *Cicero: Tusculan Disputations II and V, with a Summary of III and IV* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, Ltd., 1990), 9.

¹⁹Rockwood, xxviii; his emphases.

paragraph, even though Douglas and Pohlenz assert that Cicero is not responsible for these designations. More importantly, in light of Rockwood's gloss, it appears that Petrarch chooses to use the names of the characters instead of their functional titles so that he may avoid giving the privilege of "magister" to either of his interlocutors. The decision functions as a subtle evasion of hubris—something Cicero the monologist never managed to avoid—sensibly enough, for one of Petrarch's characters bears his own name, and the other the name of his dear friend Augustine.

Another element of the frameworks, the duration of each conversation, may also yield illuminating dissimilarities, if it is established that Petrarch's method is generally revision-cum-reaction. Cicero's uncharacteristic brevity in "De senectute" leads to "a complete account of [his] sentiments on...old age,"²⁰ but the discussion spans only a few hours of discourse among Cato, Scipio, and Laelius. The *Secretum* is longer by far, occupying Francesco and Agostino for three days.

The biographies of the writers—prominent in Petrarch's thoughts during his seclusion—give perspective on this difference in time. First, the Ciceronian text most cited is not "De senectute," but rather, *Tusculan Disputations*, for which, Rockwood explains, the frame is a "company of friends [devoting] five days to the consideration of philosophical subjects, after the manner of the Greeks." In his desire to reproduce the Greek language's capacity for both lofty and subtle philosophical discourse, Cicero follows the traditional plan: "a member of the company proposes a topic for consideration and expresses his own opinion in regard to it, which Cato then proceeds to refute." This structure leads to incontestible conclusions and to an atmosphere of oration because "after a few preliminary questions, one speaker discusses the subject with very little interruption or suggestion on the part of his hearers."²¹

Such a situation very likely arises from the relationship of Cicero to Atticus. The orator recognizes that his friend is well-read, but he cannot help being disturbed by Atticus's philosophical stance. Copley asserts that "the Epicurean, with its doctrine that pleasure is the chief good, always worried [Cicero]; it is clear that he felt repelled by the idea that pleasure, however defined, should be the chief aim of life."²² So if Cicero addresses the way to live reasonably and virtu-

²⁰Copley, 1.

²¹Rockwood, xxviii.

²²Copley, xiii.

ously, then choosing the dialogue form allows him to say what he wishes, at the same time deflecting Atticus's suspicions by putting the exhortation in the mouth of another.

On the other hand, Francesco and Agostino do not appear to be at odds when they discuss pleasure:

Francesco. Quod si unus esset amborum finis, non intelligo cur non felicior dici possit qui nunc gaudet doliturus in posterum, quam qui nec sentit in presens gaudem, nec expectat. Nisi te moveat forte quod in finem risus sit luctus acerbior.

(If both kinds of life [i.e., the hedonistic and the ascetic] had one and the same end, I do not see why he should not be counted the happier who enjoys the present time and puts off affliction to another day....unless you are perhaps moved by this consideration that in the end the laughter of the former will be changed to more bitter tears?)²³

S. Augustine. Illud magis quoniam, freno rationis abiecto, quod quidem prorsus in illa suprema voluptate deseritur, gravior casus est, quam, eodem vel tenuiter retento, ex pari precipitio corruentis. Ante omnia tamen a te illud dictum prius attendo, quod de alterius sperandum de alterius conversione desperandum sit.

(Yes, he will, since he abandons the restraint of reason (in pursuit of sensual gratification) and he will fall from his station by degrees, which is worse. But before all, keep in your mind words previously heeded, that you may turn always from despair to hope)²⁴

Not only do the minds seem to meet in this prognosis for hedonists, but the nature of the conversation changes so that, for a moment, the characters are not disputing. This juncture makes perfect sense, however, because the characters agree, not only on the malignant nature of sensuality, but on a source of benign pleasure; one ought to recall the texts one has read before. And this point of accord provides

²³*Secretum*, 60; Draper, 37.

²⁴*Secretum*, 60; my translation, because Draper's (38) is a summary of the text. He has avoided representing a response that is indeed reducible to "yes, much more bitter," but this works against the text. Augustine holds a reputation for his longwindedness, and for doing as he does in this case: answering a straightforward question with a theoretical discourse. I suspect humor in the scene, because at the end of the second day (128), when Augustine asks whether they should stop, Petrarch's response comprehends comments upon the Graces, numerology, Virgil, etc., ad nauseum.

Petrarch with the outermost frame for his *Secretum*, the pleasure of remembering.

The biographical information in Petrarch's *Rerum senilium* XVIII.1, the "Letter to Posterity," clarifies his reasons for drawing so much upon textual "gifts" as a distraction from despair; in this epistle the poet recounts his dilemma in "urbis fastidium atque odium," ("that disgusting, stinking city [Avignon]"):

Illis in locis moram trahenti—dictu mirabile!—uno die et ab urbe Roma senatus, et de Parisius cancellarii studii ad me litere pervenerunt, certatim me ille Romam ille Parisius ad percipiendam lauream poeticam evocantes.

(While staying in that spot, there came to me, strange to say, a letter from the Senate of the city of Rome and from the Chancellor of the University of Paris, vying to invite me, one to Rome and one to Paris, to receive the laurel crown of poetry)²⁵

On these offers the poet deliberates, seeks advice, and chooses Rome, for

romane urbis auctoritatem omnibus preferendum statui.... Unde Neapolim primum petere institui; et veni ad illum summum et regem et philosophum, Robertum, non regno quam literis clariorem, quem unicum regem et scientie amicum et virtutis nostra etas habuit....Audita autem adventus mei causa, mirum in modum exhilaratus est...et forsitan cogitans honorem, quem peterem, sua gloria non vacare, quod ego eum solum iudicem idoneum e cunctis mortalibus elegerem....super eo tandem pro quo veneram certum michi deputavit diem, et a meridie ad vesperam me tenuit. Et quoniam, crescente materia, breve tempus apparuit, duobus proximis diebus idem fecit. Sic triduo excussa ignorantia mea, die tertio me dignum laurea iudicavit (14–16).

(the authority of the city of Rome must have preference above all others....So I decided first to head for Naples, and came to that eminent king and philosopher, Robert, as famous for his culture as for his rule....Having heard the reason for my coming, he was wonderfully exhilarated, and perhaps thinking that the honor I sought would redound to his glory, since of all mortals I had chosen him as a fit judge....he assigned me a day for the primary purpose of my visit, and kept me from noon until evening. Since the subjects grew

²⁵*Letters of Old Age [Rerum senilium libri]*, ed. and trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 14.

and the time seemed short, he did the same on the next two days. Having tested my ignorance for three days, on the third he judged me worthy of the laurel)²⁶

It is not difficult to discern the shadow of this three-day discourse as it colors the *Secretum*, especially after the exchange that concludes the second dialogue:

S. Augustine. Sed quoniam satis hodiernum colloquium processit, pateris ne que restant in diem tertium differi atque ibi finem statui?

(as our converse to-day has lasted a long while, are you willing that we should defer the rest for a third day, when we will bring it to a conclusion?)

Francesco. Ego verum numerum ipsum ternarium tota mente complector; non tamquam tres eo Gratie continentur, quom quia divinitati amicissimum esse constat. Quod non tibi solum aliisque vere religionis professoribus persuasum est, quibus est omnis in Trinitate fiducia, sed ipsis etiam gentium philosophis, a quibus traditur uti eos hoc numero in consecrationibus deorum: quod nec Vigilius meus ignorasse videtur ubi ait: *numero Deus impare gaudet*²⁷.... Tertium igitur deinceps de manibus tuis partem huius tripartiti muneris expecto

(With my whole heart I adore the number three itself, not so much because the three Graces are contained in it, as because it is held to be nearest of kin to the Deity; which is not only the persuasion of yourself and other professors of the true faith, who place all your faith in the Trinity, but also that of Gentile philosophers who have a traditional use of the same number in worshipping their own deities. And my beloved Virgil seems to have been conversant with this when he wrote—'uneven number to the gods is dear'.... *I will therefore presently await from your hands the third part of this your threefold gift*)²⁸

In his gloss of the number three, Petrarch reveals that the artistic tradition of the *Secretum* is consciously Latin, for the importance of the number lies "not so much" in the three Graces, but in the faith in the Deity found in the Latin works of Christian writers, such as Augustine, and also in the religious treatises of Virgil. The detail in his reaction to the number three also accents the contrast between

²⁶Bernardo, 14–16.

²⁷*Eclogue*, vii.75.

²⁸*Secretum*, 128; Draper, 105–6; my emphasis.

Petrarch as poet-writing-prose and Cicero as monologist-writing-dialogue: though Cicero takes an entirely uncharacteristic, congenial tone, presenting himself quite informally to Atticus, Petrarch, even in prose, is wholly attentive to the ramifications of each word spoken.

In addition to emphasizing his authorial prudence, the poet has again drawn attention to the nature of the *Secretum* as a "gift," and, by extension, he recalls the idea of "benefit" that permeates Cicero's gift to Atticus. Furthermore, it would appear that Petrarch imposes his own personality on the structure of this discourse by choosing a span of three days instead of Cicero's five-day disputation. Whereas Cicero aims only to fill a week, the poet finds considerable significance in every detail, even if prose is a more diffuse form—certainly at this stage in its development—than verse. And to ensure that the changed detail receives due attention, Petrarch explicates the symbolic ramifications, in a manner reminiscent of Augustine's exegesis of Genesis at the end of his *Confessions*. It appears that every departure from the popular Graeco-Roman tradition is an opportunity for originality; each such departure must, therefore, be properly accented.

Still, there is the issue of Augustine himself. His contribution to the form of the dialogue is in a way negative, because his *Confessions* possess the status of the greatest work of prose. Somehow Petrarch must assert himself as master over his master—but on the master's rhetorical terms. To this end, the poet chooses the dialogic form over the monologic, a middle ground between Cicero's group of five friendly disputants and Augustine's single, impassioned voice. It seems reasonable to say that Petrarch, the master of form, is also a master of the social form of courtesy, since by altering the form and context of his own prose work, he avoids usurping Augustine altogether. The former master of prose may retain his pride of place in the prose monologue, even if the new master must open a new formal realm to keep him in that place.

Augustine's contribution to Petrarch's dialogue is both acknowledged and honored. Petrarch identifies strongly with him—far more, in fact, than Cicero equates himself to Atticus:

quotiens Confessionum tuarum libros lego, inter duos contrarios affectus, spem videlicet et metum, letis non sine lacrimis interdum legere me arbitrer non alienam sed propriam mee peregrinationis historiam.

(as often as I read the book of your *Confessions*, and am made partaker of your conflict between two contrary emotions, between hope and fear, (and weep as I read), *I seem to be hearing the story of my own self, the story not of another's wandering, but of my own*)²⁹

In this fashion, Petrarch explains the "reward" of Augustine's *Confessions*: he finds it a narrative of his own wandering. And though the poet, for reasons now obvious, may not name Augustine his "magister," he does the next best thing:

Francesco. Quid pares ignoro. Iam nunc tamen frontem meam rubor invasit, experiorque quod, pedagogis obiurgantibus, pueri solent.

(I know not where you want to take me, but already I am aware of the blush mounting to my brow, and I feel like schoolboys in the presence of an angry master...)³⁰

In this figure, Petrarch has come as close to naming Augustine "magister"—as the anonymous scribe called Cicero—as he dares.³¹ He acknowledges both the age and authority to teach in his choice of the term "pedagogue," but the privilege of the more powerful title is not forthcoming. Giving even this much more—a title Dante did not hesitate to bestow on Virgil—would undermine the balance of authority in the dialogue, perhaps reducing the tensions between "hope and fear" that remain, in the end, the human condition, and perhaps wasting the complex potential of the form, transforming the dialogue into another de facto monologue.

The "reward" of the *Secretum*, the way it benefits its reader, appears to have everything to do with its nature as a balanced conversation. As Petrarch encounters, again and again, the voices of authority in his friends Cicero and Augustine, he recognizes them as the voices of fellow human beings; therefore he is able to offer his "own sad experience" as a complement. Unlike these friends, the poet of dualities

²⁹*Secretum*, 42; Draper, 21; my emphasis.

³⁰*Secretum*, 32; Draper, 11.

³¹Though Francesco does call Agostino "pape" (30), I do not think he means this as anything more than an honorific acknowledging Agostino's status as a bishop. Sister Mary Bridget O'Brien's dissertation, "Titles of Address in Christian Latin Epistolography to 543 A. D." (Washington: Catholic University of America Patristic Studies, v. 21, 1930), attributes "papa" and "papas" "to popes and bishops exclusively" (164–65). The difference is worth noting for two reasons: 1) Dante, in similar circumstances (standing before Virgil), says "Tu se lo mio maestro e' l mio autore" (*Inferno* I.85); and 2) for many years the only accessible English translation (Draper's) seems likely to have overrated Francesco's humility by giving the translation as "father" (10).

and doubts insists there is more than one side of any issue: transforming the formal techniques of Cicero's "De senectute" and noting his debt to Augustine's *Confessions*, the writer draws upon the books that have shaped him, but chiefly so that he may shape himself, affirming himself, in the unresolved end:

Francesco. O utinam id michi contingat, quod precaris; ut et duce Deo integer ex tot anfractibus evadam, et, dum vocantem sequor, non excitem ipse pulverem in oculos meos; subsidanque fluctus animi, sileat mundus et fortuna non obstrepat.

(O may it indeed be as you have prayed! May God lead me safe and whole out of so many crooked ways; that I may follow the Voice that calls me; that I may raise up no cloud of dust *before my eyes*; and, with my mind calmed down and at peace, I may hear the world grow still and silent, and the winds of adversity die away).³²

Emphasizing the link between Augustine's *Confessions* and Petrarch's *Secretum*, Kenelm Foster notes in *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist*, that "Petrarch cultivated self-disclosure to an extraordinary degree." Foster continues, though, by accenting the poet's construction of his public image, his textual self, as "modelled on certain cherished examples drawn from his reading."³³ In Francesco's final words, as he still seeks vision for his own eyes, Petrarch affirms his position: he is suspended between the voices that called to him in his past reading and the voice that calls him to his future. Thus Petrarch reproduces in prose the tension and anticipation, awaiting resolution, that he first created in verse, in the *Canzoniere*. From the prose dialogue he enjoys, he may always await the last word.

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³²*Secretum*, 214; Draper, 192; my emphasis.

³³Kenelm Foster, *Petrarch: Poet and Humanist* (Edinburgh University Press, 1984), 2-3.