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2 Implicit Anti-classicism

Imitating and Exhausting Old and New Classicisms in Spiritual Tragedy and Spiritual Petrarchism

2.1 Possibilities and impossibilities of spiritual tragedy (Marc Föcking)

2.1.1 Christian challenges to classicist models of tragedy

In 1542, an extraordinary work appeared in Rome, a Greek tragedy on the suffering and death of Christ called *Χριστὸς πάσχων* or *Sancti Gregorii Nazanzeni theologi tragoedia, Christus patiens*. It was extraordinary because the author was supposedly the Greek Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus (died 390), renowned for his Trinitarian theology, who was awarded the honorary title of “theologos”. Moreover, it was also exceptional because the suffering and death of Christ were not literarised as a vernacular *sacra rappresentazione*, but as a tragedy in the “verses of Euripides” (*Christus paschon* 1542, p. 1r.). And, last but not least, also because the printer and publisher Antonius Bladius dedicated the work to Marcello Cervini, the bibliophile cardinal and confidant of Paul III. Here, the highest theological authorship, the highest classical genre and a great literary dignity went hand in hand with the highest possible position of the protagonist and the highest dedicatee. All this combined to form an unequivocal commitment to spiritual tragedy, in fact to its superiority over secular tragedy. The *Χριστὸς πάσχων* became the parameter of a series of tragedies on the passion and death of Christ in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries: Coriolano Martirano, also a cardinal and participant of the Council, wrote his Latin “tragoedia” *Christus* in 1542, which was published in Naples in 1556, together with his secular tragedies and comedies such as *Medea, Electra, Hypopolitus, Bacchae, Phoenissae, Cyclops, Prometheus, Plutus* (see Fanelli 2011, 280–301). As early as in 1549, the Neapolitan academic Giovanni Domenico di Lega published his tragedy *Morte di Christo*, the first vernacular tragedy on Christ’s death and one that referenced Pseudo-Gregory’s play (see Föcking 2020). Di Lega’s text was followed by the Latin “tragoediae” *Christus patiens* and *Christus Iudex* written by the Jesuit Stefano Tucci, the latter was performed in 1569, but published a good hundred years later (Tuccius 2011). In 1582 Curtio Faiani published his *Passione di nostro signore in verso heroico* in five acts in

1582 (see Nigra 1895), followed by Bonaventura Morone's "tragedia spirituale" *Il mortorio di Christo* eighteen years later (Morone 1611). In 1611 Domenico Treccio wrote his *Christo penoso, e moriente* (Treccio 1611). Many others followed in the Seicento (see Nigra/Orsi 1895).

This invention and implementation of a *tragedia sacra*, which, like the *sacra rappresentazione*, draws its themes from the New and Old Testaments and Christian martyrologies – though its forms are oriented towards the 'rinascita' of Greek and Roman theatre – began in the middle of the sixteenth century, years before the heyday of the Jesuit theatre in the seventeenth century. From the very beginning it was written in the vernacular and in Latin by laymen such as Giovanni di Lega, or members of the secular clergy such as Coriolano Martirano and Paolo Bozzi, and by clergymen of all orders like the Jesuit Stefano Tucci or the Franciscan Bonaventura Morone da Taranto. And it ran parallel and in close debate with one of the most important poetological developments of the secondo Cinquecento: the editing, translation and commentary of Aristotle's *Poetics*, which, together with Alessandro de' Pazzi's Latin translation (1536), the commentaries of Robortello (1548) and Maggi/Lombardi (1550), as well as Bernardo Segni's Italian translation (1549), became the catalyst for an extremely lively poetological discussion in relation to tragedy that determined the second half of the century. Despite all the plurality of different ideas about the contents, forms and functions of tragedy, fed into this discussion from antiquity and late antiquity, one feature remains indispensable: the "exitus infelix" of the tragedy plot (Scaliger 1994–2011, I, 132). The protagonists are for their most part neither flawless nor depraved, but "medius inter bonum et malum" (Robortello 1548/1968, 130, after *Poetics* 13, 1453a8–10). They fall into misfortune and death due to individual wrongdoing stemming from "imprudencia" or "ignorantia" (Maggi/Lombardi 1550/1969, 155).

These characteristics of a tragedy based on classical models and Aristotelian theories, but also on those put forward by Plato, Horatius, Diomedes, etc., which in the Cinquecento were presented in various shades and interpretations, are challenged by a spiritual tragedy in which Christ, both true God and true man, becomes in everything equal to man "absque paccato" (Hebr 4:14): he can neither be a 'middle hero' of the Aristotelian line of argumentation, nor is his *exitus* through crucifixion theologically an *exitus infelix*, since his sacrifice is followed by the resurrection and redemption of sinful man. What was true of Christ as the first martyr also applies to all martyrs after him: they may have human faults, but misfortune has not fallen upon them out of their own "imprudencia" or "ignorantia" (Maggi/Lombardi 1550/1969, 155). Nor is their death a misfortune or a punishment at all, but the first step towards happiness and the path to salvation since, according to the Christian view of the Apostle

Paul, the values of life and death are reversed: “Mihi enim vivere Christus est, et mori lucrum” (Phil 1:21).

Can there be a Christian tragedy in the Cinquecento at all, or is Christian tragedy not an oxymoron? Are Christian protagonists, for whom even the most terrible martyrdom is enough to bring happiness in the afterlife and who are above any *mediocritas*, compatible with the poetics of the secular tragedy in Cinquecento classicism? The writers of spiritual tragedies answered these questions in the affirmative and called into question whether a Christian tragedy can only be an explicitly anti-classical one, based on a completely different concept of tragedy. Rather, they strived to position themselves within what was usually labelled by them an ‘Aristotelian’ and classicist frame of reference, yet creatively using its gaps, contradictions and alternative theories to accommodate the specifically Christian semantics of the Bible and of church history into tragedies that want to be ‘classicist’, but which, underhandedly, modify, extend and overstretch the theoretical framework in such a way as that the result can be described as ‘implicitly anti-classicist’.

2.1.2 Three perspectives

The answer to this seeming contradiction, which Corneille was not the first to point out in his examination of the *Polyeucte* (“si la Passion de Jésus-Christ et les martyres des saints doivent être exclus du théâtre à cause qu’ils passent cette médiocre bonté”, Corneille 1968, II, 8) differs depending on how one defines classicism and classicist tragedy. At least three different distinct viewpoints exist: 1. a panoramic-retrospective one, which leans towards an essentialist concept of tragedy and the tragic, historically drawing on seventeenth-century French classicism. 2. one that is diametrically opposed to it, but is equally retrospective ‘from below’, mapping the poetological landscape of Cinquecento tragedy not only as plural, but as pluralistic, thus eliminating any notion of classicism. 3. a historical-contextual participant one of authors of the *tragedia sacra*, as well as of poetologists of the Cinquecento, registering every possible resistance of the secular and especially the classical or archaising norms to Christian content and function. Taking these ideas as a starting point, a complex of norms emerges *ex negativo*, for which a contemporary term comparable to ‘classicism’ is not available, but which nevertheless finds its labels implying a normativity of classical antiquity and its revitalisation in the Cinquecento à la “i greci legga chi ciò brama” (Di Lega 1549, s.p.) or “i precetti di Aristotile” (Grillo 1616, 512).

2.1.2.1 'Classicist' essentialism and the impossibility of spiritual tragedies

A simultaneously essentialist, reductive, anachronistic and retrospective conception of tragedy attributes on the one hand the only 'true' and 'genuine' tragedy to Greek antiquity ("Il n'y a qu'une tragédie au monde, c'est la grecque", Festugière 1969, 11), on the other hand, it is based on the theatrical norms of the French *siècle classique* in the seventeenth century. If these norms are projected back to conditions prevalent during the sixteenth century in Italy, the question of compatibility or incompatibility between tragedy and Christian themes can only lead to the exclusion of the latter. The 'classicist' impossibility of Christian tragedy in this sense was already formulated by Saint-Évremond at the end of the seventeenth century, polemicizing against Corneille: "Le Théâtre perd tout son agrément dans la représentation des choses saintes, et les choses saintes perdent beaucoup de la religieuse opinion qu'on leur doit, quand on les représente sur le Théâtre" (Saint-Évremond 1969, IV, 174–175). In 1743, the Jesuit Francesco Saverio Quadrio turned against the tradition of Jesuit tragedy of his own order (and also against Corneille's *Polyeucte*) with an impetus typical for the Enlightenment when he declared that tragedy required *catharsis* through and from "compassione, e il terrore". Therefore, the "martiri, e i Santi, esser non possono soggetti capaci di Tragedia", because their fate made the audience rather "temerarii, e fanatici, che [. . .] virtuosi, e saggi" (Quadrio 1743, 232). A good twenty years later, Lessing, like Quadrio, also takes a sceptical view of the possibility of Christian tragedy, first because of the absence of *catharsis*, but even more so because of the impossibility of a failing of the Christian protagonist. After all, he (or she) is destined for salvation and heavenly bliss:

Selbst der Polyeukt des Corneille ist [. . .] tadelhaft; [. . .] so dürfte die erste Tragödie, die den Namen einer christlichen verdienet, ohne Zweifel noch zu erwarten sein. Ich meine ein Stück, in welchem einzig der Christ als Christ uns interessiert. Ist ein solches Stück aber auch wohl möglich? Ist der Charakter des wahren Christen nicht etwa ganz untheatralisch? Streiten nicht die stille Gelassenheit, die unveränderliche Sanftmut, die seine wesentlichsten Züge sind, mit dem ganzen Geschäfte der Tragödie, welche Leidenschaften durch Leidenschaften zu reinigen sucht? [. . .] Bis ein Werk des Genies [. . .] diese Bedenklichkeiten unwidersprechlich widerlegt, wäre also mein Rat: – man ließe alle bisherigen christlichen Trauerspiele unaufgeführt. (Lessing 1967, 128f.).

Even Corneille's Polyeukt is [. . .] blameworthy; [...] so the first tragedy that deserves the name of being Christian is undoubtedly still to be expected. I mean a play in which only the Christian as Christian interests us. But is such a play possible at all? Is not the character of the true Christian quite untheatrical? Do not the quiet composure, the unchanging gentleness which are his most essential traits, conflict with the whole business of tragedy, which seeks to purify passions by passions? [. . .] Until a work of genius [. . .] refutes these doubts, my advice would therefore be: – leave all previous Christian tragedies unperformed. (my translation)

Departing from Lessing, this view of the impossibility of Christian tragedy extends to Schiller's essay "On the Sublime", which is based on the inevitability of a death not transcended by Christian metaphysics (Hoxby 2015, 15). There is also Goethe's dictum to F. von Müller on 6 June 1824 "Everything that is tragic is founded on an unbalanced opposition. As soon as balance occurs or is possible, the tragic disappears" (Goethe 1950, 349, my translation). Finally, the theory is taken up by I.A. Richards and George Steiner's *The Death of Tragedy* (1968): any "happy ending" would destroy the tragic, the "norm of tragedy" is contradicted by any form of "compensation", and since, as with Schiller, Christianity offers precisely this compensation through eternal life, there can be "no specific Christian mode of tragic drama even in the noontime of faith [. . .]. Christianity is an anti-tragic vision of the world" (Steiner 1968, 332, see Hoxby 2015, 14–26). In a similarly essentialist manner, Charles Mazouer decrees as late as in 2015: "Il ne peut donc y avoir, à la vérité, de tragique biblique, dès l'Ancien Testament. La Loi Nouvelle, qui propose un Dieu uniquement défini par l'Amour, répugne encore plus au tragique; le tragique chrétien est encore plus impensable que le tragique biblique" (Mazouer 2015, 406).

This master narrative of (neo-)ancient tragedy vs. Christian anti-tragedy is combined in Corneille ("mediocré bonté"), Lessing ("passions purified by passions") and Steiner ("a Christian hero can be an occasion for sorrow but not for tragedy", Steiner 1968, 332) with a set of specific elements that are *grosso modo* associated with "neo-Aristotelian precepts" (Steiner 1968, 24) and with the term "classicist"/"classicism" (e. g., Steiner 1968, 24). Lohse (2015, 13–59 et passim) meticulously traces the history of this narrowing identification of classicism and Aristotelian poetics, common in twentieth-century Renaissance scholarship, and, in particular, the retrojection of the normative structure of, for example, the *trois unités* of seventeenth-century French classicism onto the poetological and theatrical practices of sixteenth-century Italy, beginning as early as in the seventeenth century (see Lohse 2015, 31): in nineteenth-century criticism – for instance in De Sanctis (1983 II 683) – the "scrivere classico" and an 'Aristotelian' monopoly on norms coagulate into a fixed binomial, one that is the same in influential studies, especially those carried out by Joel Spingarn's *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (Spingarn 1899/1924), Bernard Weinberg's *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Weinberg 1961) and Marvin T. Herrick's *Italian Tragedy in the Renaissance* (1965). The validity of this binomial has been recounted in Italian literary studies since the 1970s (e.g. Ariani 1974, 179; Battaglia/Mazzacurati 1974, 128; Borsellino 1983, 72; Tateo 1996, 482), as well as in German studies (Drost 1980, 481; Höhle 1984, 52). This amalgam of "Aristotelian rules and neoclassical practice" (Herrick 1965, 265) can only define the *tragedia sacra* as a paradox and the texts, largely ignored by scholarship and never promoted to the

canon of Italian tragedies of the Cinquecento, only as a-classical or anti-classical pseudo-tragedies. They have found no place in relevant research studies (eg. Ariani 1976; Bragantini 2001) or in anthologies (Ariani [ed.] 1977) on Italian Cinquecento tragedy.

2.1.2.2 Sceptical dismantling of an Aristotelian theoretical framework

Justified and well-founded doubts about the concept of a poetological Aristotelianism, which would have given the tragedy production of the secondo Cinquecento a rigid and comprehensive system of norms, can be found in isolated studies as early on as in the 1930s to 1960s (Zonta 1934; Tigerstedt 1968), then increasingly since the 1970s (Tatarkiewicz 1970/1980, III, 214–250). It became apparent that the *Poetics* was of little use as a binding normative repertoire and that contemporary commentaries, poetics and discussions were “inventive, exploratory, even permissive in their dilation of Aristotle” (Cave 1988, 83). Widely available since 1538 (Pazzi’s Latin translation) and 1548 (Robortello’s commentary) at the latest, the *Poetics* became a vanishing point for a multitude of quite different poetological concepts following those put forward by Plato, Diomedes, Donatus, and, in particular, Horace (Tatarkiewicz 1970/1980, III, 215–217; Hoxby 2015, 57–108; Lohse 2015), which fuelled the poetics and the practice of tragedy in the early Cinquecento. They used “Aristotle’s terms as a scaffold on which to hang a vast collection of ancient testimonies that elucidated, complicated, or contradicted Aristotle” (Hoxby 2015, 57). Instead of extrapolating “Aristotelian rules” (Herrick 1965, 265), which supposedly stemmed directly from the *Poetics*, scholars now map the various layers of poetological knowledge that enter into the readings and interpretations of Aristotle’s *Poetics* and reconstruct their horizons of an understanding – one that is far from being consensual. The darkness of the *Poetics*, according to Giraldis (1543, 2), the “cose oscure scritte da Aristotele” (Castelvetro 1570, dedica s.p.) and its sketchiness (“prima forma rozza, imperfetta, & non polita”, Castelvetro 1570, dedica, s.p.) could for this very reason become a motor for commentary and theory without producing uniform interpretations. A type of research that utilises a perspective that gets up close and personal so to speak on the theoretical debates of the secondo Cinquecento, discovers a teeming world full of differences, contradictions, misinterpretations, and idiosyncrasies, for which the label of poetological Aristotelianism is just as unsuitable as that of a ‘classicism’ impregnated with it and its French classicistic aftermath. Lohse (2015, 266) considers “the talk of ‘classicism’ [. . .] largely [to be] useless in the context of a formation of modern tragedy”, and not only that: the grassroots view of theoretical discussions and tragedy production dissolving into myriads of

differences, produces an agnostic position of doubt about the “assertion [. . .], that the Renaissance had a primary interest in ‘normative fixation’ [Buck 1972, IX, 40]” (Lohse 2015, 101, my translation). Thus, the interplay of plurality and its coping strategies, which have been recognised as one of the essential signatures of the Cinquecento (see Stempel/Stierle 1987; Hempfer 1993b; Föcking/Huss 2003; Müller/Oesterreicher/Vollhardt 2010; Beuvier etc. 2021), and for which precisely the authority of Aristotle’s *Poetics* releasing and binding the plural theoretical positions is good evidence, is replaced by the pluralism of hierarchically indistinct phenomena that are not accessible to any unifying principle whatsoever. Whereas the retrospective approach, working with the Aristotelian/classical binomial, inevitably leads to the opposition of *tragedia* and *sacro*, and to the theoretical impossibility of the *tragedia sacra*, the problem is simply non-existent from a grassroots viewpoint, simply because the norms of a (mutual) exclusion have been dissolved. This lack of awareness of the problem then leads to the fact that sacred theatre – *tragedia sacra* as well as *sacra rappresentazione* – is hardly considered to be a separate problem area of Cinquecento theatre and is consequently (as for Lohse) “only selectively taken into account” (Lohse 2015, 59, n.186).

2.1.2.3 The *Poetics* as a frame of reference and the participant perspective

The third view of the problems surrounding the *tragedia sacra*, as it is to be dealt with subsequently, is that of the participant’s perspective. From this perspective, the view from ‘above’/‘outside’ of the poetological discussion of the secondo Cinquecento is combined with that from ‘within’/‘below’: the authors of *tragedie sacre* constantly name a decidedly ‘Aristotelian’ framework of norms, which raises questions relating to the justification and validity of their own enterprise, but at the same time, by grasping the chances of contemporary interpretative diversity, they try to find a place within (or at least on the margins of) a poetological spectrum flagged as conforming to Aristotle.

Far from allowing an Aristotelian bias to be imposed on them only retrospectively, authors of *tragedie sacre* and spiritual poetologists of the second Cinquecento name first “i greci”, and then, in a monopolising way, Aristotle as the frame of reference for their own reflections on sacred tragedy. An explicit distinction from a complex of norms that can be traced back to ancient tragedy and poetics is usually made. For Giovan Domenico di Lega’s *Morte di Cristo* (1549), “i Greci [. . .] e gli altri/C’hanno il Tragico dir tanto honorato” (di Lega 1549, s.p. [prologo]) form the horizon of expectation, whereby basic Aristotelian issues (here from *Poetics* cap. 9, 1451b) of this “Tragico dir” are invoked by neuralgic terms such as “se d’Historia/O di fabula narrasi l’effetto”. A similar *recusatio*

is also used by Stefano Tucci in the two prologues of *Christus iudex* dating from 1569 and 1572: “Non damus Oedipodas, non eruta Pergama Grai[s],/[. . .]/ Mendacem haud poterant divina oracula vatem/nec rerum pietas ethnica iura pati” (Tuccius 2011, 148), whereby the pagan “vates mendax” Aristotle, in the version which was to be performed in front of Pope Gregory XIII in Rome (1572), is indeed used as an advocate of his own metrical decision against the iamb: “Cur si neque ars neque ipse Aristoteles vetat [. . .]” (Tuccius 2011, 272). In the *Bibliotheca selecta* (1593), his confrere Antonio Possevino, despite also referring to Horace “et alij”, deals solely with what “pleases Aristotle” (“sicuti Aristoteli placet”, Possevino 1593, 289). The secular cleric Paolo Bozzi, who published his Italian version of *Christus Iudex* in 1596, ponders in the preface the (denied) compatibility with the “precetti di quel valente filosofo” (Bozzi 1596, s.p. [dedica]). At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Benedictine Angelo Grillo, in his detailed poetological evaluation of Malatesta Porta’s plays *I santi innocenti* (1604), did not call into doubt that “Aristotele è oracolo delle scuole”, which raised the question: “se si possano fare Tragedie al modo Christiano di uomini Santi, salvi i precetti di Aristotele” (Grillo 1616, 530, 512). Porta himself raised this question polemically in the preface to his play labelled “tragedia”: he believed he was dreaming with his eyes open, “udendo, ch’altri creda, & affermi, e v’habbia chi per aventura scriva, che non siano i Santi nostri Martiri soggetti di nobile Tragedia, e che non bene si possano i loro martiri trattare conforme à poetici precetti” (Porta 1604, All’illustre [. . .] Ludovico Marchiselli [s.p.]).

Ten years later, the Franciscan Bonaventura Morone, in the preface to his *La Giustina. Tragedia spirituale*, again addressed the question of the relevance of the “regole d’Aristotele” for his martyr drama (Morone 1634/1612, A’suoi carissimi Tarantini [s.p.]). As early on as 1600, in *Il mortorio di Christo*, he had discussed the compatibility of Judas’ stage suicide with “le regole d’Aristotele” (Morone 1620/1611, 160). The “precetti”, “regole” or even “prohibitions” (“Aristoteles vetat”, Tuccius 2011, 272) are obviously understood by the authors to be normative standards for the composition of tragedies, which for them seem to have been passed down directly from the *Poetics*, mostly without being filtered through contemporary commentaries or *sposizioni*. Grillo alone mentioned “Castelvetro, & da altri espositori” alongside the “precetti d’Aristotele” (Grillo 1616, 512). The awareness of the presence of *regole*, which at the end of the century is strongly linked to the filtering of Aristotelian poetics through Castelvetro’s *La poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta* (1570), is thus as clearly present on this side of the argument thanks to Grillo as on the other side thanks to Giovanni Battista Marino: in his letter to Gierolamo Preti in 1624, he still ascribed to the “mente d’Aristotele” and the “cacciare il naso dentro al Castelvetro” the normative authority of the “regole”, which one must know in order to be able to break them (Marino 1967, 227–228). The sacred

tragedians neither joined Marino's position of rule breaking, nor the minority position of an irregular, non-Aristotelian and anti-normative poetics, such as that of the Dominican Tommaso Campanella, who was repeatedly accused of heresy by the Inquisition and who stated in his *Poetica italiana* 1596: "chi ha paura di trasgredire li precetti è umile, basso, e vile dicitore" (Campanella 1977, 363). Instead, they named (and integrated) the "regole" and "precetti", especially where the "aristotelico teatro" (Grillo 1616, 530) poses problems for the dramatisation of sacred material. From this description of the problem arises, *ex negativo*, the normative horizon against which and with which the *tragedia sacra* has to operate.

There is an indisputable awareness of the genre 'tragedy' and its differences from the traditional *sacra rappresentazione*, which the authors display with their choice of the genre designation 'tragedia', 'tragedia sacra' or 'tragedia spirituale'. An analysis of the genre designations of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century tragedy texts listed in EDIT 16 (<https://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/>) and elsewhere (e.g. see Riccoboni 1730, 101–130; Quadrio 1743, 61–87; Haym 1771, 273–308; Lohse 2015, 670–671) shows that plays labelled as 'sacra rappresentazione' appear in large numbers throughout the Cinquecento and Seicento, but that genre designations as 'commedia spirituale' or 'tragedia spirituale/sacra' only began to emerge slowly after the middle of the century (Cox 2020, 18), i.e. alongside the beginning of the peak phase of the reception of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Terminological uncertainties persist, however: D'Ancona (1891, 379) recorded an illuminatingly unsuccessful attempt to designate a "Commedia ovvero Tragedia di Santa Teodora" (1554) in his study of southern Italian *sacre rappresentazioni*. The problem of a worldly unhappy ending with a simultaneous metaphysical happy ending of heavenly reward is directly reflected in the title and already marks one of the main problems within this discussion. In 1549, Giovanni di Lega chose the simple title "Tragedia" for *Morte di Christo*, but because of the "felice morte" he also used the generic title "Tragicomedia" (di Lega 1549, Al signor Leonardo Curzi, s.p.). Towards the end of the century, however, the generic title 'tragedia sacra/tragedia spirituale' or even "Hiero-Tragedia" had become established. Liviera, who coined the term "Hiero-Tragedia" in 1593, marks the consciousness of difference to the "Tragedie ordinarie" (Liviera 1593/1605, "All'Illustriss. Signor Marino Grimani, s.p.), for example, in relation to the *exitus infelix/felix*, but at the same time also recognised the observance of essentially other elements of the expectation horizon of tragedy: the *sacro* is not merely an addition to the *tragedia*, but it intervenes into its structure in a modifying fashion. With the postponement of more than half a century, a similar differentiation and modification of classicist genre designations was thus realized in the field of sacred drama, as well as in the sacred lyric poetry of the 1540s, which expanded the designation 'rime' referring to Petrarch's canonisation to 'rime spirituali/rime sacre', signalling at the same time *imitatio* and a

specifically Christian licence to semantic change (see Föcking 1994, 54–61; Föcking, “Rime spirituali 1550”, in course of print a; Fliege, below).

The test here is the scrupulous attitude of Paolo Bozzi, who published a classicist tragedy *Cratasiclea* in 1591 (see Lohse 2015, 373–376). However, he called his Italian version of Stefano Tucci’s Latin “tragedia” *Christus iudex* (1569/1572) in 1596 a “semplice rappresentazione”: his precise knowledge of secular tragedy poetics left him no choice in view of the subject matter, which for him was not suitable for tragedy: “[N]ostra intentione non è stata di fare una Tragedia, ò Comedia (non sofferendo ciò il soggetto” (Bozzi 1596, dedica s. p., cf. Föcking in course of print b).

What elements this horizon of expectation, mostly traced back to the “precetti” or “regole d’Aristotele”, does embrace and what problems it raises for the sacred tragedy of the second half of the Cinquecento, can be seen in the poetological remarks made by Giovan Domenico di Lega about *La morte di Christo*, the archetype of the vernacular Christ tragedies towards the middle of the century, Angelo Grillo’s letters on Malatesta Porta’s *I santi innocenti* a good 50 years later (Porta 1604; Grillo 1616), as well as a number of other texts. Di Lega drew heavily on his knowledge of ancient tragedies (*Christus paschon*) as well as vernacular secular tragedies, especially the quite controversial tragedies of Giraldi Cinzio, interspersed with some elements of pre-Aristotelian and Aristotelian theories. It thus marked the tentative beginning of a poetological discussion, at the argumentative end of which are Grillo’s expositions of Malatesta Porta’s *Tragedia sacra I santi innocenti* of 1604 (see Apollonio 2007, Sarnelli 2009, Nendza 2020, 179–184). At about the end of the Cinquecento’s theory debates, Grillo offered a consolidated theoretical arsenal of “precetti d’Aristotele” and an awareness of their being filtered by “Castelvetro, & da altri espositori” (Grillo 1616, p. 512). Common to all authors, however, is the question, “se si possono fare Tragedie al modo Christiano di uomini Santi, salvi i precetti di Aristotele” (Grillo 1616, 512).

Obviously, the primary challenge for the authors of spiritual tragedies is the laying out of the tragic protagonists. For the Neapolitan academic Giovan Domenico di Lega, the “morte di terren Principi” (di Lega 1549, s.p.) is the nucleus of tragedy. Thus, di Lega did not start with the morally determined quality of the protagonist of the *Poetics* (1453a16–18), but rather with the determination of the protagonist by a high social status according to the humanist rhetoric and its coupling of social hierarchy and levels of styles which was decisive for the tragedies dating from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and also present in the later period, such as in Scaliger (“reges, principes ex urbibus, arcibus, castris; principia sedatoria, exitus horribiles; oratio gravis, culta, a vulgi dictione aversa; tota facies anxia; metus, minae, exsilia, mortes”, Scaliger 1994, I, 130).

For di Lega, Christ as the protagonist of tragedy was not a fundamental problem because, as the Prince of Heaven, he occupied the highest rank of all the “principi”: “Che in essa non la morte di terren Principi, ne i successi degli huomini, ma l’unico patre, e morire di Gesù Christo figliuol di Dio si contiene” (di Lega 1549, s.p [I]).

In Sebastiano Minturno, a cardinal and author of two tracts on poetry, equipped with a keen eye for the relationship between classicist poetics and spiritual themes, one of the participants of the dialogue *De Poeta* (1559), Vopiscus, followed a similar path of tying the “magnificum, & praeclarum” to “illustres personae” (Minturno 1559/1970, 179). But this “illustre” should not necessarily be understood in terms of status, and it is Aristotelian because the author combined it with the protagonist’s *mediocritas* alien to the rhetorical-humanist conception of tragedy. The protagonist of tragedy, according to Vopiscus, “neque summa probitate excellat neque improbitate sua”. For Minturno, the justification for this medium character lies in the power of identification that can thereby be established with the tragic hero, “cum autem bonis quidem ipsi nos dispares esse agoscamus, mali autem dissimiles nostrum habeantur” (Minturno 1559/1970, 180) – and it is for this reason that misfortune befalls the protagonists due to human error (“errore quodam humano”), which could happen to anyone (see Kappl 2006, 248). Against this background, Vopiscus’ respondent Summontius states that the death of Christ cannot be “tragicè deploranda” (Minturno 1559/1970, 182). The narrow limits (“angustiores [. . .] fines”) of the theory of tragedy going back to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, presented by Vopiscus, is thus clearly named as a reason for excluding a Christian tragedy.

Torquato Tasso also implicitly argues for this argument in the *Discorsi dell’arte poetica e in particolare sopra il poema eroico* (1587): he assigns different qualities to the “illustre [. . .] azione del tragico e quella dell’epico”. To the “tragico” he allots an action characterised by “inespettata e subita mutazion di fortuna” of “persone né buone né cattive” and which excites “orrore e misericordia”. The “epico” on the contrary demands “nelle persone il sommo delle virtù” and “eccelsa virtù bellica, sopra i fatti di cortesia”, but also “di pietà, di religione” (Tasso 1977, 14). This allows Tasso to realise a spiritual epic “per esaltazione della Fede di Cristo” (Tasso 1977, 16), but not a tragedy in which either Christ or martyrs act as protagonists.

Two decades later, this recourse to the middle hero can also be found in Angelo Grillo’s letters to Malatesta Porta on his *Tragedia spirituale I santi innocenti* (1604) and to Bernardino Steffonio S.J., with *Crispus. Tragoedia* (1597), one of the best-known exponents of Jesuit drama at the turn of the century (Steffonio 1998): even at the beginning of the seventeenth century, “Aristotile [è] [. . .] oracolo delle scuole” (Grillo 1616, 530) and the passage of the *Poetics* (1453a16–18) for

the qualification of the protagonist “di mezzana costume, cioè né molto buona, né molto rea” (Grillo 1616, 512) is still relevant. Grillo, however, does not believe that this should be defined in an identificatory way, but in terms of a moderation of the “commiseratione” which should be achieved according to aesthetics of emotion: the suffering of a purely good figure would turn the spectator against the injustice of fate. Grillo insists that this point of view is the right one, arguing against Castelvetro’s belief that the common people, believing in divine justice, would assume that some guilt lies behind every misfortune (Castelvetro 1570, 154v.), even in the case of an – almost – perfect martyr. The suffering of the purely evil protagonists, on the other hand, would be perceived as just punishment and the public would be led to gloat in the face of his suffering (“goderrebbe del male altrui”, Grillo 1616, 512). Grillo also justifies the specifically social fixation of the protagonists as “Eroi, & in Principi, & altre persone di Regio affare” founded on the greatest possible effectiveness of the plot and its ability to arouse “diletto”. Grillo seems to have adopted the link between character and plot design and the arousal of the greatest possible “diletto” from Castelvetro (1570, 164r., 383v.), who obviously serves as his primary author of reference. Only “Eroi, & Principi” would not be prepared for a “sciagurato fine” due to their high status, which could explain why their surprise at their own fall generated the greatest interest from and pleasure for the audience:

Onde sentendo il popolo l’infelice fine di simili personaggi, quanto più gli riesce stravagante, & fiero, tanto maggiormente si diletta d’intendere incontra tali in persone grandi, & che non havrebbero mai pensato à caduta sì grave (Grillo 1616, 513)

This demand for a tragic fall from a metaphorical great height cannot apply to Christ or martyrs, since they hand themselves over to suffering and death with their eyes open so that their “caduta sì grave” cannot surprise anyone – neither protagonists nor spectators.

In contrast to the rhetorical and social “illustre” of di Lega, for Grillo the susceptibility of tragic figures to fault follows from this “mezzano costume”: misfortune befalls them through a “peccato” or “reato” (“che volendo Aristotele reato nella persona tragica principale”, Grillo 1616, 513). Although this “peccato” is different from Minturno’s blurred statement of “a certain human error” (“errore quodam humano”, Minturno 1559/1970, 180), it nevertheless follows for the Benedictine that there seems to be no “Tragedie al modo Christiano” for immaculate “huomini Santi, salvi i precetti di Aristotile [. . .]” (Grillo 1616, 512) – but only “à prima vista”.

The “tragedie al modo Christiano” are confronted with a further problem of Aristotelian requirements, relating to the question of reference to historical reality. Aristotle was not very coherent in his writings on this problem, formulating the opposition of historiography and poetry in the ninth chapter of the *Poetics*, but also leaving it up to the authors of tragedies to adhere to historical material in order to achieve probability (*Poetics* 1451b16–20). Against this background, the rhetorical consensus of the first half of the century, according to which the material of tragedy must be guaranteed by history or literary tradition, dissolved towards the middle of the century (Lohse 2010, 211–232). From that time onwards, Aristotle’s commentators and poeticsians emphasised the role of imagination, the stronger role of fiction justified by the concept of *imitatio* of possible human actions, and the stronger stage effectiveness of the “novità del soggetto” of “favole finte” (Giraldi 1554, 12f.). The problematic nature of this ‘modern’ Aristotelian requirement for tragedy, which competed further with the traditional humanist view “ex historiis argumenta” advocated, for example, by Scaliger in the second half of the century (Scaliger 1994–2011, III, 27), was already addressed by di Lega, when in the prologue to *La morte di Christo* he alluded to the current discussion “se d’Historia/O di fabula narrasi l’effetto” (di Lega 1549, s. p. [2]).

Twenty years later, for Castelvetro the alternative *historia/favola* shifted towards a preference for invented material as the subject matter of poetry, and of epic and tragedy in particular. He took the position that “poesia (. . .) diletta assai piu che non fa l’historia delle cose avvenute” (Castelvetro 1570, 17r.). But when he nevertheless envisaged historical material as appropriate to tragedy (“le tragedie [. . .] deono essere composte d’accidenti [. . .] che si possono domandare historici”, Castelvetro 1570, 104v.), he showed that facticity of the historical was not a value in itself, but that historical plots served to heighten and facilitate the probable, especially in tragedy with its sublime personnel: “Non ci possiamo imaginare un re che non sia stato, ne attribuirgli alcuna attione” (Castelvetro 1570, 104v.) Historical subjects, however, can never be more than the nucleus of a plot, which is then subjected to the modes of representation of poetry (and not historiography). Poets who used the “materia d’historia” in the mode of the historian would do so out of an inability to “ben trovare cose simili al vero, & rassomigliarle”, or would even have to accept accusations of fraudulent intentions if they were hiding historical material under “la scorza, & col colore delle parole poetiche” (Castelvetro 1570, 16r.–v.). This condemnation therefore applied to Latin authors such as Silius Italicus and Lukan, but also to his contemporary Girolamo Fracastoro, who he claimed should be expelled from the “schiera de poeti” and deprived of the “glorioso titolo della poesia” because of his Latin biblical epic *Josephe* (posth. 1555),

percio hanno trattata materia nelle loro scritture trattata prima dagl'historici, & quando non fosse anchora stata prima trattata dagl'historici, basta bene, che fosse prima avvenuta, & non imaginata da loro (Castelvetro 1570, 16r.-v.).

Castelvetro repeated this strict judgement, which competed with other declarations by Castelvetro and Torquato Tasso (cf. Lohse 2010, 217) that were oriented towards the *historia* of tragedy, although 'at least', albeit in a patronising manner, he did not take away Fracastoro's title of historian ("Il che è lode non picciola", Castelvetro 1570, 105r.-v.). His rebuke that Marco Girolamo Vida in his Christ Epic *Christias* (1535) narrated "le molte & miracolose attioni di Christo [. . .] come facevano que poeti biasimati da Aristotile", namely without establishing a unity of the *favola* beyond the figure of Christ (Castelvetro 1570, 98v.), amounted to an equation of the New Testament theme of Christ and *historia*: Vida would not tell his story like a "poeta", but like a historian "nell'historie, nelle quali si congiungono piu attioni diverse insieme" and in which "si convenga narrare tutte le cose avvenute in un tempo" (Castelvetro 1570, 280v.).

The consequences of this painful verdict of Castelvetro against the *poemata sacra*, passed as 'Aristotelian', did not go unnoticed by ecclesiastical authors such as the Jesuit Antonio Possevino in his *Bibliotheca selecta* dating from 1593: as the "poetica Ethnicorum" demanded "una unius actio insignis tota" of a fictional, non-historical action ("omnis inveniend[o] [. . .] ne cum historia confundi videatur", Possevino 1593, 289), Aristotelians disregard Ennius "vel Vida, qui Chriti (sic) Domini vitam carmine heroico cecinit". Although Possevino named Aristotle, Horace "et alij" as authorities of the "poetica Ethnicorum", for him the "praecepta" that hindered Christian material had clearly been narrowed down to those of Aristotelian poetics ("sicuti Aristoteli placet", 289), but seen through Castelvetro's eyes. That this also provided an argument against Christ's capacity for tragedy and the *Christus patiens* of Ps.-Gregory of Nazianzus ("nec item habetur apud eosdem absolutus Tragicus, qui Christus patientem inscripsit Tragœdium suam") was perfectly clear to the Jesuit.

Additionally, spiritual authors viewed it as the task of a (Christian) tragedy not to describe, like a historian, the completeness, unconnectedness and temporal-spatial extension of manifold actions, but to condense them, like any "poeta", into a plot line concentrated in space and time. *Ex negativo*, this meant for Paolo Bozzi that the subject of the rise and fall of the Antichrist and the Last Judgment, which is then set in motion by completely different protagonists – Christ and his angels – was not suitable for tragedy and could consequently only be treated as a "semplice rappresentazine". According to the "insegnamenti d'Aristotile", the action of the tragedy should last "non pur d'un giro di Sole" (Bozzi 1596, dedica, s.p.). This is not given in his *Giudicio universale*, so the play is not a tragedy. Bozzi suggested that the unity of time "as far

as possible within a single Sun's Circulation" (*Poetics* 144b10), which in Aristotle derives from the unity of action, becomes an autonomous characteristic of tragedy. Here, Castelvetro's reversal of reasoning is possibly at play, as it was his belief that the unity of space and time follow on from the "luogo stretto" of the stage and how receptive a given audience is, and from which the unity of the plot is then derived (Castelvetro 1570, 212r.; cf. Kappl 2006, 176). At the end of the century the unity of time and place already appeared to be a dominant stage-norm, independent from the unity of plot, and this is why Bonaventura Morone used it to justify, why he had chosen to concentrate time and place within the plot of *La Giustina. Tragedia spirituale* (1634/1612) completely to Antioch against the historical facts of the martyr story of Giustina and Cipriano: because of the "luogo stretto [del] palco"

io sono forzato cominciare, e finire in Antioch tutto il processo; e fingo esser occorsa in un medesimo giorno la conversione, e la morte di Cipriano: Perche né in un medesimo Theatro si potevano fingere due cittadi, né in una stessa tragedia rappresentare cose, che avvennero in tempo diverso, fra lo spatio d'alcuni anni (Morone 1634/1612, A' suoi carissimi Tarentini, s. p.)

In other respects, too, Castelvetro's emphasis on what could and consequently could not be portrayed in accordance with stage practice was as important as problematical for the sacred authors. It was not for the reasons of social *bien-séance*, later on important in the French seventeenth century, but for those of *verosimile* in the sense of illusion-promoting feasibility on the stage that he rejects the representation of explosive cruelties, torture and executions – and also the Crucifixion:

Perciò che l'esperienza ha mostrato che simili crudeltà, & horribilità non si possono verisimilmente far vedere in atto, & che fanno anzi ridere che piangere & che producono non effetto di tragedia ma di commedia, & se alcuno dubitasse ritrovisi alla rappresentazione della passione di nostro signore dove cio s'usa e spetialmente a Roma & contenga le risa se può. (Castelvetro 1570, 161r.).

One background to this exclusion of stage deaths discussed in the classicist theatre poetics of the Cinquecento (see Carta 2018) is not so much Aristotle's *Poetics*, which considers the representation of death on stage to be conducive to pathos. But this only holds true when the portrayal of death and cruelty takes place amongst close relatives and when it does not interfere with the likelihood of the representation itself (*Poetics* 1452b 11–13; 1453b 7; see Sri Pathamantha 1965, 2–4). More explicit is Horace's *Ars poetica* vv.185–188, which cannot argue in favour of Medea's slaughter of her own children "coram populo" because it cannot be plausibly shown on stage ("quodcumque ostendis mihi sic, incredulus odi", Horace [1972], 16).

Bonaventura Morone (1634/1612 A' suoi carissimi Tarentini, s.p.) nevertheless considers this commandment to not let the protagonists strive “a vista de' Spettatori” to be one of the “regole d'Aristotile”. He does so without Horace's and Castelvetro's theatrical-practical justification, although he seems to take up literally Horace's “coram populo”. This shows once again that at the end of the century all that remained of the poetological discussions of the Cinquecento were, for many (clerical) theatre practitioners, a handful of diverse normative ‘prescriptions’, all of them attributed to Aristotle, such as unity of space and time, as well as the prohibition of death on stage. This certainly would modify Lohse's thesis that the *communis opinio* of a rigid norm-oriented ‘Aristotelian’ poetics owes itself solely to an anachronistic backward projection of the rigid normative system of French seventeenth-century classicism (Lohse 2015, 13–59).

In discussing Porta's *Innocenti*, the Benedictine Grillo, who is more deeply involved in the poetological discussion, follows Castelvetro's argumentation rather than a normative pseudo-Aristotelian verdict that needs no justification: the death of the children cannot be realistically portrayed “senza gran copia di sangue”: “dilacerati non veramente, sariano cagione, che non si potrebbe offerire spettacolo a' riguardanti, conforme alla verità dell'historia.” Therefore, cruel acts could only be reported “da messi, & da' noncij di gentil favella” (Grillo 1616, 512).

But even if there were a realistic possibility of representing death, torture and physical cruelty, Grillo sees the spiritual drama confronted with the expectation that “né le morti, nè gli stratii deono rappresentati in publico per non funestar gli occhi del theatro con gli horridi, & sanguinolenti spettacoli”, since otherwise the arousal of effect would get out of hand and the “affetto della compassione” would be incited “oltre misura”. According to the “precetti di Aristotile”, it would be in the “intento del poeta” to “muovere una mediocre commiseratione ne gli spettatori, sì che gli animi loro non restino di soverchio perturbati”. In Grillo's conception of an ‘Aristotelian’ norm, the problem of *catharsis* – which is not explicitly named – is thus derived from the representation of cruelty and its potential for emotionalisation. In a first letter, Grillo limits this to “compassione” (Grillo 1616, 512), in a second, he speaks of the arousal of “spavento” and “compassione” as the “principal fine del Tragico” (Grillo 1616, 515). Yet this “spavento/compassione” should not become excessive through the cruelty of stage fiction, but remain in the realm of the ‘mediocre’ so that the spectators “non restino di soverchio perturbati” (Grillo 1616, 512). In this characterisation, the stoical line of discussion is recognisable insofar as that tragedy should aim at a *tranquillitas animi* that is not totally based on apathy, but nevertheless on a reduction (“non di soverchio [. . .] perturbati”) of the “commiseratione” into the direction of the ‘mediocre’. Grillo's isolation of “commiseratione” in the first letter possibly has in mind the importance of compassion as a

basic human characteristic in Robortello, Maggi, Viperano or Giacomini (see Kappl 2006, 309). However, in the light of very multiform interpretations of the Aristotelian concept of *catharsis* and their relevance for the aesthetics of tragedy (see Hathaway 1962, 212–300; Kappl 2006, 266–311) Grillo's account focussing on a more or less stoic line of argumentation seems to be quite reductive. He seems to make a bogey of the concept of *catharsis* against which Christian tragedy must struggle: after all, compassion and the mercy it engenders are Christian virtues that cannot be great enough.

2.1.3 Spiritual solutions

The authors of spiritual tragedies dating from the secondo Cinquecento and the early Seicento are thus well aware of the poetological obstacles of a 'classicist' framework for biblical and Christian themes. But the question, "se si possano far Tragedie al modo Christiano di huomini Santi, salvi i precetti di Aristotile" can only be answered for Grillo "à prima vista" with "si possa dir di nò" (Grillo 1616, p. 512). Rather, he and others before him work to prove that "Aristotile [. . .] non rifiuta i Santi, & Innocenti nella Tragedia" (Grillo 1616, p. 514): what Malatesta Porta and Bernardino Steffonio had achieved in practice with their Italian, as well as Latin, sacred tragedies, could also be inserted with poetological theory into an Aristotelian normative context.

This 'classicist' line seems to differ from the far more radical positions of withdrawal held by di Lega, Tucci, Possevino or Porta, all of whom emphasize the difference between ancient greek and roman tragedies and 'new' Christian *tragedia sacra*: Di Lega's *recusatio* "i Grecci legga, che ciò brama" of 1549 (di Lega, Prologo, s.p.), no less than Tucci who insists on a spiritual "nova Mel-pomene" – and corresponding "new laws" of a "nova Musa" that gives itself new rules ("novas nequeat sibi condere leges?", Tuccius 2011, 148). This is followed by Possevino ("At materia, qua tractandum suscepit [Vida], Ethnicas poematum & fabularum leges non admisit", Possevino 1593, 289) or Porta 1604, in which he emphasizes the novelty of his "nuova Tragedia de Santi Innocenti": "Nova dico: percioche non segue lo stile de Greci, de'Latini", but the "sagre Carte" (Porta 1604, All'illustre [. . .] Ludovico Marchiselli, p. p.).

This anticipated spiritual *querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* can be based on similar patterns of argumentation in the secular poetics of drama. However, these are not directed against Aristotle, but instead stake claim on him as the source of legitimacy for an adaptation of poetry to the "costumi de' tempi nostri": Giralaldi Cinzio's prologo "La tragedia a chi legge" to *Orbecche* written in 1543, allows, on the one hand, a "nova tragedia" to emerge from

“nova materia” (Giraldi Cinzio 1977, 180), but, on the other hand, believes that Aristotle’s *Poetics* legitimizes his theatrical solutions: “Et oltre a ciò lo mi ha concesso il medesimo Aristotele. Il quale non vieta [. . .] il partirci alquanto da quell’arte, ch’egli ha ridotta sotto i precetti, che dati ci hà” (Giraldi 1583, 155; see *Poetics* 1453a 25). Albeit strongly condemning Giraldi Cinzio’s *Orbecche*, Castelvetro strengthens this argument thirty years later when he historicizes the *Poetics* as a descriptive, not normative text: had not Aristotle in some respects “riguardo solamente a quello che era in uso a’ suoi tempi e non a quello che si sarebbe potuto o si doveva fare” (Castelvetro 1570, 57v., 11r., see Stillers 1992, 155). These selective historicizations by an authority of Castelvetro’s calibre were deemed more than suitable for justifying a new Christian “uso” – and Grillo seized upon this opportunity only too willingly: if

Aristotele havesse tolto à dar precetti à tempi nostri di formar Tragedie, à patto alcuno non avrebbe egli esclusi i Santi da’ pubblici spettacoli: anzi gli havrebbe scelti per li più nobili Eroi [. . .]: dovendo per questo mezzo giovare all’anime de’ fedeli per renderli forti al mantenimento della nostra santa fede cattolica. (Grillo 1616, 512)

The fact that the authors, despite the Christian *novità* of their themes, still wanted to write tragedies, which neither returned to the *sacra rappresentazione* nor created a completely new form, shows that they were still able to see a possibility for redemption with regard to norms usually defined as Aristotelian in nature. This redemption, however, only functions at the price of stretching these norms to the point of their partial relativisation, and engenders a paradoxical strategy that simultaneously respects and contradicts classicist normativity, which in essence constitutes the implicit anti-classicism of the late Cinquecento.

Part of this strategy, however, is that authors with a Christian-Aristotelian agenda sought to avoid explicit breaches of norms (or what they considered as such) and, to this end, chose to only use commentaries on ‘Aristotelian’ guidelines that suited their lines of argument from the huge range of contemporary interpretations available at that time. When di Lega, for example, wanted his tragedy of Christ to be described alternatively as a “Tragicommedia (. . .) poiche da si felice morte nacque la vera vita” (di Lega 1549 Al signor Leonardo Curzi, s.p.), or when Possevino in the *Bibliotheca selecta* labelled the tragedy of Pseudo-Gregory of Nazianzus “Tragedia sive Tragicomedia” (Possevino 1593, 300), then this designation of a new, irregular genre was out of the question for Grillo, who wanted to save the status of a more or less classical tragedy for the biblical-Christian theme at all costs. He thus clearly followed the rejection of *tragicommedia* put forward by Aristotelian commentators such as Castelvetro (see Castelvetro 1570, p.57v.), albeit with different motives: for Grillo *tragicommedia* was irregular for the very reason that it was solely justified

metaphysically and theologically, and not for the logics of its action. For him, the focus on the theological foreknowledge of the happy ending of the resurrection, or of the heavenly reward of the martyrs was solely an achievement of the “intelletto”, which neither could nor should minimize the shock conveyed through the senses by the suffering shown on stage: “l’oggetto del senso è per se stesso assai più efficace di quello dell’intelletto”, because it is only this shock to the senses that produces the “compassione” with the crucified Christ or the slain martyrs for one’s own betterment and the *imitatio Christi* (Grillo 1616, 517). By simultaneously actualising the knowledge of redemption and including it into the play itself, this “compassione” would be destroyed. This is precisely what the dramas about Christ and martyrs of the sixteenth century sought to avoid, for they ended in crucifixion and torture, leaving out resurrection or redemption. Di Lega’s *Morte di Christo* ends with Christ’s descent from the cross, and the final chorus only hints (as the only sign for a *theological* happy ending) that “Signor oime, tu morto/Sei sol per darne vita” (di Lega 1549, atto quinto, s.p.). Domenico Treccio’s *Christo penoso, e moriente* (1611) ends with an amplification of Arnulf of Leuven’s Good Friday hymn “Salve caput cruentatum” excluding the resurrection. Morone da Taranto also ended his *Tragedia spirituale Il Mortorio di Christo* (1611) with the death of Jesus and the liturgical choral “Sepulto Domino”, the ninth and final responsory of Holy Saturday. Analogically, Grillo assigned the sacred tragedy of Porta’s *Santi innocenti* to the “compassione” of the liturgical celebration of the Innocent Children on December, 28th, in which the purple of mourning (“veste nel natal loro di pavonazza”) and the omission of the “Gloria in excelsis” shade the “allegrezza de la lor beatitudine” through the liturgical colour of sorrow (Grillo 1616, 517).

These and other authors thus underline the analogy of the *exitus infelix* of spiritual (as well as secular) tragedy to liturgy, and, in particular, the death of Christ on stage to the Passion of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, which often provided context for performances of crucifixion dramas (see Treccio 1611, *Al molto illustre* [. . .] Serrano Trissino, s.p.). In the liturgy of Good Friday, the main aim is to evoke the suffering and death of Christ on the cross, the dramatically staged accusation that Christ brings against the people of God in the so-called ‘improperia’, who, by being unbelievers, have caused these sufferings of the righteous. Compassion with the protomartyr Christ (as well as with the martyrs who followed him) should immediately awaken the feeling of one’s own guilt, and also love for suffering (“Popule meus, quid feci tibi? Aut in quo contristavi te? Responde mihi”, Schott 1935, 397). In the liturgy of Good Friday, Christ and the cross are symbolically buried, and therefore no fully valid masses – i.e. ones in which consecration takes place – are celebrated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, instead only previously consecrated hosts are distributed.

Detached from the liturgy of the Passion, the same separation of the contemplation of Christ's suffering and death from the resurrection can also be found in books containing meditations, sermons and poetry on the Passion that flooded the Italian book market from the mid-sixteenth century onwards – for example, Vincenzo Bruno's S.J. *Meditationi sopra i misteri della passione et resurrectione di Christo Nostro Signore* (Venice 1586), Francesco Panigarola's *Cento Ragionamenti sopra la passione* (1587), Angelo Grillo's *Christo flagellato* (1607) or Guido Casoni's *La Passione di Christo* (1626) (see Föcking 2018b), in which no knowledge of redemption should lessen the shock of Christ's passion and one's own sins. This meditations on the passion of Christ also form a reference for the *tragedia sacra*: Morone da Taranto, for example, explicitly understands his *Mortorio di Christo* as one of the “cento, e mille modi” in which “la morte del nostro benedetto Christo può meditarsi” (Morone da Taranto 1620/1611, *Alli suoi rev. Padri e Fratelli*, s.p.; see on spiritual theatre and meditation Schmidt 2018).

The conception of a *tragedia a lieto fine* developed by Giraldi Cinzio in the mid-sixteenth century, which incorporates the reward of a God who is tormented and close to perishing into the play and thus destroys the *exitus infelix* as a minimally tragic element (cf. Herrick 1955; Lohse 2015, 195–200), therefore does not serve the theory and practice of *tragedia sacra*. On the contrary, supported by the Good Friday liturgy of mourning, meditations about passion, as well as the secular tragedy poetics of the *exitus infelix*, act as a defense against the contemporary view that the death of Christ and of the martyrs is conceivable as a *tragicommedia*. However, it also acts as a line of argument against the views held by Lessing, George Steiner or Charles Mazouer that a Christian tragedy is a contradiction in terms (see above, chap. 2.1.2.1.), as well as Torquato Tasso's assignment of Christian themes to the epic, and not to tragedy. Thus, the *tragedia sacra* would have to be considerably more conservative than Giraldi Cinzio, but less conservative than Tasso. Sacred tragedy is even less prone to follow the purely secular *tragicommedia* route favoured by Giovan Battista Guarini in 1585, which shifted the educational effect of the greek, roman and contemporary tragedy entirely to ecclesiastical proclamation through the “parola Evangelica”, thereby declaring both the ‘old’ tragedy and the ‘new’, spiritual tragedy (like every form of spiritual poetry) obsolete: “che bisogno habbiamo noi hoggi di purgar il terrore, & la commiseratione con le Tragiche viste, havendo i precetti santissimi della nostra religione ?” (Guarini 1585, 29r.–v.).

Although the *tragedia spirituale* is committed to biblical and Christian themes, liturgy, piety and theology, in its self-perception it remains a tragedy, one whose normative horizon must be adapted to the “novas leges” (Tuccijs 2011, 148). At its centre lies the problem of *catharsis*, from which both the construction of the ‘middle’ tragedy's protagonists and the recipient's affective

response are configured. The multiform interpretation of *phobos* and *eleos* in the Cinquecento (see Hathaway 1962, 203–300, Kappl 2006, 266–311, Chevrolet 2008, Lohse 2015, 173–182) thus took on decisive importance for the genre of spiritual tragedy, and the Benedictine Grillo viewed himself as an authority able to adapt the concept to Christian needs through the historicization of tragedy norms already set out theoretically by Giraldis Cinzio and Castelvetro:

se Aristotele havesse tolto à dar precetti à tempi nostri di formar Tragedie, à patto alcuno non avrebbe egli esclusi i Santi da' pubblici spettacoli: anzi gli havrebbe scelti per li più nobili Eroi [. . .]: dovendo per questo mezzo giovare all'anime de' fedeli per renderli forti al mantenimento della nostra santa fede cattolica (Grillo 1616, 512)

The “renederli forte al mantenimento della nostra fede cattolica” indicates that no purification of excessive emotion is required of tragedy. Malatesta Porta even explicitly rejects the concept of *catharsis* in the sense of a purification or moderation of emotion: the new Christian tragedy “né studia di purgare, o togliere le passioni” (Porta 1604, Al'Ilustrissimo Signore [. . .] Lodovico Marchiselli, s.p.). On the contrary, it drives out the specifically Christian ennobled “gagliardissimi affetti; & massime della compassione” (Grillo 1616, 513) through the suffering of exemplary Christian figures in order to inspire faith and love for Christ and counteract the “disordine de gli affetti” and the “l'abuso de' costumi” (Grillo 1616, 530). Not the moderation of emotion is the goal, but the maximum increase of “compassione”, remorse and the ability of *imitatio Christi* (see Nendza 2020, 180). All this is highlighted by Morone da Taranto when he assigns to his “lagrimevol tragedia” the meditative and affective goals of “meraviglia, ò di ringratiamento, ò d'imitatione, ò di compuntione, ò di compassione” (Morona da Taranto 1620/1611, Alli suoi rev. Padri e Fratelli, s.p.).

This moralisation of the concept of *catharis* is not a speciality of the sacred drama, but is of importance for its interpretation throughout the Cinquecento (see Schings 1980, 33; Lohse 2015, 176–182), which, alongside a more stoic interpretation of Robortello, Vettori, or Minturno (see Kappl 2006, 270–286) combined the Aristotelian economy of emotion with a more Horatian and humanist understanding of *prodesse* and *utile*: emotions such as “orrore” or “compassione” are not awakened by Giraldis Cinzio's stage action in order to temper them in real life, but they are used as instruments to make the audience “bramosi di apparare, col mezzo dell'orrore e della compassione, quello che non sanno, cioè di fuggire il vizio e di seguire la virtù” (Giraldis Cinzio 1973, 224). Using “compassione” and “paura” to combat other – negative – emotions and thus guiding the spectator along a virtuous path is also the one set out by of Maggi/Lombardi and Jason Denores, for whom poetry is “una arte di purgar gli animi de que' piu importanti affetti, che travagliano la nostra humanità, &

introdur in loro virtù con accorto, utile, honorato tratenimento” (Denores 1588, 2r.–v. epistola dedicatoria, see Kappl 2006, 273, 293–295). Obviously, this line of argumentation is more compatible with Christian morals than the stoic alternative of *catharsis* as outlined by Robortello or Minturno (see Regn 1987b, 126f.).

If the *tragedia sacra* relies on the full force of the compassion with the suffering of the protagonists, it can also bid farewell to their traditional *mediocritas* “inter bonum et malum” (Robortello 1548/1968, 130). As the spiritual authors have identified a main objection to a Christian tragedy here, they apply various strategies to eliminate this hurdle. On the one hand, saintly protagonists are justified as they create the maximum amount of compassion and their suffering the maximum amount of *terrore*, however, on the other hand, they can thus become exemplary figures of *imitatio Christi* so as to enhance the (Christian) virtuosity of the spectators. Sebastiano Minturno took a completely different approach when attempting to justify such protagonists in *De Poeta* to the one in his *Poetica Toscana*: here he stated, in the Aristotelian fashion throughout (*Poetics* 1452b, 35–38) that it is “non [. . .] ragionevole, che i buoni, o pur’i rei in qualche avversità caduti si rappresentino in Teatro”, because the fall of those “essendo di ottimi costumi, e di somma verità ornati [. . .] più sdegno apportì, che spavento” (Minturno 1725, p. 78). His definition of this “sdegno” is very similar in nature to Castelvetro’s (1570, 154v.) as the spectators’ revulsion against a world order that plunges the good into misfortune without reason or guilt. Those, however, who “quella infelicità meritino”, that is, the one who is thoroughly evil, are not to be pitied. In *De Poeta*, however, he changes his argument: here, the tragedy does not lie in the misguided wrongdoing of the protagonists, which starts the action, i.e. the “*fortuna mutatione*” and the tragically late arrival of the *anagnoris* (Minturno 1559/1970, p. 179), but solely in the effect suffering has on the spectator. In this respect, Christ’s death is, according to Minturno, thoroughly suitable for tragedy, since Christ’s passion was cruel and inhuman (“*crudeliter lacerates*”, “*horrendum*”), pitiful (“*miserabilis*”), terrifying – Minturno refers to the eclipse of the sun from Mt 27:45 – and miraculous (“*admiranda sunt mortem devictam esse*”, Minturno 1559/1970, 183, 184). Morone da Taranto, without naming Minturno, transposes exactly all this in the *Mortorio di Christo*: “Il fine nostro è muovere i santi affetti degli spettatori col vedere Christo crocefisso e che gli si trafigga il petto che si schiodi” (Morone 1620/1611, 160). Since the death of Christ and the martyrs is an expression of the divine plan of salvation, one which is known to every believer, the fall of these “buoni” into (material, physical) ruin cannot arouse any “sdegno” of the spectators against the opacity of an inexplicable fate.

Like Minturno, Castelvetro stated in 1570 that a supposed absence of *hamartia* need not be in itself an obstacle to a ‘real’ protagonist of a tragedy, if only his suffering and death have the right effect on the spectator. On the one hand, he refers to the fact that, according to Aristotle, the fall of the “persona santissima (. . .) da felicità a miseria è stimata cosa ingiusta” and bears the danger of “di mormorare contra Dio, & di dolersi di lui” (Castelvetro 1570, 157r.). Yet on the other hand, he also has a genuinely Christian effect-centred and *imitatio*-related argumentation at hand that justifies the “persona Santissima” as a tragic character. He explains that the example of strong protagonists in a tragedy could better immunise the spectator against “spavento & misericordia” than weak ones could:

Il che s'è veduto in coloro, a quali fu rivelata per benignità divina la luce dell'evangelio concio sia cosa in quelle contrade dove si videro alcuni con gagliardo & sicuro animo sostenere il martirio molti s'incorarono altresì per esempio suo a sostenerlo con fermezza d'animo (Castelvetro 1570, 65v.).

Thus, martyrs suddenly become ideal tragedy heroes, although the *inter bonum et malum* seems to be eliminated in view of their enlightenment by “la luce dell'evangelio”. They suffer not because of their own misjudgement, but because of testifying “benignità divina”. Castelvetro is thus anything but an exclusive defender of a norm that excludes “ogni possibilità di trasformare in eroe tragico qualsiasi martire cristiano, e ancor più Cristo” (Fanelli 2009, 365), but rather – like Minturno – opens the way to the martyr drama (see Schings 1980, 33; Kappl 2006, 240), which is presented in accordance with an ‘Aristotelian’ theoretical framework.

Also, Grillo solves the *hamartia* problem relating to biblical Christian protagonists (with the exception of Christ, who is free of any fault) in an ‘Aristotelian’, but slightly different manner: before him, Castelvetro had already suspected that in depicting the fall of an immaculate figure to ruin, the public’s revulsion against a world order unjustly established by the gods would be suspended: the common people would believe every misfortune to be the protagonist’s own fault (Castelvetro 1570, 154v.). In this dilution of *hamartia* into a general human defectiveness and its divine punishment, still attributed to the “popolo, il quale crede tutte le cose avvenire per disposizione giusta di dio” (Castelvetro 1570, 154v.), Castelvetro was able to draw on leanings such as those employed by Cardinal Minturno, who transforms the individual fault arising from a protagonist’s character and provoking his or her fearful and pitiful fall (*Poetics* 1453a8–10) into an “errore quodam humano” (Minturno 1559, 180). He thus achieves a “neutralisation of tragic hamartia” (Kappl 2006, 248).

Following this, Grillo then took the logical step of relating this *error humanus*, independent of any specific occasion, with the results of human original sin and was thus able to declare every human being, including the “Santi, tanto venerati”, to be a protagonist suitable for tragedy:

Inteso che molti valent’huomini, cioè, che molti martiri, & molti gran Santi, che potrian esser convenevol soggetto di tragedia, in questa carne non solamente furono peccatori, ma gran peccatori; come si prova in San Pietro, che negò [. . .]. Lasciando che la legge di Christo non ammette alcuna perfettione nel suo giusto che non sia assai mezzana al debito della legge, al merito della gratia, & al premio della gloria. (Grillo 1616, 517)

Grillo’s approximation of Christian sinfulness to Castelvetro’s “persona simile a noi, & della mezzana” as the best subject to arouse “spavento, & compassione” (Castelvetro 1570, 158v.), is altered into the formulation “assai mezzana al debito della legge” or the “mezzana conditione, rispetto al debito, di cui siam tenuti al superno legislatore” (Grillo 1616, 530). Thus, too, apostles such as Saint Peter, Saint Paul or the good thief crucified alongside Christ are affected by the concept of original sin, something that results in Peter’s misdeeds (triple denial), Saul’s persecution of Christians or the criminal life of the good thief. Those sinners are eligible as protagonists for Christian tragedies:

E per questa porta legittima, & reale possono entrare i nostri giusti, & i nostri innocenti nell’Aristotelico theatro, & farsi convenevol soggetto della sua Tragedia, con tutti que’ movimenti, & incitamenti, che possono regolare il disordine de gli affetti, & riformare l’abuso de’ costumi (Grillo 1616, p. 530)

Thus, Grillo can draw on a model – one well-used in older ascetic literature – of knowledge on the predisposition of man, redeemed from original sin thanks to Christ, but still susceptible to it nevertheless. Accordingly, Thomas à Kempis wrote in his immensely successful book *De imitatione Christi*, attributed to John Gerson in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:

Niuno è tanto perfetto e santo, che non habbia alcuna volta tentatione; che non possiamo a pieno esser senza essa. Nientedimeno le tentazioni sono spesse volte utili all’uomo; avvenga, che siano gravi e moleste: imperoche in quelle l’uomo si purga e dalla colpa; & etiando è ammaestrato & humiliato. (Gerson 1571, 15)

If in this way the concept of *hamartia* has passed into the Christian human condition of the original sinful *errore*, *phobos* and *eleos* are, even more than for Minturno, no longer tied to an individual and character-related failure, nor to the effect of a moderation of emotion. In the *tragedia sacra*, the arousal of pity and horror is uncoupled from any individual guilt of the protagonist and is now aroused by his or her suffering and death: martyrs are tortured and killed for their own redemption and, exemplarily, for that of all people. Since their

sacrifice becomes more impressive the more they suffer, the cruelties inflicted on them can also be heightened to the maximum and represented on stage. The Horatian conviction that the combination of visual and acoustic perception produces stronger agitation than the acoustic one alone (*Ars poetica* vv. 180–182), had already been adopted by Giraldi Cinzio to intensify the impact of his tragedies of horror (Giraldi Cinzio 1973, 185–186), and found its religious counterpart in the mainly Ignatian concept of meditation by means of all the senses, in which the meditator's *imaginatio* itself becomes a multisensory piece of theatre (Erdei 1990; Enenkel/Melion 2011). The contemporary meditations of Christ's passion especially thus profile a detailed 'inner' observation of the martyred and crucified body of Christ, as is the case in Vincenzo Bruno's *Meditationi sopra i misteri della passione et resurrezione di Christo Nostro Signore* (1586), which, however, requires reading the written word:

Vedi come quei crudeli carnefici mettono le mani adosso al Salvatore, & con grande fretta, & inumanità lo spogliano ignudo; [. . .] et perche la veste era in tutte le parti del corpo attaccata alle piaghe, nello spogliarlo [. . .] si staccò insieme con la veste con tanta violenza la pelle dal corpo; [. . .] anche rimarendo quasi scorticato, e fatto tutta una piaga. (Bruno 1586, 320–321, cf. Föcking 2018b, 227–231)

The even greater affective power of the visual is repeatedly raised as a subject in the spiritual theatre of the secondo Cinquecento, with reference to meditation, but the latter is simultaneously surpassed and – in comparison to meditation – undercut by the medial possibilities and restrictions of the visual: the visualization of the spiritual spectacle willingly cuts itself off from its intellectual transcendence and from the happy ending of salvation (see Föcking 2018b), and relies solely on the affective, sensual shock, leaving the audience alone with its utmost inflamed emotions. Paolo Bozzi, for example, wrote in the preface to his *Giudicio universale* in 1596: “Le cose, che si veggiono (. . .) molto più l'animo commuovono, che quelle, che si leggono, & ascoltano” (Bozzi 1596, Dedicà All'Illustrissimo, & Reverendiss[imo] Monsignor Cornaro Vescovo di Padova, s. p.).

More than a messenger's report of the torments of Christ or the martyrs, their showing thus arouses the emotions, the pity and the remorse of the spectators. Here, spiritual tragedies can be more radical than Grillo who praises Porta's *I santi innocenti*, that only what is appropriate for the “bellezza della favola” has been put on stage, “il resto passarlo con racconti, & moderarlo con l'aiuto di bene applicati episodi” (Grillo 1616, 513). In contrast to his contemporary Grillo, Bonaventura Morone sees his more radical beliefs justified when he makes the protagonists of *La Giustina* suffer and die on stage, “perche farei da sciocco se nascondessi dietro il palcoscenico l'attione principale: e gli spettatori,

che vengono a vedere la rappresentazione del martirio, non vedessero morire i Martiri” (Morone da Taranto 1634/1612, A’ suoi carissimi Tarentini, s. p.). In the preface to *Irena* (1619), he even goes one step further: in antiquity, Medea’s death was not allowed to be shown on stage. Implicitly, Morone refers to Horace’s *Ars Poetica* v.185 and states:

ma nei tempi nostri non dobbiamo obbligarci a questa osservanza; perche l’attione principale [. . .] non deve raccontarsi solo, ma vedersi [. . .]. Restarebbono mal soddisfatti i popoli, che convengono a quelle Tragedie spirituali, se non vedessero nel fine il martirio di colui, o colei, c’ha dato il nome a l’opera (Morone da Taranto 1619, Alla nobilissima e fedelissima città di Lecce, s.p.)

Accordingly, the steadfast Irena is stabbed to death by the tyrant Saborio on stage. Her disembowelment (“ch’io le torro di mezzo l’petto il core/per abbruciarlo in olocausto”, Morone da Taranto 1619, 139v.) is prevented in the nick of time, and, finally, Saborio himself is killed and taken away to the “averno” before the eyes of the audience by Giove and Mercurio, who have been banished to hell.

Representations of death on stage are also found, as early on as in the middle of the Cinquecento, in Giraldi Cinzio, whose *Orbecche*, however, was sharply criticised by more orthodox partisans of the *Poetics* (see Weinberg 1961, 952). In his tragedy of horror, Giraldi Cinzio, in addition to adapting to the “costumi de’ tempi nostri” (Giraldi 1977, 180), had reported the gruesome deaths of Orontes and the children by a messenger, highly in love with details, but then showed Orbecche’s suicide on stage as well as Orontes’ severed head and hands, and the bodies of the children pierced by swords. And his entry in his *Discorso intorno a comporre delle comedie e delle tragedie* (1554) detailing that one should not show the death of the “rei” on stage, so as not to arouse any pity for the wrong characters (Giraldi 1554, 222; see Lohse 2015, 200), means, by implication, that the death of the good evokes precisely this pity. It is certainly no coincidence that Giraldi Cinzio seems to be a model author during the early period of the *tragedia sacra*, for instance for di Lega, who, however, for his part, shies away from any staging of the crucifixion, presenting it only in a messenger’s report (see Föcking 2020, 289–292).

The maximum arousal of compassion and its proximity to the meditative contemplation of the passion and suffering of Christ and his martyrs, ultimately also explains the low relevance that the problem of historicity has for the poetological discussions of the *tragedie sacre*. In 1549, di Lega was the first to address the alternative of “se d’Historia/ o di fabula” (di Lega 1549, prologo, s.p.) for the sacred tragedy, but then he declared without circumstance the “atti fatti, & tutte le parole dette dal Signor nostro Christo Giesù” (di Lega 1549, Al signor Leonardo Curzi, s.p.) as suitable for tragedy. The fact that the *tragedia*

sacra can take the sacred history as its sole source, and that it can remain completely unimpressed by arguments recommending the use of “favole finte”, finds both spiritual and poetological justification.

The subjects of the meditation are fundamentally and exclusively based on the Passion of Christ and other incidents from the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Martyriologies. There can be no ‘faked’ martyrs or saints at all for meditation and ascetic or spiritual literature. In this respect, the latter is fundamentally set apart from the licences of the imagination of Aristotelian *mimesis*. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the historicity of the *historia sacra* was guaranteed and controlled by ecclesiastical authority and purified from the purely legendary: this concerned the revision of the calendar of saints in the *Missale Romanum* in 1570, as well as the standardisation of canonisation processes by the Congregation for Sacred Rites and Ceremonies established in 1588 (Burke 1987) and the historical, source-based new historiography of saints and the Church such as, for example, Cesare Baronio (*Martyriologicum romanum*, 1586; *Annales ecclesiastici a Christo nato ad annum 1198*, 1588–1607). The historicity of the New Testament is the ineluctable authority for di Lega (“tutti gli atti fatti, & tutte le parole dette dal Signore”, di Lega 1549, Al Signor Leonardo Curzi Pathenio, s. p.), as well as for Malatesta Porta 1604 (“Con nova foggia rappresenta miserabile, e terribile auuenimento di sagra istoria”, Porta 1604, All’illustrissimo [. . .] Ludovico Marchesini [s.p.]). Morone da Taranto’s sources for *Giustina* are the hagiographies of Simeon Metafraste (*Menologion*, c. 1000 A.D.) and of the Carthusian Laurentius Surius, *De probatis Sanctorum historiis* (1550–1575) (Morone da Taranto 1634/1612, Ai suoi carissimi Tarentini, s.p.).

The strong authority of the New and Old Testaments, in addition to the traditional as well as the contemporary hagiographies of the sixteenth century, as the only possible sources for spiritual tragedies was integrated into the secular side of the poetological discussion and into the rhetorical and humanist position shared by Bernardino Daniello, Girolamo Muzio, J. C. Scaliger, T. Tasso (Lohse 2010, 215–218), that history should be the only basis for tragedy. But even Castelvetro’s more flexible and more Aristotelian point of view, which demanded “verosimiglianza” rather than historical truth at any cost, could also meet the needs of authors of spiritual tragedy: if tragedy “dee contenere attione humana, ma magnifica ancora, & reale”, then, Castelvetro argued, it would be unlikely if a stage king were not also known from history (“non ci possiamo imaginare un re che non sia stato”, Castelvetro 1570, 104v.). Since Castelvetro also allowed martyrs to serve as protagonists, this also applies to them: there is no martyr of whom the *sacra historia* would not also have had knowledge. None can simply be invented, and an invented martyr would lack credibility as well as authority.

2.1.4 Conclusions

The debate of the authors of *tragedie spirituali* about poetological issues of tragedy in the second half of the sixteenth century demonstrates that they were not satisfied with a classicist exclusion of a Christian “illustre” from tragedy as set out for instance in Tasso’s *Discorsi* (Tasso 1977, 13f.). They also did not agree with Battista Guarini’s disentanglement of religious content and poetic genres, even if he based his argument on the undisputed primacy of “nostra religione” for moral betterment and the arousal of “terrore, & commiseratione” (Guarini 1588, 29v.). The result reached by Guarini’s outlines the obsolete nature of tragedy in general, as well as the possibility of poetry relieved of moral claims, especially in the genre of the *tragicomedia*. Forty years after its publication, Guarini’s views were still supported by some: G. Zinano, author of the *poema eroico L’Eracleide*, argues in a similar line against sacred (epic) poetry:

Finalmente i Santi [. . .] sono soggetti d’hinni, di prediche, d’orationi, di sacre lezioni e l’epica poesia si dee reputare indegna di trattar di loro. Ci insegnano bene le sacre Historie loro à condurci alla felicità con l’esempio loro, ma con modo più eccelso che l’epica poesia. [. . .] Se l’epico poeta cantasse di Santi, oltre che s’usurparebbe l’ufficio proprio de’ sacri maestri abandonarebbe altresì il proprio modo d’insegnare. (Zinano 1623, s.p.[4r.])

These positions of a classicist radicalism are registered as a danger to a *tragedia spirituale*. The reaction to this danger, however, is not to design a completely different, pronouncedly unclassical or anti-classical form of tragedy, or even to continue creating poetry in medieval genres such as the *sacra rappresentazione*. Rather, the authors use the vagueries, contradictions, and gaps within an ‘Aristotelian’ frame of reference as an opportunity to produce a spiritual tragedy both compatible with the “precetti di Aristotile” and in contradiction to the supposed ‘Aristotelian’ impossibility of its very existence. The justification behind the legitimacy of *tragedia spirituale* often has something of a poetological trick about it, such as the one performed by Malatesta Porta and Angelo Grillo:

Con nova foggia rappresenta miserabile, e terribile auuenimento di sagra istoria, toglie persone principali che paiono da ogni teatro Tragico lontanissime; ed in sostanza, che potrà forse venire nel primo incontro tutta creduta diuersa dà i poetici migliori insegnamenti, epur non è così. (Porta 1604, All’illustrissimo (. . .) Ludovico Marchesini [s.p.])

Grillo confirmed, that Porta could not have chosen a “soggetto più contrario di brocca all’apparente sentimento di Aristotele” than children innocent in the biblical sense (Mt 2:16–18), but then showed himself “nelle maggiori difficoltà maggior maestro”, i.e. he mastered the *contrainte* of the Aristotelian requirements against all appearances (Grillo 1616, 513).

Unlike Giambattista Marino's post-classical credo of writing his books "contro le regole" (Marino 1967, 227), the question here is not one relating to open innovation (and certainly not to disruption). It is also less about a "conversion" of a secular-classicist model from a position of ideological strength (cf. Cox 2020, 16), but rather one relating to a paradoxical confession of the superiority of the "precetti di quel valente filosofo" Aristotle (Bozzi 1596, s.p. [dedica]), producing tragedies that, like conundrums, only reveal their classicist background at second glance and with the backing of considerable argumentative efforts. These efforts seem to be a necessity for the authors, for, on the one hand, they most certainly took note of the pressure created by the poetological orthodoxy of the "precetti", of the "regole" and the 'prohibitions' ("Aristoteles vetat", Tuccius 2011, 272), on the other hand, they claimed that what they were offering was an apparent adaptation of classicist poetological positions to biblical and christian plots. The most important of these adaptations, and one that is repeatedly referred to as being particularly problematic for the Christian tragedy genre, is the middle hero who, in texts by Minturno or Castelvetro, can completely lose his or her *mediocritas* and, as Christ or an exemplary martyr, become the completely flawless protagonist of tragedy. The fact that authors such as Angelo Grillo recoiled from this apparently too overt 'un-Aristotelian' solution and wanted to see a remnant of *hamartia* now identified with sinfulness as a consequence of original sin in even the most virtuous of martyrs, shows the 'classicist' pressure which the genre still had to face as late as 1600. But it also shows the creativity with which its authors offered apparently compatible solutions that hollowed out Aristotelian concepts beyond recognition. When Grillo wrote that an operation of this kind "non fa Aristotele Christiano, lo dimostra però in questo articolo di poetica si catholico [. . .] che non rifiuta i Santi, & Innocenti nella Tragedia" (Grillo 1616, 514), he characterized exactly what can be called 'implicit anti-classicism': the will to operate within the classicist framework of the "precetti di Aristotele" (Grillo 1616, 512) and the necessity to adapt biblical plots and Christian protagonists generate solutions that were harmful to classicism itself.

2.2 Paradoxical anti-classicism: On contrafactures of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* in the Cinquecento (Daniel Fliege)

When the Franciscan friar Girolamo Malipiero published his *Petrarca spirituale* in 1536, a collection of contrafactures of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* that attempted a spiritual correction of Petrarch's poems and Petrarchism in

general, it spurred many other poets to follow his example. Giovanni Giacomo Salvatorino, for example, wrote in the preface to his *Thesoro de Sacra Scrittura*, published soon after Malpiero's work, that he had only begun his own project following the publication of the *Petrarca spirituale*. The year 1554 also saw the publication of *I Sonetti, le canzoni ed i trionfi di M. Laura*, attributed to a certain Stefano Colonna, in which Petrarch's lover Laura responds to the *Canzoniere*'s poems. And in the *Sonetti di messer Francesco Petrarca trasportati in sacro* by Lucia Colao, which have only survived in manuscript and were written towards the end of the Cinquecento, we similarly find a female lyrical subject. These four texts offer moral-spiritual corrections of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* in that the authors employ contrafactures to correct (almost) every single poem of Petrarch's original in a moral-religious sense, though they start out from respectively different perspectives: Malpiero writes from the point of view of a deceased Petrarch now existing as a spirit who cannot leave the earthly world; Colonna writes from Laura's point of view and tries to correct Petrarch's one-sided perspective; Salvatorino takes the point of view of an undefined speaker; and Colao switches genders by making the first person speaker an alter ego of herself as a female poet.

2.2.1 The literary-historical context

The first examples of genuinely spiritual sonnet cycles can be observed at the same historical moment as these contrafactures. Vittoria Colonna's *Rime* were first printed in Parma in 1538, even if this edition contains only a small number of religious poems (see Fliege 2021a, 234–243), and around 1540, Colonna gave Michelangelo a manuscript with 103 sonnets of her *Rime spirituali* (published with an English translation in Colonna 2005 and an ample commentary in Colonna 2020). Soon thereafter, in 1542, Rinaldo Corso commented on Colonna's spiritual sonnets (see Bianco 1998, Cinquini 1999 and Faggioli 2014), and in 1546, ten years after the *Petrarca spirituale*, Colonna's *Rime spirituali* – comprising 180 sonnets – were published in Venice by Vincenzo Valgrisi (on the print tradition of Colonna's *Rime*, see Crivelli 2016a and 2016b as well as Fliege 2021a). It can be assumed, however, that Colonna had already begun writing spiritual sonnets in the 1530s (see Fliege 2021a). Along with Colonna, Veronica Gambara wrote spiritual sonnets early on, but they never appeared as print edition in the Cinquecento (Gambara 1995; see Bettoni 2002 and Fliege 2021b). Luca Contile's *Rime cristiane* were completed as early as 1546, but not printed until 1560 (see Quondam 1974). In the secondo Cinquecento, numerous poets followed this model. In 1564, Laura Battiferra published her *Sonetti spirituali*,

and in 1570 Gabriele Fiamma followed with his *Rime spirituali*, in the preface of which he names Vittoria Colonna as the model for his own spiritual sonnets (see Ossola 1976b, Föcking 1993, 1994, 69–102).

That this reorientation of Petrarchism had already begun in the 1530s may seem surprising at first glance, since Petrarchism was still a relatively recent phenomenon – at least according to Bembo’s conception, who declared Petrarch to be the sole author taken as a model for the genre of verse poetry, as opposed to prose, which looked to Boccaccio. Yet Petrarch, of course, had already been the subject of poetic imitation before Bembo. Bembo’s *Prose della volgar lingua*, first published in Venice by Giovan Tacuino in 1525, and the *Petrarca spirituale* are separated by only a decade (for a critical edition of the princeps, see Bembo 2001); Bembo’s *Rime* were printed only six years before Malipiero’s work, in 1530 (Bembo 2008). The *Petrarca spirituale* and the other contrafactures of Petrarch are to be read in this context of a close imitation of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* that was just being constituted along the lines of Bembo. The *Canzoniere* already held a special status at this time, i.e., in the 1530s, as Amedeo Quondam notes: the *Canzoniere* “[n]on è un testo qualsiasi: è in quegli anni diventato il Testo per eccellenza, nelle pratiche della comunicazione letteraria” (Quondam 1991c, 208). In his *Pistole volgari*, printed in 1539, Nicolò Franco laments not without irony the pressure exerted by Bembism:

Il quale [scilicet Pietro Bembo] come ottimo e massimo duce di tutti gli altri, si sta dando ordeni e leggi con lo scettro de la scienza, minacciando prigion d’infamia e morte di nome a chi non osserva i giusti decreti de la sua penna. (Franco 1542, 195r.)

Before examining the correction of the *Canzoniere*, it is thus necessary to first look at the classicism established by Bembo, or what Quondam called the “trionfante classicismo bembiano” (1991c, 210).

The *Prose* raised Petrarch to an author of a classicism worthy of imitation for verse poetry, and whose object was first and foremost Petrarch’s linguistic expression. For Bembo, Petrarch’s *volgare* was to become the model of language to be followed in poetry and, as we will show in the following, the authors of spiritual contrafactures had no objections to this assertion. The language of the new poetry that Bembo called for was to be characterised by “armonia e leggiadria” (Bembo, *Prose* II, 2) and a “dolce suono” (see Marx 1998, 11), in opposition to the principle of using ordinary language, the “occulta forza della lunga usanza nel parlare del popolo” (Bembo, *Prose* I, 18; see Marx 1998, 11). Moreover, Bembo departed from a morally entrenched aesthetics in favour of a poetry that is entirely focused on the musical and self-reflexive quality of expression (Marx 1998, 12–13). Although Simona Oberto similarly emphasises Bembo’s importance for the formation of Petrarchism in the Cinquecento, she nevertheless questions the

term “orthodoxy” as used by scholars to characterise Bembo’s Petrarchism, arguing that this term “fails to capture the innovative specificity of Bembo’s practice of imitation and poetry” (Oberto 2016, 150; we have ourselves translated all quotations from foreign languages other than Italian into English). In other words, to follow Oberto, we can say that the term overlooks the specific features that Bembo introduced into his own *Rime*, reducing it to the closest possible imitation of the original Petrarchan text. Or, as Noyer-Weidner (1974, 353) noted some time ago, Bembo “wanted to show that ‘more can be made’ of the possibilities provided by Petrarch than Petrarch made of them”.

An important difference between Bembo and Petrarch is the conception of the poet’s glory. Gerhard Regn has observed that the incipit of the proemial sonnet of Bembo’s *Rime* imitates the beginning of the *Aeneid*, and that Bembo strives to emulate the model of the epic, so that, in his poetic programme, “la poesia petrarchista reclama la dignità del genere elevato e promette di guadagnare per il suo poeta [. . .] una gloria che vince la morte” (Regn 2018, 6). Consequently, Regn continues, “il conflitto assiologico fra fama poetica ed etica cristiana – così caratteristico dei *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* – non erompe” in Bembo’s *Rime* (Regn 2018, 7). On the contrary, “[n]el petrarchismo di Bembo, la gloria poetica, che per Petrarca costituiva un difetto morale riconosciuto come tale ma tuttavia incorreggibile, diventa addirittura il fulcro di un’idea di letteratura che trasforma la dimensione estetico-formale in valore etico” (Regn 2018, 9).

Oberto also explains that “the increased attention to the euphonic of the verbal material is at the expense of the materia as well as the fulfilment of complements having a stylistic effect such as gravità and piacevolezza (along with suono, numero, variazione, decoro, and persuasione)” (Oberto 2016, 192). She adds, about this neglect of content in favour of euphony in Bembo’s poetics:

This process takes place in the *Prose* [. . .] through the “splitting” of the rhetorical res-verba relation [. . .]. By concentrating solely on the linguistic constitution of the work, as well as repeatedly referring to a possible change of register of the “scrittura” from poetry to prose, the cardinal lays the foundations for a language system that overarches genres because it is independent of genre, on the basis of a Petrarchist volgare illustre. (Oberto 2016, 192)

The contrafactures of the *Canzoniere* to be examined here continue to use this *volgare illustre*. In this way, they also imitate Petrarch’s language in the closest possible *imitatio*. What justifies the contrafactures, however, is the *materia*, the content, of the *Canzoniere*, which is considered by the spiritual poets as morally and religiously offensive, but which Bembo neglects: in a sense, the spiritual contrafactures of Petrarch, and with them, spiritual Petrarchism as a whole, step into a gap left open by Bembo. On the one hand, the contrafactures recognise

Petrarch as a model of a classical *volgare* and imitate his linguistic expression as closely as possible. But on the other hand, he cannot serve as a model because the spiritual contrafactures consider the content of his poetry to be reprehensible and in need of correction. The contrafactures now show ways to “save” Petrarch as a classical author by adapting the reprehensible content of his texts in a moral-religious way without changing his language. In this respect, the spiritual contrafactures can be considered neither classicist nor anti-classicist: rather, they show possibilities of an alternate classicism (cf. Föcking 1993, 226).

But Petrarchism is of course more than just the reference back to Petrarch and his literary nobilisation by Bembo: even earlier, independently of and after Bembo, poets imitated the *Canzoniere* (a good overview of different definitions of Petrarchism is given by Schneider 2007). Michel Dassonville, for example, emphasises that it is not isolated individual elements that are important for defining Petrarchism, but rather the references to a system, and that, since the mid-sixteenth century, it was not the individual components of a “Petrarchist system of signs” that were important, but rather their reference to each other and to an overarching tradition (Dassonville 1972, 178–179). The most obvious feature of Petrarchism in this sense is its reference to Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* – and to a lesser extent to his *Trionfi*. Thomas Borgstedt argues that this “imitative programmatic” of Petrarchism forms a system that is made of

certain motif complexes and stylistic peculiarities, precious topoi of the description of beauty above all, the elaborate shaping of antithetical emotional states of painfully unfulfilled love and the humanistic belief in their transfer into the immortality of poetry. (Borgstedt 2004, 130)

However, as Klaus W. Hempfer has observed, “the principle of imitating model authors is as such an essential component of the entire humanist-classical aesthetics” (Hempfer 1987b, 256; see also Regn 1987c, 49). Moreover, it is not enough to consider Petrarch as a reference point for a linguistic model, as a “modello di lingua” of a *toscanità*, as Bembo demands in his *Prose della volgar lingua*. Rather, as Hempfer argues, Petrarch should be regarded as a “modello di poesia” (Hempfer 1987b, 257). Nor is it sufficient to enumerate certain rhetorical procedures, such as antitheses, anaphors, or parallelisms, since these “as such, of course, cannot be considered distinctive either for Petrarch or for Petrarchism” (Hempfer 1987b, 259). As Regn has also noted, it is not enough to present Petrarchism as a list of clichés and motifs: rather, Petrarchism is to be understood as a system, “as [a] se[t] of elements and relations between these elements” (Regn 1987c, 22). He explains:

themes, motifs, and stylistic figures that can be attributed to Petrarch's *imitatio* and that are so often identified in research as typically Petrarchist [. . .] [are to be regarded] in their capacity as relationally integrated elements, that is, relationally to the antinomic-paradoxical concept of love of Petrarchist provenance that functions as the dominant element of the system. (Regn 1987c, 22–23)

This system is thus not a stock of symbols with codified meanings, but a system of signs that acquires a new meaning through the reciprocal correlations of its signs with each other. Nonetheless, as Regn points out, the term of a Petrarchist system serves a heuristic function making it possible to describe a specific text in relation to other texts in a given historical context (Regn 1987c, 23). And as Hempfer has also shown, sixteenth-century contemporaries implicitly or explicitly referred to such a system without, of course, using today's terminology (see Hempfer 1987b, 264).

As the first constitutive element of such a Petrarchist system, Regn names the “antinomic-paradoxical structure of affects” (Regn 1987c, 26), i.e., the relation between *affetti dogliosi* and *affetti lieti*, which the lyrical speaker feels simultaneously and which are paradoxically opposed to each other. The second element is the “external substrate of events in the Petrarchist story” (Regn 1987c, 32). This includes “the upholding of the identity of the protagonist whose experience of love the individual poems portray” (Regn 1987c, 32). In addition to the unfolding of a story, this includes a proemial sonnet in which a speaker retrospectively announces the story of the love that he has already experienced (Regn 1987c., 33 and Hempfer 1987b, 266). This story inscribes itself in a specific temporality, that has a starting point, namely, the *innamoramento*; expands beyond the death of the beloved; and paradoxically culminates in the proemial sonnet, which serves as a retrospective of the story that follows. It thus creates a limited narrative foundation in the form of an exemplary autobiography of the lyrical subject who, at the same time, seeks to identify himself with the author.

As we will now show, the spiritual contrafactures are not able to maintain this narrative foundation: they no longer tell a conflicted love story and lack a secular antithetical-paradoxical conception of love, since the “dogmatic orientation [of spiritual Petrarchism] wants to expose precisely the [Petrarchist] conception of love [. . .] as a pernicious *cupiditas*” (Föcking 1993, 225). Here, the question arises as to how the constitutive elements of Petrarchism are replaced, whether a “different story” is unfolded across the sonnet collection (for example, the Passion of Christ), and whether other antithetically shaped conflicts and antinomic-paradoxical affect structures are enacted (one might think here of the struggle against the forces of corruption). Moreover, this raises the question of the status of

the lyrical subject. Is it identified with the author and, if so, with which author (Petrarch, Laura, the contemporary writer of the contrafactures)?

2.2.2 State of research

While numerous studies on spiritual Petrarchism (see Föcking 1994, Doglio 2005 and 2007, Fliege 2021a) have been published, scholars remain hesitant when it comes to contrafactures – Malipiero is an exception here, probably because he is the first and best-known author of such rewritings. In his influential work on *Petrarchismo ed Antipetrarchismo nel Cinquecento* from 1886, Arturo Graf examines the phenomenon of the “spiritualizzazione del *Canzoniere*” (Graf 1886, 57). He distinguishes between three types of spiritualisation. Firstly, he names the *centone* technique as “la forma più mite” (Graf 1886, 57), but he objects that

Qui lo spiritualizzamento non si esercita propriamente del *Canzoniere*, ma fuori di esso, i componimenti che ne nascono non han punto la pretesa di sostituirsi al libro onde traggono la sostanza. Di giunta in essi la parola del poeta si rimane inalterata. (Graf 1886, 57)

Secondly, he refers to “l’opera trasformatrice [che] invade il *Canzoniere* stesso, e ne penetra tutte le parti, finchè si giunge alla piena trasmutazione di esso” (Graf 1886, 57) without elaborating on what these *trasformazioni* or *trasmutazioni*, as he calls them, actually consist of. Thirdly, he mentions allegorical interpretations of the *Canzoniere*, which leave the Petrarchan text intact while reading into it a religious level of meaning “vedendo simboli dove il poeta certamente non ne aveva messi” (Graf 1886, 57). Graf also devotes several pages to Malipiero’s *Petrarca spirituale*, to whom he concedes “il primato tra gli spiritualizzatori del Petrarca” (Graf 1886, 59). For Graf, the book is a “libro cattivo, ma curioso” (Graf 1886, 59). He also devotes a short section to Salvatorino’s *Thesoro*, though he denigrates these rewritten rime as “sciagurate” (Graf 1886, 58). For Graf, the change of theme in some of the sonnets is simply “assai strana” (Graf 1886, 58); he does not recognise in them any literary “value” but regards the spiritualisations of the *Canzoniere* to be a literary-historical curiosity, which he assigns to the phenomenon of anti-Petrarchism.

Subsequent scholars have also denied that the spiritual contrafactures of Petrarch have any literary value, or simply didn’t take them into account because these texts were not seen as “proper” literature. Or as Fucila concludes: “[t]here is no literary merit whatsoever in any of these writings” (1949, 267). Giulio Ferroni similarly speaks of “una curiosa riscrittura”, “un’operazione molto rozza, con una dose di involontaria comicità”, an “occasione di scherzo e

di trastullo”, that he included in his anthology “a mero titolo di curiosità documentaria” (Ferroni 1999, 29). Scarpa (1997, 7) likewise calls Stefano Colonna’s contrafactures “unreadable”, “monstrous and unbearable”, a “pedantic enterprise”. And Fechner (1966, 138), Baldacci (1973, 165–166) and Schick (1983, 287), among others, still characterise Malipiero’s work as anti-Petrarchist.

However, these views can be considered outdated since Quondam’s and Föcking’s attempts to reassess the spiritual contrafactures. At the time of the appearance of the *Petrarca spirituale*, the phenomenon of the *Rime spirituali* was, according to Quondam, still completely unknown, so that Malipiero’s text was “in grado poi di attivare imitazioni, di fare scuola” (Quondam 1991c, 204). For Quondam, then, the *Petrarca spirituale* was thus no “marginal” text (Quondam 1991c, 205), leading him to ask how its relatively great success on the Cinquecento book market can be explained. As an explanation, he notes first that there is “nulla di ingenuo” (Quondam 1991c, 205) in Malipiero’s *riscrittura* and that Malipiero’s intention stems neither from “una sorta di pratica giocosa” nor “un’economia parodica”, but rather takes the form of a “seria e di grande importanza” (Quondam 1991c, 205). The Franciscan friar “non è, insomma, uno dei tanti volenterosi e audaci dilettranti dell’imitazione petrarchista che iniziano, proprio in questi anni, a inondare carte e stampe” (Quondam 1991c, 205). Nevertheless, Quondam continues, Malipiero’s project is “estremamente semplificat[o], persino grossolan[o]” (Quondam 1991c, 206), in that Malipiero replaces Petrarch as a speaker with “un nuovo soggetto, generico e collettivo al tempo stesso” (Quondam 1991c, 206) which can be related to the community of all Christendom. In Quondam’s view, however, the emphasis on spiritual themes could also be understood as “una radicalizzazione estrema di elementi interni all’economia tematica dell’originale petrarchesco (in quanto iperspiritualizzazione)” (Quondam 1991c, 206). Moreover, Quondam argues, all historical-geographical references and all allusions to Laura are completely lost in this “travestimento spirituale” (Quondam 1991c, 206). Quondam does recognise “[u]na contraddizione” (Quondam 1991c, 223) in the fact that Malipiero praises the linguistic design of the Canzoniere and imitates it as closely as possible, while also condemning and correcting its content. For Quondam, then, the *Petrarca spirituale* is an exemplary intervention of active censorship and a militant book in the context of debates about censorship and the Inquisition in Venice in the 1530s and 40s (Quondam 1991c, 208): he reads the *Petrarca spirituale* as attempting to show how harmful texts can be purified without completely abandoning poetry.

Moreover, Quondam also recognises an effect of parody that results from the fact that reading the rewritten sonnets inevitably calls to mind the original text, which many readers knew by heart: he goes so far as to claim that the *Petrarca spirituale* “non può esser letto di per sé, nella sequenza lineare dei propri

testi, ma soltanto per rapporto e differenza” (Quondam 1991c, 229) from the Petrarchan original. In his view, the result of this “double” reading (“una doppia partita di lettura”) is a “maligno godimento e comica ricezione” (Quondam 1991c, 225), culminating even “in una fragorosa, liberatoria risata” (Quondam 1991c, 225). Yet Quondam ultimately concludes that the *Petrarca spirituale* failed in its attempt to save Petrarch as an example of spiritual poetry, since contemporary readers received the text as a “parodia e [. . .] curiosità giocosa” (Quondam 1991c, 225).

Following Quondam, Schick (1983) has interpreted the *Petrarca spirituale* as an allegoresis of the *Canzoniere*. Yet her hypothesis is based on a misinterpretation of the dialogue between the figures of Malipiero and the ghost of Petrarch that precedes the contrafactures in the *Petrarca spirituale*. In this fictional conversation, Malipiero states that he interpreted the *Canzoniere* allegorically (see below), but Schick fails to mention that Petrarch himself categorically rejects this reading of his work. An allegorical reading presupposes that there is a deeper and “truer” meaning hidden beneath the literal surface in a text, but this is precisely what the *Petrarca spirituale* denies. For if such an allegorical reading were possible, a correction of the poems would not be necessary; instead, a “correct” interpretation would suffice. Therefore, we can conclude, the *Petrarca spirituale* is not an allegoresis: rather, Malipiero considers the *Canzoniere* to be a literal expression of worldly love that he corrects by creating a new, religious literal meaning as an alternative.

Föcking considers Girolamo Malipiero and Vittoria Colonna to be the origin of the spiritual Petrarchism that emerged mainly in the *secondo Cinquecento* (Föcking 1993 and 1994). Yet he also relativises the classification of the *Petrarca spirituale* in anti-Petrarchism, inasmuch as he sees Malipiero’s poetics as directed against the contents of the *Canzoniere*, but not against its language, making it possible to classify Malipiero as anti-Petrarchist only in reference to his content (Föcking 1993, 231). Föcking moreover situates Malipiero’s project in the larger context of confessional politics, locating the *Petrarca spirituale* at the beginning of a long chain of works that, in a kind of anticipatory obedience, purged secular works even before the Council’s decree on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* of 1559, a process that ranged from the replacement of dogmatically or morally objectionable words in Dante’s *Vita nuova* or Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, for example, to the spiritually oriented ré-écriture modelled on Malipiero’s *Petrarca spirituale*. (Föcking 1993, 229–230).

In Malipiero’s contrafactures, Föcking notes, the suffering of a lyrical subject becomes the “iter spirituale of any Christian” and the paradoxical affect structure that was constitutive of Petrarchism is erased by Malipiero in favour of a dichotomous axiological juxtaposition (Föcking 1993, 230–231).

But Föcking also recognises “an involuntarily comic effect” of the *Petrarca spirituale*, which results from the “[t]he blatant signal value of the system references with simultaneous semantic inversion” (Föcking 1993, 231). He therefore concludes, like Quondam, that “this discrepancy was already ridiculed by contemporaries, [and] Malipiero’s ‘serious’ anti-Petrarchism missed the target of a spiritual reshaping of the Canzoniere” (Föcking 1993, 231). At the same time, however, he emphasises that

the centuries-old mockery [. . .] had obscured the view of a far-reaching innovation by Malipiero: the clear and morally justified decision against a love poetry that is regarded from a moral point of view. Whereas the later cardinal Pietro Bembo had presented earthly love as a deterrent example and therefore more clearly elaborated the morally didactic function of the *histoire* and the *affetti dogliosi* of love, the Franciscan Malipiero, only six years after the first edition of Bembo’s *Rime*, rejected it completely against the background of the discussions about the seductive power of love poetry, since for him the equivalence of reading and fornication is a foregone conclusion. For the first time, the potential exemplary function of a Petrarchan love story, even if considered as being negative, or of a Petrarchist love story mediated by Bembo, is thus denied by the practice of poetic production itself. (Föcking 1993, 232).

Christoph Hoch similarly argues that Malipiero was striving for a “reform of poetry under Christian auspices directed at the literary system of Petrarchism, which was already firmly established in the 1530s” (Hoch 1997, 159).

Linda Maria Koldau has examined literary contrafactures in Italian literature of the Cinquecento in an essay devoting a section to Petrarchan contrafactures. Koldau suggests that Malipiero did not intend “to create high literature, but to offer his readers a Christian alternative to secular literature” and thereby “combined entertainment with edification and teaching” (Koldau 2002, 46 n.4). She distinguishes the *Petrarca spirituale* from anti-Petrarchism by arguing that Malipiero did not seek to “change the language and poetic expression, but merely to renew the content in a Christian sense” (Koldau 2002, 48 n.9). Moreover, she no longer uses the concept of parody, but consistently takes recourse to the concept of contrafacture.

By the way, the term contrafacture was first introduced in 1928 by Thérèse Labande-Jeanroy in an article on Stefano Colonna, whose poems, compared to Malipiero’s, have received little attention from researchers. This article has therefore been almost completely ignored by critics. It was only in 1987 that Guido Arbizzoni cited it in his own article on Colonna. At the very beginning of his essay, Arbizzoni points out that it is not certain who the author of the contrafactures is, since the title page presents Petrarch’s beloved, Laura, as the author and Stefano Colonna as the one who “found” the poems (Arbizzoni 1987, 539–540). Labande-Jeanroy had already cast doubt on the author’s identification

and assigned the contrafactures to Pietro Antonio Miero, who signed the dedicatory letter to Vittoria Farnese that precedes the contrafactures. It might be that the Stefano Colonna mentioned on the title page is Stefano Colonna di Palestrina (1490–1548). But this would mean that the poems appeared post mortem (Stefano Colonna died in 1548, while the book appeared in 1552). It is also possible that a son of this Stefano Colonna of the same name is the author of the work (this younger Stefano Colonna is said to have died at a relatively young age in 1567). The portrait on the frontispiece, however, shows a man of advanced age, although it must be objected that the woodcut shows an idealised image of an author. Still, the sitter here does in fact resemble the portrait of Stefano Colonna di Palestrina made by Agnolo Bronzino two years before the latter's death in 1546, although this resemblance does not constitute sufficient proof.

Furthermore, we would like to suggest a second hypothesis about the author already proposed by Labande-Jeanroy: is it not possible that Stefano Colonna is as much a part of the fiction as Laura, and that he is the Colonna mentioned by Petrarch in RVF 10, i.e., a contemporary of Laura's who could indeed have "found" her *Rime*, as the title suggests? After all, the poems are "pervenuti alle mani" of Stefano Colonna, as the title indicates, and were not explicitly written by him. The author of this work would therefore be Miero, whose identity, however, also lies completely in the darkness of history. A certain Pietro Antonio Miero appears in Paolo Pino's *Dialogo di Pittura* of 1548 and is introduced there as a "giovane Padovano tutto scintillante di virtù, et amato dal nostro Pino come egli stesso" (Pino 1548, 34r.): accordingly, Miero would be located in Padua as a friend of the painter Paolo Pino.

Labande-Jeanroy and Arbizzoni do not regard the contrafactures as parodies, but as "trasformazione seria" of the *Canzoniere* (Arbizzoni 1987, 540), even though Labande-Jeanroy repeatedly expresses her displeasure with Miero's contrafactures. According to Arbizzoni, the fact that each contrafacture is preceded by the incipit of the Petrarchan original poems establishes a responsive relationship between the texts and in this way "il lettore è richiamato a mantenere il contatto [ai testi petrarcheschi], a non perdere mai il segno" (Arbizzoni 1987, 541).

Arbizzoni furthermore distinguishes two main compositional techniques in the contrafactures. On the one hand, he argues, they retain the rhyme scheme and the rhyming words. On the other hand, he recognises in the text the will to create a "verosimiglianza" through which a "plausibile movimento diegetico" emerges (Arbizzoni 1987, 541). Like Malipiero's contrafactures, he continues, Colonna's are moralising; they are not so much genuine "responses" to Petrarch's poems but "commentaries" (Arbizzoni 1987, 544). Arbizzoni sees an important difference to the *Petrarca spirituale* in the fact that Colonna's *Sonetti* do

not aim to replace the *Canzoniere*. Rather, Colonna leaves the incipit of each of Petrarch's poems before his contrafactures; his rewritings stand complementarily next to the original texts, as Arbizzoni explains: "il nuovo testo non vuol sostituirsi al suo modello, ma affiancarlo e duplicarlo [. . .]" (Arbizzoni 1987, 546). Colonna's contrafactures thus function only as commentaries on the original text, which does not lose its status as a model text in its own right, but is supplemented by a new perspective.

Andrea Torre, too, has recently examined Lucia Colao's *Rime* (Torre 2017), placing Colao's contrafactures in a "ricezione produttiva" (Torre 2017, 61) of Petrarch and showing how Colao uses the rewritings "alla narrazione della propria personale storia lirica" (Torre 2017, 64). Torre is also able to show that Colao does not refer to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* alone, but was familiar with the contrafactures of Stefano Colonna and quotes the *Rime spirituali* of Vittoria Colonna (Torre 2017, 77). Furthermore, Torre 2019 examined other rewritings of model authors in the early modern period (including Ovid, Vergil, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Ariost, and Tasso). He emphasises that every rewriting of a model text is also an interpretation of that text, thereby preserving it within the "cultural memory" (Torre 2019, 21). He distinguishes roughly between two forms: "la rimozione pressoché completa del dettato ipotestuale" and "un suo addomesticamento entro i domini dell'allegoria" (Torre 2019, 22). In the chapter on Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, Torre focuses in particular on commentaries that attempt to give the poems a religious meaning (Torre 2019, 161–168, e.g. in Pietro Vincenzo Sagliano's *Esposizione spirituale sopra il Petrarca*, Naples, Cacchi, 1591), before concentrating on Malipiero and Colao.

2.2.3 Definition of the term contrafacture

Contrafacture (from Latin *contra* "against" and *facere* "to make, to produce") means the replacement of the text of an existing song with a new text without changing the music (see Wilkins 1999, 446). The term denotes both the process of artistic production and the result. Applied to poetry, a contrafacture refers to the substitution of the text of an existing poem with a new text without changing the form, metre, or rhyme scheme. The replacement of text central to this compositional technique can take different degrees, ranging widely from the substitution of individual words to the creation of a completely new text retaining the original form.

The status of contrafactures is paradoxical, because in correcting Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, they constantly refer to the original poems. On the one hand, this happens in paratexts, such as the titles of the works, which sometimes explicitly

refer to Petrarch's original, and in the prefaces, which justify the rewritings. On the other hand, this also takes place in the texts themselves: for instance, Stefano Colonna quotes the beginning of the first verse of the original poems before each contrafacture, as if the reader should have in mind the original text. In addition, the rewritten texts are strongly reminiscent of the originals and the mode of correction always raises the question of what was actually corrected, compelling readers to return to the original poem for an answer unless they can quote it from memory. Moreover, in many texts, tension only arises when the altered text is read next to the original. Stefano Colonna smooths out any potential for conflict and strips all discrepancies from his contrafactures, which only find their way back into the text when they are read against the background of the original poems: after all, he titles his contrafactures "risposte" and in order to understand what his fictional Laura is responding to, one must have an intimate knowledge of the original. Paradoxically, although the authors of the contrafactures are trying to replace what they considered to be the "harmful" original text, the very nature of their approach means that they are constantly referring to the poems they are trying to replace. This indicates that there are different types of contrafactures, as we will attempt to differentiate below.

Similar to contrafacture, the term parody (from Greek *παρ-ωδία* *par-odía* "counter-song") refers to the imitation of an existing text by closely following its linguistic expression. But unlike parody, a contrafacture is not meant to mock or distort. Critics, however, such as Quondam 1991a and Gorni 1984, among others, like to call the spiritual rewritings of Petrarch parodies. This follows from the attitude that has determined the reception of these texts, which denied them any serious character and interpreted them as "distorting" imitations that "disfigure" the original text.

2.2.4 Modes of contrafacture: an attempt at classification

In all contrafactures, the metre, rhyme scheme, and form remain unchanged. Even if individual rhyming words are replaced, the original rhyme scheme is usually maintained. Within this fixed framework, the authors make further changes which can be roughly divided into two modes:

(1) Allegorisation and resemantisation

Resemantisation is to be understood as the attribution of a different meaning to an identical sign or chain of signs without substituting words. This mode is frequently observed, though it is not usually used alone, but is complemented by mode (2). This includes contemporary commentaries on the Canzoniere that

attempt to give it a religious level of meaning (Torre 2019 has analysed these in detail).

(1.a) Resemantisation through new context

A special case is represented by poems that are neither rewritten nor directly resemantised, but remain textually unchanged in their entirety. Only the changed context of the overall composition may lead to resemantisation. In the case of the *Petrarca spirituale*, this applies to just one sonnet, RVF 232: this poem laments the anger of several ancient historical figures that led to both their physical and spiritual death. Although a mortal sin does emerge here as the theme, it is already condemned by the “real” Petrarch, so that Malipiero does not change the sonnet at all, but simply inserts it as such among his contrafactures. Thus, the words are not changed, but the context is.

(1.b) Special case: erasure

So far unmentioned by scholars is the fact that Girolamo Malipiero and other authors of contrafactures do not rework all the poems of the *Canzoniere*. For example, Malipiero deletes RVF 360, a canzone that depicts a psychomachia between a speaker suffering from love sickness, Cupid, and the power of judgement. Why this poem in particular is not reworked cannot be entirely explained. It is unproductive to assume that it would simply have been too “difficult” to correct this poem, which is entirely focused on love sickness. Besides, the erasure of texts changes the overarching structure of a collection.

(1.c) Special case: spiritual centone poetry

The centone poem should be mentioned here as a special case which combines verses from different poems from Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* into new poems. The original text of these individual verses is usually preserved – minor syntactical adaptations, however, cannot be ruled out. The meaning of the individual verses changes through the combination with verses from other contexts as well as through the newly emerging overall context of the new text. Christoph Hoch has devoted a chapter of his insightful study on cento poetry to the spiritual cento (Hoch 1997, 155–174).

(2) Substitution

(2.a) Substitution of individual syntagms

This includes contrafactures in which either only individual words or syntagms are replaced, while most of the original text remains intact. In particular, the incipit is often unchanged, as this element makes it easier to recognise the original Petrarchan text or at least to find it again with the help of an index.

(2.b) Preservation of individual syntagms

In contrast to mode (2.a), this mode includes contrafactures in which the majority of the original text has been replaced in such a way that only individual words or syntagms remain, including mostly the rhyming words. The gradations between these two modes are fluid.

(2.c) Borderline case: preservation of the rhyme scheme

This mode covers contrafactures in which the original text has been completely replaced and only the rhyme scheme remains. However, such texts can only be reasonably described as contrafactures if the authors explicitly name the model and the technique of their rewritings. Otherwise, almost all of Petrarchist poetry would have to be considered as counterfactual, which does not seem reasonable.

2.2.5 Motivation and objectives of the contrafactures

Malipiero and Salvatorino accompany their contrafactures with theoretical reflections, in a dialogue and an introduction in the *Petrarca spirituale*, and in a long poetological sonnet series in the *Thesoro*. (Stefano Colonna and Lucia Colao, by contrast, do not preface their contrafactures with explanatory prefaces.)

2.2.5.1 *Petrarca spirituale*: the dialogue between Maripetro and Petrarcha

The dialogue preceding the contrafactures introduces the figures of Maripetro and Petrarcha (in order to distinguish them from the real authors Malipiero and Petrarch, we will use the name variants found in the Italian text to designate the fictive figures of the dialogue). Here, Maripetro first reports in a long monologue on the circumstances that led to the conversation: on a literary pilgrimage to the tomb and residence of Petrarch in Arquà, he retreats on 8 June 1534 during the midday heat into a shady and lonely little wood, when suddenly a person unknown to him approaches (Malipiero 1536, 2r.). This person is none other than Petrarcha, who greets Maripetro and addresses him by name – not immodestly, the text tells us that Petrarcha has already heard of the Franciscan friar, while the latter does not recognise the poet at first (Malipiero 1536, 2r.). Petrarcha willingly gives the friar information and explains why he must wander the earth as a spirit: God had punished him for his love poems and Petrarcha would only find redemption when his poems had been “*ritrattat[e]*”. Maripetro first pretends not to be able to comprehend God’s judgement. The fact that Maripetro has embarked on a journey to Arquà suggests that he is an admirer of the *Canzoniere*,

whose poems he claims are “leggiadre” and “tutte buone” (Malipiero 1536, 2v.) – this may come as a surprise if one reads the dialogue to the end and comes across Maripetro’s later harsh criticism of the *Canzoniere*. Likewise, Maripetro initially pretends not to be able to recognise anything offensive about the poems, since he interprets Laura as an allegory of wisdom:

Ho pur inteso io [. . .] che sotto velame di non so che madonna Laura, volesti figurare la Sapientia delle cui bellezze l’huomo, al quale massimamente la virtu aggrada; fassi degno amatore; et per conseguente, che tutti i versi et canti tuoi d’amore, sono allegorici, et hanno sensi spirituali. (Malipiero 1536, 2v.)

Maripetro himself had thus already “changed” the *Canzoniere* – or as one might say: he has “read it contrafactually” – by imposing upon it a new spiritual meaning. Petrarcha reacts dryly by posing a rhetorical question: “Con che evidenza di verita si puo questo dire, confessando io nel primo de tutti i miei sonetti; che gli amorosi affetti, de quai tante rime io scrissi, mi vennero per giovanile errore?” (Malipiero 1536, 2v.). This rejects the allegorical interpretation of the *Canzoniere* on the grounds that the proemial sonnet does speak of love and youthful mistakes, which, according to Petrarcha, should be understood literally and not figuratively. Right at the outset, then, the *Petrarca spirituale* refuses any allegorical interpretation of the *Canzoniere*, since this would make a correction of the original Petrarchan text unnecessary (see Quondam 1991c, 207–208). The poems therefore did not arise from “sana sapientia”, Maripetro argues, but from “insana concupiscenza” (Malipiero 1536, 3r.), which of course also constitutes an interpretation of the *Canzoniere* that can nevertheless justify a correction (see Quondam 1991c, 207–208).

After this explanation, which convinces Maripetro, the friar responds by asking Petrarcha why he published his poems at all, in defiance of the expectation of Christian morality. The latter replies that “[l]a grand importunita de nobili amici, et l’appetito di eterna fama si del nome mio, come di quella, che cotanto, amai” (Malipiero 1536, 3r.), i.e., the craving for fame, in moral theology *superbia*, was the cause of his sin. Contrary to his initial admiration, Maripetro now joins in the criticism of the *Canzoniere* and accuses Petrarcha of negligence, arguing that Petrarcha should have known that his poems would provide “occasione ad altri di carnale concupiscenza” and harm “tanti giovani amatori del mondo” (Malipiero 1536, 3v.). But Maripetro also differentiates between (corrupt and spoiling) *res* and (elegant and seductive) *verba*: the young lovers would be so attracted to Petrarch’s “polito et leggiadro dire” that his “vanita essere piu lette, commentate, et studiate, che’l vangielo di Christo” (Malipiero 1536, 3v.) – here Maripetro’s true face is revealed, and he goes on to indulge in countless reproaches.

Petrarcha explains in detail the unfavourable state he is in: although he has the form of a body, he can no longer intervene in the world, “fuori di spatio temporale, non posso produrre atto alcuno meritevole, come sarebbe questo, di ritrattare la sconvenevole materia de gli predetti miei versi” (Malipiero 1536, 4r.). Noteworthy here is the notion of merit, for in order to atone for one’s sins, a meritorious work on the part of the believer is required according to Catholic doctrine: the correction of the *Canzoniere* thus becomes a meritorious work of lived charity in the theological sense – on the one hand for the salvation of Petrarch’s soul, and on the other to preserve the young innocent lovers.

The poet now sets out to explain to Maripetro what the task of rewriting involves. First of all, he differentiates between linguistic expression and the content of his *Canzoniere*:

così ancora potrai ad esso Re celeste riconcigliare le mie thosche e volgari Muse, tal che espurgate d’ogni otioso parlare, et ridotte per quelle istesse rime et vocaboli a cantare cose tutte honeste e sante; io sia detto per l’avenire Petrarca theologo et spirituale. (Malipiero 1536, 4r.)

According to this text, the reprehensible aspect of his poetry does not lie in the formal and linguistic design of the texts (*verba*), but in the things sung about (*res*). To this end, Petrarcha argues, Maripetro should “espurga[re]” the poems, i.e., purify them from “ogni ozioso parlare”: the reprehensible thing does not concern the *parlare* as such, but lies in the definition of *parlare* as “ozioso”, i.e., as useless and idle, which in the form of the *acedia* represents a mortal sin. It is not the *otium* that should be sung about – as Petrarcha has done so far – but “cose tutte honeste e sante”. The harmful contents should be replaced by “i nuovi et buoni concetti” (Malipiero 1536, 5r.), which Petrarcha’s wandering spirit had already thought up. While his poetry had hitherto been “noioso all’uomo”, through the contrafactures it should now become “utile e profittevole” (Malipiero 1536, 5r.).

Maripetro accepts the challenge, but at the same time he points out that no one will want to read these corrected *Rime*:

Io comprendo et giudico per fermo, che quando in tal degno essercitio havremo con sofficente castigatione ridotte le rime tue a sacri et spirituali soggetti, potremo col satirico poeta Persio ancho noi ragionevolmente dire: Quis leget haec? (Malipiero 1536, 5v.)

According to Maripetro, a spiritualised version of the *Canzoniere* would meet with little interest: “Laonde io conchiudo, che se tu ti farai theologo et spirituale, da niuno, overo da pochi sarai apprezzato” (Malipiero 1536, 6r.). And yet the author Malipiero has undertaken the task to rewrite the *Canzoniere*, which shows that he hoped to reach at least a small readership.

Incidentally, Petrarcha also briefly quotes “il laureato Aligheri, gloria prima della patria mia” (Malipiero 1536, 6r.), but without going further into Dante’s poetry: Dante does not seem to be an alternative for poetry.

2.2.5.2 Malipiero’s *Introduzione*

In the new edition of the *Petrarca spirituale* published by Comin da Trino in Venice in 1545, Malipiero inserted an “Introduzione” between the sonnets and the canzoni. The text itself indirectly names 1543 as the year of its composition: “Esso [scilicet Francesco Freggipane] [è morto] l’anno novamente passato, che fu quadragesimo secondo apresso il mille e cinquecento [. . .]” (Malipiero 1545, 94v.), i.e., Francesco Freggipane, Bishop of Agrigento, had died a year earlier in 1542, from which it can be deduced that the writing of the “Introduzione” took place in 1543. In the short treatise, Malipiero develops in ten chapters the theological foundations for his project of correcting the *Canzoniere*, which Malipiero, however, only addresses in the last chapter. Quondam goes so far as to recognise in this text “il momento fondativo [. . .] di una nuova tradizione (quella della poesia spirituale)” (Quondam 1991c, 214) of the secondo Cinquecento. He argues that Malipiero’s treatise would have remained unnoticed if he had not immediately put the theoretical principles developed in it into practice: herein lay “il punto di forza” of the *Petrarca spirituale* (Quondam 1991c, 215).

In the first chapter, Malipiero highlights the desire for the good inherent in all beings (Malipiero 1545, 90r.). In order to attain this good, Malipiero argues, human beings, unlike all other creatures, possess free will (Malipiero 1545, 91r.). Malipiero emphasises the value of works of charity, as human beings reach heaven “per sua spontanea volonta et amore” (Malipiero 1545, 92v.) and “fede formata” (Malipiero 1545, 93r.), with the help of which one “volendo et santamente operando possa pervenire” to heaven (Malipiero 1545, 93r.). God had predestined humans in the sense that he had given them the promise of salvation, but on the basis of this promise and after the gift of grace, one must not remain inactive, “a guisa di poltroniere et codardo”, which is why God “gli a vogliuto aggiungere per questo la [n]ecessita di operare virtuosamente” (Malipiero 1545, 93r.), remembering here the rejection of “ozioso parlare” in the introductory dialogue. Without love, no human being would reach the divine goal, and Malipiero defines love neoplatonically as “vero et iusto Amore, il quale, secondo la dottrina theologica, altro non è, che desiderio di bellezza” (Malipiero 1545, 104r.). Accordingly, Malipiero equates the highest beauty with God: “la vera bellezza solamente consista nelle cose divine” (Malipiero 1545, 104r.). The Council of Trent would make this concept of the merit of good works

one of its central doctrines, defined as the cooperation of the believer with God's grace in contradistinction to the Protestant principle of justification by faith alone. Malipiero thus situates his treatise and the *Petrarca spirituale* in highly topical theological debates, while siding with the conservatives on the eve of the Council. At the same time, Malipiero also contradicts Petrarch's *Secretum*, in which the interlocutor Franciscus confesses before Augustine that he cannot restrain his desire: "desiderium frenare non valeo" (Petrarca 2004b, 398). Malipiero, however, does not discuss any inability of human will in the face of an overpowering desire.

Rather, according to Malipiero, in order to guide the will along a path that can be considered "righteous", what is required is knowledge of the "true" goal of human striving: divine truth is revealed to human beings solely through the Holy Scriptures and their interpretation by the Church. Here, too, in this emphasis on tradition alongside Holy Scripture, in the accompanying rejection of the principle of *sola scriptura*, and in the rejection of independent Bible reading without a mediating ecclesiastical authority, we find clear avowals of traditional Catholic theology. In this context, Malipiero manages a clever transition to the topic of Christian literature. Since the ancient philosophers were denied knowledge of Christian truth, he argues, their works, no matter how learned and eloquent, are also to be condemned as "libri di morte" (Malipiero 1545, 97v.). The books of the ancient philosophers are also to be rejected insofar as they endeavoured to develop a doctrine of the way of life towards a goal that can be achieved in this worldly life; Malipiero cites fame, love, and power, among other examples. He sees the goal of the Christian life, by contrast, as salvation in the afterlife, which he defines in a typical Christian paradox as "true life", while earthly life represents "true death": seen in this light, the books of ancient philosophers are "libri di morte".

Malipiero moreover explains that not all believers are able to read the Holy Scriptures, nor do they have sufficient (theological) education (Malipiero 1545, 98r.). Therefore, he argues that

à questo effetto il divino instinto ha comossi, tra gli huomini: molti nobili spiriti à comporre libri di materie spirituali con semplice et volgar locquella, fondate sopra le scritture sacre et autorità delli dottori catholici, per modo che sufficientemente possono gli ignoranti dalle devote letitioni di cotai trattati, essere instrutti dell'ultimo loro fine: et da gli intelligibili sentimenti de sermoni sacri essere eccitati al divino amore. (Malipiero 1545, 98r.)

Once again, Malipiero rejects the principle of *sola scriptura* in favour of tradition, the authority of ecclesiastical scholars, and mediation by those same ecclesiastical authorities as well as by vernacular devotional literature, which must be written in "simple and vernacular language" so that even the "ignorant"

would have access to divine truth. Malipiero does not make it explicit, but here, too, the context suggests that his *Petrarca spirituale* is meant to be such a “book of spiritual content with a simple and vernacular idiom”. Malipiero thus presents his work as a *via media* between the mediation of the Bible and the teachings of faith (*res*), and the appropriation of a vernacular poetry to be corrected on the level of content, whose language (*verba*), however, is useful for the communication with the “ignorant” readers.

According to Malipiero, the reading of such texts is particularly effective because it unites the intellectual power of the *anima intellectiva* with perception through the senses:

O quanta giova all’humana salute leggere spesso cose sante. Et cio è vero, perche havendo l’Anima intelletiva grandissima unione con i sensi corporei, è molto aiutata à destare in se i buoni spiriti, à riaccendere il lume naturale, à concipere honeste cogitationi, à produrre santi desideri, à fare celesti proponimenti, et habituarsi à contemplare le cose eterne, quando ode et ascolta parole di santità, et le divine laudi, espresso massimamente et prononciate dalla viva voce: che da lei è formata per gli organi corporali. (Malipiero 1545, 98r.–v.)

The reader, that is to say, should read the devotional texts aloud with a “living voice” in order to be able to “hear” them in this way: the sound of poetry is supposed to support the religious message. This is the background before which Malipiero comes to the subject of the “spirito della poesia” (Malipiero 1545, 98v.). According to him, such poetry is useful if the believer is aroused by a “melodia musicale” (Malipiero 1545, 98v.), as long as it is performed “santamente”, and if the believer’s spirit is raised to heaven by the melody (Malipiero 1545, 98v.). For this purpose, he continues, God has endowed some people with the “spirit of poetry”:

[. . .] ha infuso et donato à molto svegliati intelletti lo spirito della poesia, così nell’antico come nuovo testamento: et da quello non mediocre copia n’è stata fatta di cantici, salmi, et hynni sacri, pieni di maravigliosi mysteri et soavissime consonanze: percioche essendo composti per modi, numeri, tempi, et misure, et per conseguente con figure metriche, fanno dolce harmonia: laquale perche ad ogni uno diletta, à tutti è utilissima, quando è usata (come dicemmo) per concetti quasi angelici ordinati in Dio. (Malipiero 1545, 98v.)

In both the Old and New Testaments, he notes, one finds examples of “chants,” “psalms” and “hymns” – that is to say, examples of poetry whose content means to reveal divine mysteries and whose tonal harmony is based on the use of regular metres (“modi, numeri, tempi, et misure [. . .] con figure metriche”). It is, he argues, the interplay of utility (“utilissima”) and pleasure (“diletti”) that makes these texts effective in communicating a religious message.

According to Malipiero, the well-wrought form of poetry is based on the principle of proportion and not only triggers pleasure in human beings, but can also comfort and even heal. He quotes here, among other things, the story of King Saul and David (1 Sam 16:14–23) and, for the first time, Petrarch with his sonnet RVF 102 (“Cesare poi che’l traditor d’Egitto”; Malipiero 1545, 100r.). This juxtaposition is revealing inasmuch as Saul only seeks pleasure in music because he is possessed by an evil spirit and God has abandoned him – the same reasons why he would eventually fail and commit suicide. Petrarch is likewise cited here as a negative example; he too is, in a sense, possessed by “an evil spirit”, namely sinful lust and the striving for glory. Malipiero argues that music can therefore have a healing effect because the human mind is so influenced by the harmony of music that it “fixes” the disposition of the mind (Malipiero 1545, 100r.). However, content and form must be congruent (otherwise Petrarch would have been able to “heal” himself with his poetry): the melody of poetry can only be beneficial if it also conveys religious content.

Against this background, Malipiero condemns “modern” poets who devoted their talent to carnal love, by which Malipiero means Petrarch and Petrarchists:

Ma ò tempi nostri infelicissimi et tenebrosi, quanto errore, et quanto abuso stomachevole hoggidi circo cio, si vede tra Mortali? concio sia cosa, che lo studio di si nobile scientia et arte, divinamente ritrovata per lodare et glorificare il sommo Creatore, et per essercitio di spirituale amore, et per incominciare in terra il degno ufficio, che dee continouare eternalmente in cielo, sia usurpato da molti de Moderni versificatori à commercio d’amor carnale, à corrutella del Mondo, et in biasmo et onta dell’eterno Dio. [. . .] Et ciechi non s’accorgono, quanto per ciò si facciano colpevoli si, che di suplicio eterno siano puniti: iquali havendo la mente di molta contaminatione bruttata et offoscato l’intelletto, cercano medesimamente contaminare et imbarbigliare l’animo altrui [. . .]: percioche sotto gli amorosi versi et lusinghevoli parolette prendono occasione et materia di una concupiscenza et illecita voluttà. (Malipiero 1545., 103 r^o–v^o)

Poetry is defined here by Malipiero as “scientia et arte”, *arte* here probably has the meaning of “craft”. It was invented, Malipiero argues, by God and fulfilled the purpose of praising him. Malipiero considers using poetry for other purposes to be “usurpation”, which many “moderni versificatori” commit, and usurping divine poetry to lead to the “corrutella” of the world and to “colp[a]”, meaning sin. This attack can be interpreted as an assault on “il sistema linguistico e culturale del Classicismo bembiano” (Quondam 1991c, 220). Based on this scathing analysis of contemporary vernacular poetry, Malipiero tries to develop solutions to return poetry to its original function according to the biblical model. His proposal is simple: addressing the community of poets, he urges: “aplicate anchora voi le Muse vostre (come si conviene) circa cose celeste et

divine: Et in tal modo farete senza fallo opere lodevoli et degne di celebre memoria” (Malipiero 1545, 104r.).

The Franciscan friar also quotes Dante, calling him “il theologo poeta” (Malipiero 1545, 111r.). Yet there is no question of Malipiero correcting Dante; quite the opposite, Dante had understood that the Cross was the only means of giving poetry the right melody:

Et cio bene intese Dante, il quale (come si legge nelli cantici del paradiso) sollevato al cielo di Marte, pone in quello con gran misterio il segno della santa croce, formata di anime de Beati, iquali esseno stati precipui et studiosi in meditare l'asprezze passione del Signore, meritorno di gustare et sentire quanto fusse dolce et soave la melodia di essa croce: et però assomigliandola à strumenti musicali cosi dice. (Malipiero 1545, 113r.–v.)

From this, however, Malipiero does not derive an alternative classicism based on Dante: this once again shows that Malipiero is a classicist at least on the linguistic level, insofar as he adheres to Petrarch's linguistic primacy and “only” wants to correct the contents.

It is only in the tenth chapter of his treatise (from 111r^o) that Malipiero finally elaborates on his contrafactures, using the term “mutazione” to describe his undertaking (Malipiero 1545, 111r.). The aim of this endeavour is “d'essere profitevole à suo lettore si, che possino aspirare al fine della beata vita” (Malipiero 1545, 111r.). The love poems are “avelenate et pestifere lettioni”, which make the reader so ill that “sia contaminata la mente et corrotto l'animo, perche i malvagi parlari [. . .] corrompono i buoni costume” (Malipiero 1545, 111r.); more concretely, the reading of profane love poetry leads to readers being given “materia et occasione all'anime ragionevoli di fornicare per adulterino amore in ingiuria et onta del sommo Creatore” (Malipiero 1545, 111r.). Petrarch's mistake was that he did not distinguish between two different types of melody: “non facendo distintione tra la melodia, che diletta solamente il senso dell'udito corporeo, il cui fine è cattivo, et la melodia, che diletta il senso dell'udito spirituale, il cui fine è buono” (Malipiero 1545, 112v.). Poetry should thus appeal to the inner senses. Moreover, Malipiero justifies his project by saying that Petrarch himself regretted his poems: “dopò molti anni dall'obito suo, aperti per gratia divina gli occhi della mente, ha convertita la cithara sua à canto di melodia spirituale” (Malipiero 1545, 113r.). However, Malipiero is well aware that “le modificate ode et cantilene non havranno possuto in ògni parte conservare tutta la loro polidezza et leggiadria” (Malipiero 1545, 113r.).

2.2.5.3 Salvatorino's introduction in the *Thesoro de Sacra Scrittura*

Salvatorino's contrafactures are preceded by a "Prefazione dell'opera / in sonetti .XXI. tra se retrograde". The poet himself explains the number of twenty-one stanzas at the end of the text as a multiplication of the divine numbers three and seven (XXI, 281; as the edition contains neither continuous numbering of leaves or pages nor numbering of verses or stanzas, we indicate the stanza in Roman numerals and the verses in Arabic numerals in order to aid the reader's orientation). However, this self-imposed number of stanzas is not correct, and this is only the first of many oddities of this composition: after the twenty-first sonnet, there is another twenty-second stanza. The technique of the sonetti tra sé retrogradi is unusual, too: on each page of the "Prefazione" there are two stanzas, of which the upper one forms a sonnet with two quartets and two tercets, and the lower one is a form that conversely consists of two tercets and two quartets. The lower stanza reuses the rhyme scheme of the upper poem in mirrored order: thus the rhyme scheme of the first page, i.e., the first two stanzas, is abba abba cdc dcd / dcd cdc abba abba. However, Salvatorini is not satisfied with mirroring the rhyme scheme alone, but adopts the same rhyming words and the same rhyme scheme throughout all twenty-one stanzas, namely "sette, segno, disegno, mette, benedette, ingegno, degno, concette, mosse, camino, fosse, divino, mosse, festino" (to "mette" and "mosse" Salvatorino adds different prefixes). The twenty-second stanza consists only of a quartet and a tercet with the rhyme scheme abba cdc, using the same rhyming words as in the remaining stanzas, which are additionally reinforced here by internal rhymes. Salvatorino so creates a tight formal corset for himself. It is therefore hardly surprising that the text often repeats itself in terms of content. The formal constraints sometimes necessitate a free use of syntax, which makes it quite difficult to understand the text; Salvatorino's "Prefazione" seems clumsy and awkward as a result.

In the first stanza, a speaker who identifies himself with the author dates the beginning of his writing to 1537: "Nel mille cinque cento trenta sette / [. . .] / Si cominciare queste benedette / Rime [. . .]" (I, 1, 5–7). Moreover, it is clear that at this point he was already familiar with the contrafactures of Malipiero, whom he explicitly refers to as a model:

[I] 12 Dopoi altre ne vidi, per Divino
 Voler' simili quasi; a cui si mosse
 Maripetro, di me via piu festino.

[II] 15 Quel Sacro Reverendo, piu festino
 Di me, a cotal impresa si promosse,
 Col bel leggiadro stil', Santo Divino,

- 18 Ma se ben questo mio, si rude fosse,
 Come si vede, al già preso camino
 Dio vuol ch'i segua le mie scorte mosse,
 21 Per mostrar meglio, come le concette
 Cose per vanitadi, esso fà degno
 Soggetto de virtudi; [. . .] (f. A iii r^o)

Malipiero's *Petrarca spirituale* had thus preceded him (v. 14). It is noteworthy that the "bel leggiadro stil" (v. 17) is not attributed to Petrarch here, but to Malipiero himself. This writing style is like its author, "Santo Divino" (v. 17), and is contrasted with Salvatorino's own "[stile] rude" (v. 18), which seems paradoxical, since Salvatorino also apparently adopts Petrarch's words: the style would therefore have to be similar, at least linguistically, though here the modestia topos certainly plays not a small role in the self-characterisation as "rude". Like Malipiero, Salvatorino sets out to purge the *Canzoniere* of the error of earthly love, even if, unlike Malipiero, this project is not staged as the commission of a deceased Petrarch, but of God, who makes Salvatorino his instrument:

- [IV] Si può dir veramente, ch'in festino
 42 Tempo, sian' queste rime ancho rimosse
 Dal primo error, per gratie, e don divino:
 E lo suo author mostrò, che di ciò fosse
 45 Desioso; quando ancho qui giu in camino,
 Con speme, al fin, su tai gratie firmosse:
 E forse, perch'all'hor in se concette
 48 Fuoro da lui, fatt'hora l'hà Dio, degno;
 Non potendo ei per morte; d'altrui ingegno,
 Per cui, nel'avvenir sian'benedette: (f. A iii r^o)

In the marginal notes, Salvatorino "proves" that Petrarch had already intended this reorientation towards the spiritual during his lifetime with a reference to: "Pet.trion./ de la divi/ nita", i.e., "Petrarca Trionfo della Divinità". According to Salvatorino, the *Trionfi* were thus written after the *Canzoniere* in an act of penitence; and since they culminated in the triumph of God, Petrarch had intended a turn towards the spiritual for his other works, which he was not able to realise for the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* due to his death.

In the following stanzas, Salvatorino moves away from Petrarch and Malipiero and digresses and summarises all kinds of contemporary history and stories of divine deeds from the Bible. Finally, after long passages praising God, Salvatorino suddenly returns to Malipiero: the author asks himself where his reflections have led him: "Ma dove son?" (XIX, 255). More profound theoretical considerations are not found in Salvatorino's "Prefazione". Here, a Latin dedicatory poem by an unidentifiable Santino Coferino (f. A iii r^o) is more precise:

S. Sanctini Coferini in Salvatorinum carmen

Non Nymphas, Satyros, Veneres, Puerumque, minacem,
 Furta Deum gentis Martia bella canit;
 Hic canit historias legis veterisq[ue]; novaeq[ue];
 Et servat numeros Docte Petrarcha tuos;
 Tu Francisce, tuo cecinisti carmine Lauram,
 Virginis Hic sobolem, caelicolumq[ue]; choros;
 Publica Res Christi Sanctum venerare poema,
 Et legat hoc Hominum docta Corona, iube.

Eiusdem ad lectorem.

Hic vatis partes; nam miscuit utile dulci,
 Quod iuvat, et prodest, accipe lector opus,
 Olim qui Lauram, nunc legem laudat utranq[ue];
 Arni igitur castas percole castalides.

By Santino Coferino on the song of Salvatorino. Not of the nymphs, satyrs, love-goddesses, and the threatening boy, their secrets, the god of the heathen, the wars of Mars, he sings; this one sings of the stories of the old and new law, and serves your melody, learned Petrarch; you, Francis, sang of Laura in your song; this one of the Virgin's offspring and the choirs of the celestials; Respublica Christi, venerate this sacred poem, and command that the learned assembly of men read it. From the same to the reader. Here are the pieces of a poet, for he mixes the useful with the sweet, take, reader, the work that delights and benefits. He who once praised Laura now praises the law of both testaments; honour, then, the chaste Castalides of Arno (my translation).

Coferino explains that Salvatorino writes neither entertaining and mocking poetry nor erotic love poetry, nor does he describe military deeds, but instead deals on the level of content with the Old and New Testaments and uses Petrarch's poetic language for this purpose: here, too, a clear distinction is made between *res* and *verba*. In this sense, Salvatorino combines the useful (the message of the Bible) with the entertaining (the melody of the poetry). Coferino already understands that Petrarch does not denote an author alone, but also a style: "Olim qui Lauram, nunc legem laudat utranq[ue]" (v. 12): the general pronoun "qui" – which does not function here as relative pronoun referring to another noun – stands not for Petrarch as author, but for the Petrarchists, and Laura here stands for the earthly beloved about which the Petrarchists generally sing. The spiritual Petrarchists such as Salvatorino replace Laura with Christ, but remain thus Petrarchists.

2.2.6 Reactions to spiritual contrafactures in the Cinquecento

We make only brief remarks here on reactions to spiritual contrafactures in the Cinquecento, since only a relatively small number of documents from this period offer any commentary on contrafactures, and all of these refer to Malipiero's *Petrarca spirituale*. A positive reaction to this work may be the number of reprints during the sixteenth century, which shows that there must have been a readership and a demand. Furthermore, Malipiero's contrafactures were included in the anthology *Libro primo delle rime spirituali*, published in 1550 in Venice "al segno della Speranza", next to poets of high reputation such as Vittoria Colonna: Colonna and Malipiero even take up the bulk of the anthology by a wide margin, while only individual sonnets are quoted by other authors. Another positive reaction is the fact that there were imitators – first and foremost Salvatorino, who explicitly praises Malipiero in the preface to his own contrafactures. Moreover, Cecilia Luzzi has shown that the *Petrarca spirituale* was also the subject of musical settings (Luzzi 2013).

In addition, however, we also find negative reactions to the *Petrarca spirituale*. Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio writes:

[. . .] si son trovati e si trovano oggidì alcuni che lasciati i sensi veri fanno tali farnetichi su alcune cose del Petrarca, che paiono spiritati che dicano le maraviglie, e [. . .] che l'ha fatto spirituali vestendolo da frate minore, e pio cingendolo di corda gli ha messo i zoccoli in piedi. (Cinzio 1554, 77–78)

The author acknowledges a "senso vero" of the *Canzoniere* from which some of his contemporaries – Cinzio is speaking in the plural – would have departed in frenzy ("farnetichi") and obsession ("spiritati"). Among these, Cinzio specifically mentions someone who had disguised Petrarch as a "frate minore", which is an allusion to Malipiero who is indeed a Franciscan friar.

In addition to Cinzio, Nicolò Franco commented on the *Petrarca spirituale*. In his *Pistole volgari* of 1539, Franco writes a letter addressed to Petrarch in which he informs the poet about the current developments of his imitation:

Veggio il Petrarca comentato. Il Petrarca sconcacato. Il Petrarca imbrodolato. Il Petrarca tutto rubbato. Il Petrarca Temporale, e il *Petrarca Spirituale*. (Franco 1539, 84v.–85r.)

Quondam prefaces his article on the *Petrarca spirituale* with this quotation: for him, Franco is a "testimone affidabile" of the "processo in corso, nei suoi termini profondi di costituzione del sistema letterario del Classicismo" (Quondam 1991c, 203). Quondam quotes another passage from Franco's *Pistole volgari*, in which Franco compares the imitation of Petrarch to a theft ("imitare idest rubbare il Petrarca"): Quondam interprets this sentence to mean that Franco

regarded the imitation of Petrarch in general as a “comportamento abnorme” (Quondam 1991c, 203).

Finally, a positive assessment comes from Giovanni Aquilano, who quotes Malipiero’s contrafactures in his *Prediche per tutta la quaresima* of 1569. Aquilano does not mention that these are adaptations of Petrarch’s sonnets, but simply attributes the authorship to Malipiero, e.g.,

Come bene, di ciò parlando, tocca in un sonetto fra Girolamo Maripietro, dicendo;
Et benche del voler habbiam le chiavi, (Aquilano 1569, 272 = sonnet CXXII in Malipiero 1536, 39v. = RVF 155)

Perquesto ancora dice quell venerabil poeta fra Gierolamo Maripietro.
Gratie, ch’à pochi il Ciel largo destina. (Aquilano 1569, 509 = sonnet CLXXVIII in Malipiero 1536, 53v. = RVF 213)

This shows that Malipiero was taken seriously and revered as an author.

2.2.7 Example analyses

In the following, we illustrate the transformation of the Petrarchan text by analysing the contrafactures of RVF 6 written by Malipiero, Salvatorino, and Colonna:

Petrarca, RVF VI.

Sì traviato è ’l folle mi’ desio
a seguitar costei che ’n fuga è volta,
et de’ lacci d’Amor leggiera et sciolta
vola dinanzi al lento correr mio,
che quanto richiamando più l’envio
per la sicura strada, men m’ascolta:
né mi vale spronarlo, o dargli volta,
ch’Amor per sua natura il fa restio.
Et poi che ’l fren per forza a sé
raccolle,
i’ mi rimango in signoria di lui,
che mal mio grado a morte mi trasporta:
sol per venir al lauro onde si coglie
acerbo frutto, che le piaghe altrui
gustando afflige più che non conforta.

Malipiero, *Petrarca spirituale*, sonetto VI. f 10v.

Sì traviato è ’l folle mi’ desio
In questa vita; ch’in gran fuga è volta,
Ne mai da lacci *del nemico* è sciolta;
Ch’amaro è più, *che morte il viver mio*.
O quante volte richiamando invio
Lo spiro a buon camin; *ma non* m’ascolta;
Ne mi vale spronarlo, o dargli volta;
Che’l senso per natura il fa restio.
Onde, se la ragione a se non coglie
L’istinto human, *m’è forza seguir lui*;
Che, mal mio grado, *al vizio* mi trasporta.
Ma pur il santo legno, onde s’accoglie
Salubre frutto, che le piaghe altrui
Tutte risana, è *sol*, che *mi* conforta.

The first verse of Petrarch’s sonnet remains untouched in Malipiero’s contrafacture, while in the second the syntagma “a seguitar costei [id est Laura]” is

replaced by “in questa vita”. Petrarch’s “mad desire” (v. 1) has strayed from the right path because it has given free rein to its *concupiscentia* for Laura. Malipiero’s desire is also described as insane, “folle”, but the cause of his straying remains unclear at first. In Malipiero, life metaphorically turns away “in flight” (v. 2) from the desire of the speaker and yet, paradoxically, cannot free itself from the “fetters of the enemy” (v. 3). This enemy can be interpreted as a designation of “desio”, and the Christian context suggests that we understand “nemico” to mean seduction by the devil and thus sin. This is why life slips away from the speaker: sin drives him to death. The consequence is that the life of the lyrical subject is more bitter than death (v. 4).

As with Petrarch, Malipiero’s speaker is unable to lead his mind back to the right path by his own efforts (vv. 5–6). Unlike Petrarch, however, it is not love (v. 8) whose nature resists, but “[i]l senso”, sensual perception, alluding to the juxtaposition of a form of knowledge through the senses and divine revelation – a possible biblical source could be Mt 16:17: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”. According to this passage, it is not a physical perception by the senses, symbolised by “flesh and blood”, but the divine revelation that has revealed the truth to Simon. The two terms “flesh and blood” may also allude to the Eucharist, which Malipiero again takes up centrally in the tercets in the metaphor of the “fruit that brings salvation” (v. 13).

The first tercet emphasises that reason is not able to restrain the “instinto” (v. 10), the natural drive of human beings, so that the lyrical subject is forced to follow this drive, which leads the subject to sin against his will (v. 11) – in the verb “seguir” (v. 10), Petrarch’s “seguitar” (v. 2) is finally taken up again. While in Petrarch the carnal lust of desire (*concupiscentia*) drives the speaker to death, Malipiero generalises this drive to the whole “instinto human” (v. 10).

Especially in the last tercet, Malipiero makes some striking substitutions: for instance, the wood of the Cross, a metonymy, replaces the laurel tree, and this wood is furthermore characterised as “santo”, thus opposing what we can call Petrarch’s “profane” laurel tree. Malipiero’s contrafacture functions here via a substitution: a secular-profane reference point, the laurel tree, is erased from the poem and replaced by a similar spiritual element. This similarity is provided by the metaphor of the tree and its wood. In Petrarch, the fruit of the laurel tree is bitter (v. 13), since the lyrical subject wants to enjoy the forbidden pleasure of the flesh from it, while the metaphorical fruit of the Cross represents the salvation of Christ and is thus marked as “salubre”. In Petrarch, the metaphor alludes to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the seduction of Eve, and hence to the resulting original sin, while Malipiero’s fruit stands as a metaphor

for the Eucharist, i.e., for the actualisation through flesh and blood of the sacrificial death of Christ performed on the “legno”.

In contrast to the laurel, which inflicts the wounds of original sin on others when tasting its fruit (vv. 13–14), the fruit of the Cross heals “all” wounds, which also refers to the wound of love inflicted by Petrarch. Moreover, the adverb “sol” (v. 14) emphasises that only the Cross can heal the wounds of sin. That Petrarch’s desire is precisely such a sin is made explicit by Malipiero through the noun “vitio” (v. 11), which replaces the term “morte” in Petrarch: while Petrarch’s speaker is inevitably driven to death by his desire, Malipiero’s lyrical subject is “only” driven to sin. Unlike Petrarch, Malipiero’s speaker can hope for forgiveness of his sins by turning to the Cross, which gives him the strength to renounce his sinful desire, a strength that Petrarch’s subject lacks. In other words, the complete turning of human beings to God, prevented in Petrarch by original sin, is now rectified in Malipiero.

Salvatorino rewrote RVF 6 twice in his contrafactures:

Salvatorino, *Thesoro* XIII.

Si travagliato è'l folle mio desio
 A seguir il van' Mondo, che m'hà involta
 L'alma nel fango, che libera, e sciolta
 Da Dio fu infusa pur, nel corpo mio;
 Che quanto più gridando al ciel' l'envio,
 Per la strada di Christo, men m'ascolta,
 Ne con ragion spronarlo o darli volta
 Mi val, che l'appetito il fa restio;
 E se tal'hor il freno à se raccoglie,
 Mi rimarrei in Segnoria di lui,
 Che da peccati à morte mi trasporta;
 Se non ch'al'arbor corro, onde si coglie
 Di vita il frutto, e nelle piaghe altrui
 Temprando i sensi miei, mi riconforta.

Salvatorino preserves the expression of the “folle mio desio” and replaces the participle “traviato” with the phonetically similar “travagliato”. He also abstracts the image of persecution by replacing Laura, “costei” (v. 2), with the “van[o] Mondo”. He thus generalises the problem of sin to the concern for worldly things which implies a neglect of the worship of God. It is noteworthy that, according to Salvatorino, the soul was created “free and detached” (v. 3) from God and “let into the body” (v. 4), while the world corrupts the soul in its metaphorical “swamp” of sinfulness, keeping it unfree and imprisoned, so that human beings then also lose control over their “desio”, which here takes on the meaning of willpower. In vain, the lyrical speaker tries to lead his will back to the right path, which leads

“per la strada di Christo”, i.e., by following Christ, to salvation, metaphorically “al ciel[o]” (v. 5). In Petrarch, the “secura strada” (v. 6) already signifies a moral-theological way of life that leads human beings to God, whereas the path taken by Petrarch’s “desio” leads to sin and to death (v. 11). Salvatorino explains that the “secura strada” is the “strada di Christo”. Like Malipiero, Salvatorino emphasises that it is the mind, “ragion” (v. 7), that is unable to restrain desire. The term “appetito” (v. 8), like Petrarch’s “desio”, can denote a sexual desire, but because of its broader reference to the “van’ Mondo” (v. 2), it also includes other sins that denounce excessive human attachment to worldly things (e.g., greed, avarice, pride, gluttony, lust).

The first tercet contains only small, albeit particularly revealing, adaptations. For example, Salvatorino changes the verb form “rimango” in the *condizionale*, “rimarrei” (v. 10), the condition of which is carried out by two conditional clauses. First, the speaker would remain under the bondage (v. 10) of his “appetite” (v. 8) if the latter took the reins and the speaker lost control. This subordinate clause introduced by “se” replaces the clause introduced by “poi che” and relativises the power of the “appetite” through the temporal adverb “tal’hora”: the “appetite” is thus only sometimes able to seize control of the speaker. Secondly, however, this only happens when the lyrical subject does not run to the metaphorical tree of the Cross – this substitution of the laurel tree by the tree of the Cross is already known from Malipiero. Unlike Petrarch, who presents the subjection of his speaker to his desire as an inevitable consequence of Cupid’s superiority, Salvatorino’s speaker can escape death (v. 11) through Christ. The wounds of love inflicted by Laura are replaced in Salvatorino by the wounds of Christ, in whose Passion the lyrical subject can restrain his senses (v. 14 “i sensi”), i.e., his sensual desire.

The second contrafacture goes further in its attempt at Christian substitution. Only the first verse and the rhyming words remain, with minor adjustments (mode 2.c). Both contrafactures follow one another directly, but while Salvatorino gives no biblical passages in the marginal notes for the first version, he cites eight passages for the second version. The *riscrittura* is thus multiplied both in terms of the number of textual elements that are rewritten and by the number of biblical quotations.

Salvatorino, Thesoro XIII.

Si mi travaglia il folle mio desio,
De questi honor’, e d’ambition tal volta;
Ch’in tutto non mi sento l’anima sciolta
Di ciò voler, si ch’appena son mio:
Ma dice il mio conforto, à cui viver m’envio;

Ro.15.

<i>Mostrandomi de vani turba molta,</i>	2.Mac.11.
<i>De Piante al Regno, infertil spina, e incolta,</i>	
<i>Da boni Arbor sprezzato, ancho salio:</i>	Iudic.9.
<i>Ove son quei, de chi in te se raccoglie</i>	
<i>Hor la memoria? e prima ov'è colui?</i>	Dan.
<i>Che di Caldei, la gran Corona porta?</i>	1.Reg.9.2.
<i>U il bon Saul poi reo? le cui spoglie</i>	2.Reg.31.
<i>Hebbe Astaroth; e cosi con altrui</i>	1.Par.10.2
<i>Esempi, mi rafrena; e poi conforta.</i>	Eccl.18.2.

The sonnet is undeniably more difficult to understand than the first contrafacture, not only because of the numerous biblical quotations closely interwoven in the text but also because of its inclusion of occult figures unknown to the Bible, like Astaroth (v. 13). The first verse is hardly changed, as in the examples already analysed, but this time Salvatorino puts the verb in the active voice: “mi travaglia” instead of “travagliato è” as in the first contrafacture. This makes it clear that the turn to God is not yet complete, for the lyrical subject is still being tormented by his desire. In addition, the object of desire is now more narrowly defined: it is no longer the whole “vain world” as in the first contrafacture, but honour, i.e., recognition according to human standards, and ambition, i.e., striving and eagerness. Both concepts concern earthly values which would be well known to any reader familiar with Petrarch from the *senhal* of the laurel. Petrarch’s desire for Laura is always also a striving for poetic fame, which Salvatorino now generalises into a striving for honour.

After this manifestation of human weakness, the “conforto” of the lyrical subject whom the subject wants to follow in his way of life is given voice: it is therefore reasonable to see Christ in the “conforto”. This is underpinned by the chapter from the Letter to the Romans (Rom 15) quoted in the marginal notes: here Paul explains to his congregation that he wants to “glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God” (Rom 15:17) and that he has “strived to preach the gospel” among the Gentiles (15:20). Paul therefore did not seek earthly honour, as Salvatorino’s speaker does (v. 2 “honor”, e d’ambition”). In this sense, according to Paul, believers should not “please [them]selves” (15:1), but “please [their] neighbour for [their] good, to [their] edification” (15:2), or as Salvatorino summarises: “conforto, à cui viver m’envio” (v. 5). Moreover, at this point in the Letter to the Romans, God is called “God of patience and consolation” (15:5), which justifies why Salvatorino can simply call Christ “conforto” (v. 5).

The reference to 2 Macc 11 leads the reader to the account of the war with the commander Lysias and his failed attempt to conquer Judea: his army, the “de vani turba molta” (v. 6), was defeated by the Jews with the help of God, who answered their prayers by providing an angel, “a horseman dressed in

white and carrying gold weapons” (2 Macc 11:8). Salvatorino then paraphrases Jotham’s fable from Judges 9:7–21, where Jotham tells the citizens of Shechem a fable in which the trees once wanted to anoint a king (v. 7 “regno”) among themselves. But neither the olive tree nor the fig tree nor the vine – the “boni Arbor” (v. 8) – wanted to accept this title, because, according to Salvatorino, they spurned the crown (v. 8 “sprezzato”). Finally, the trees turned to a thorn bush (v. 7 “spina”), which accepted the burden of kingship, while also threatening to “devour the cedars of Lebanon” (Judges 9:15) if the trees were to be disloyal. At the same time, the image of the thorn and the kingdom alludes to Christ, “King of kings” (1 Tim 6:15), and to his crown of thorns (Matt 27:29). Salvatorino thus undertakes an allegorical interpretation of Jotham’s fable, transforming the image of the laurel tree, as Malipiero and Salvatorino had already done: here the laurel tree becomes the thorn bush and the crown of thorns, which in turn stands metonymically for the Cross.

The first tercet begins a series of questions posed by the lyrical subject to a person addressed in the second person singular (v. 9 “te”), behind whom probably stands Christ, his “conforto” (v. 5). The second question alludes to the prophet Daniel, which Salvatorino has thankfully inserted in the marginal notes. The prophet Daniel is singled out as the one among the Chaldeans who had worn their “great crown”. Since Daniel was never crowned, this is a metaphor: the prophet is above the other Chaldeans, who are identified in the Book of Daniel as “magician[s], or astrologer[s]” (Dan 2:10), because he is the only one who is able, through divine inspiration, to interpret the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar.

The second tercet takes up the theme of divination and switches to another biblical figure: according to 1 Sam 18:10–12, Saul, the first king of the united tribes of Israel, was possessed by an evil spirit that made him feel threatened by, and gave him the desire to kill David. Shortly before the battle against the Philistines, Saul had lost his trust in God and instead sought information about the outcome of the battle from a spirit of the dead through a fortune teller (1 Chron 10:13). Salvatorino apparently identifies these spirits with Astaroth, a demon known from occult mythology and prince of hell, occasionally associated with the cult of Astarte known from the Books of Samuel. The biblical passages cited in the notes are erroneous: it is not the Books of Kings that are meant (“1.Reg.9.2” and “2.Reg.31”), but the Books of Samuel, which provide information about the anointing of Saul as king (1 Sam 9:2) and about his end (1 Sam 31). The latter chapter describes Saul’s suicide: his guilt (v. 12) probably consists in his suicide in view of the imminent defeat of the Israelites by the Philistines, which a medium had predicted to him (1 Sam 28:3–25). This implicitly establishes a connection with Daniel: for unlike the prophet, Saul no longer has any trust in God – and conversely, God has also let Saul fall from grace,

according to 1 Sam 18 – and cannot hope for divine revelation like that given to Daniel. After Saul's death, his "spoglie" (v. 12) are laid down in the temple of Astarte (1 Sam 31:10): Salvatorino thus translates Astarte as Astaroth.

The last verse refers in the marginal note to "Eccl.18.2": "and he [the Lord] alone is just. And there is no other besides him" (Sir 18.2). Obviously, there is no literal reference to the sonnet text, so the Bible does not serve here as a source of evidence for a paraphrase or summary of the divine word. The reference to Jesus Sirach must serve another purpose, which could be to point the reader to a superior religious truth, namely, the justice and uniqueness of God. In general, the second contrafacture departs significantly from the Petrarchan original, which, again, is typical of all contrafactures by Salvatorino.

As already pointed out, the contrafactures written by Stefano Colonna are meant to be responses that Laura gives to the original Petrarchan sonnets in order to correct his point of view:

Stefano Colonna, I sonetti VI

Si travagliato,
Tranquill'e lieto si fu quel disio,
C'hebbi già di seguir (in fuga volta
Da le reti del mondo, e d'amor tolta)
Chi à se mi chiama, e temprà il corso mio.
 Che se dal camin torto al diritto invio
Il senso, che pe'l meglio il peggio ascolta,
Non è, quando lo sprono, e gli do volta
Qual era già nel primo error restio.
 Anzi humilmente il fieno [sic] in se raccoglie
Ragion sbandita, e in balia di lui
Al supremo suo bene lo trasporta.
 Onde si radi, e vaghi fior si coglie
(Merce del ciel, non già virtù d'altrui)
Che'l corpo serba, e l'anima conforta.

In this sonnet, Laura explains why, according to Petrarch, she "[i]n fuga è volta" (v. 2): she wanted to free herself from the "nets of the world and of love" (v. 3) so that her "desire remained calm and content" (v. 1) when she follows the one who "calls her to him and softens her gait" (v. 4). Unlike Petrarch's lyrical subject, Laura is able to call her senses to the right path (v. 5) by applying the metaphorical spurs which Petrarch's speaker is denied (v. 7 "non mi vale spronarlo"). Laura, moreover, does not recall her desire, as Petrarch does, nor it is love that resists her, but "il senso". The mind, the "ragion" (v. 10), is also able to take the reins – "il fieno" is surely a misprint instead of "il freno" (v. 9) – and can lead him (v. 11 "lo", probably meaning "il senso") to the highest good,

i.e., to God. In heaven, the lyrical subject can then “pick flowers” (v. 12), i.e., receive the bliss of God. Finally, the sonnet emphasises that all this is an act of God’s grace (v. 13 “merce del ciel”) and not a merit of one’s own works (“non già virtù d’altrui”). Colonna’s contrafacture smooths out all the conflicts of the Petrarchan original: his Laura encounters no obstacles in her turning to God via the right path.

Some similarities can be observed in the contrafactures considered here. Petrarch’s “desio” always remains untouched as a formulation, while only the objects of desire shift: what they have in common, however, is sinfulness. Whereas in Petrarch’s sonnet this sinfulness is the carnal desire for Laura, in Salvatorino’s *riscritture* it is first the vanity of the world in general and then, in his second contrafacture, the striving for honour. In Malipiero and Salvatorino’s contrafactures, the “desio” is preserved in a negative meaning, while in Colonna’s it becomes a desire for God in a positive sense (as in mystical poetry). In Malipiero and Salvatorino, the image of the tree is preserved in different ways: Malipiero metonymically transforms it into the wood of the Cross. Yet Salvatorino symbolises the Cross as a tree (first version) and then connects it with the fable of Jathom from the Book of Judges (second version), building a bridge to the crown of thorns and thus back to the Passion of Christ. This reference to the crown of thorns then gives Salvatorino another reason to make a reference to the crown of the Chaldeans.

2.2.8 Conclusions

The spiritual counterfactuals of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* can be described as anti-classical in that they can only partially accept Petrarch as a model of poetry: while trying to preserve the linguistic level of the *verba*, they nevertheless correct the content level of the *res*. The contrafactures thereby maintain a paradoxical relationship to the original text: sometimes they try to replace the original, as Malipiero and Salvatorino do; and sometimes they respond to the original texts in a way that actually preserves the original poems, as Colonna does. Although Malipiero also mentions alternative models – first and foremost the Bible, but also Dante – he does not go so far as to make an alternative classicism out of these sources. Petrarch remains the point of reference. The contrafactures were ridiculed in their time – by Cinzio and Franco, for example – but it can be assumed that a large part of the readers took the contrafactures to be serious literature, as evidenced by new editions, imitators such as Salvatorino, anthologies as the *Libro primo delle rime spirituali*, and quotations in Aquilano’s sermon books.