CONTINUITIES AND DISCONTINUITIES BETWEEN THE MEDIEVAL AND THE EARLY MODERN
The first stanza of Canzone 126, “Chiare fresche e dolci acque” is one of the most memorable texts of Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, and arguably a quintessential Petrarchan text, as it evokes all the most relevant traits of his collection of vernacular lyrics. In it, Petrarch reconstructs by memory (‘remembers’) the apparition of his beloved Laura in a supremely idealized springtime context. The dialectic between a poetics of scattering (‘membra’) and a poetic strategy of re-composition (‘rimembra’), the relation between self and landscape, between memory and identity, the theme of desire and its frustration are all implied in this short turn of lines.

Chiare, fresche et dolci acque  
ove le belle membra  
pose colei che sola a me par donna;  
gentil ramo ove piacque  
(con sospir’ mi rimembra)  
a lei di fare al bel fianco colonna;  
erba e fior’ che la gonna  
leggiadra ricoverse  
co l’angelico seno;  
aere sacro sereno  
ove Amor co’ begli occhi il cor m’ aperse:  
date udienza insieme  
a le dolenti mie parole estreme.¹

¹ ‘Clear, fresh, sweet waters where she who alone seems lady to me rested her lovely body, gentle branch where it pleased her (with sighing I remember) to make a column for her lovely side, grass and flowers that her rich garment covered along with her angelic breast, sacred bright air where Love opened my heart with her lovely eyes: listen all together to my sorrowful dying words.’ Petrarch’s text is quoted from *Canzoniere*, ed. G. Contini (Turin: 1964). Translations are taken from *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*, transl. R. Durling (Cambridge: 1976). The question whether the best fitting title for Petrarch’s work is *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (as Petrarch himself named it) or *Canzoniere* (as it is more frequently called in the tradition), or even *Rime sparse* (from