The earliest medieval representation of the death of Saint Monica (333–387 CE) appears in the Church of Notre-Dame-du-Bourg, Rabastens, located in southwest France (Fig. 1). The first chapel on the right is dedicated to Monica’s son, the theologian and Church Father, Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE). In the scene of Monica’s death, Augustine stands before his mother’s bier, resting his head in his hand. The figural arrangement highlights Monica’s pronounced participation in her son’s life: the haloed heads of both saints, as well as their hands (his left, her right) are turned toward each other, creating a visual harmony that suggests the closeness of mother and son. Framing the scene in the background, an angel displays an excerpt from the very Psalm Augustine cited in his spiritual autobiography, the *Confessions* (ca. 397 CE), shortly before recounting the death of Monica: *pretiosa in conspectus domini mors sanctorum eius* [precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints].

As one of only six scenes depicting events from Augustine’s life—a series from which Augustine’s dramatic conversion to Christianity is noticeably absent—the Death of Monica testifies to the artist’s conception of Monica’s importance. Indeed, as Pedro Almodóvar might say, for Augustine it was “all about my mother.” In the *Confessions*, Augustine’s relationship with Monica takes center stage; he mentions his mother early on (book one, chapter six), and he provides a profile of her life and death in book nine, writing that: “there are many things I do not set down in this book [...] but I will omit not a word that my mind can bring to birth concerning your servant, my mother. In the flesh she brought me to birth in this world: in her heart she brought me to birth in your eternal light.”

The chapel dedicated to Augustine in the Church of Notre-Dame-du-Bourg was constructed in 1318. That very year,
the poet and humanist Francis Petrarch (1304-1374 CE), who was studying nearby at the University of Montpellier, suffered the death of his mother, Eletta Canigiani (ca. 1280-1318 CE).\(^5\) The date is a striking coincidence, given that the image of a son grieving for his mother reverberates throughout Petrarch’s body of work, beginning with his earliest composition. Between 1318 and 1319, Petrarch composed an affectionate Latin elegy, the *panegyricus in funere matris*, with the death of Eletta as its subject.\(^6\) Echoing the depiction of Augustine and Monica on the Rabastens mural, Petrarch’s poem for Eletta closes with a description of the sorrowful son before his mother’s corpse: *licuit gelidis lacrimas infundere membris* [it was allowed to shed tears on your cold limbs].

The resonance between the conclusion of Petrarch’s poem and the Rabastens image draws attention to the necessity of taking into account the importance of Petrarch’s cultural environment in understanding his literary corpus. In this article, I expand upon methods of intertextual source study by examining the visual prominence of Monica in Petrarch’s world. I propose that artistic representations of the saint, in which Monica is shown either at her son’s side, witnessing and affirming his life, or dead as at Rabastens, are of critical importance for Petrarch.

A full understanding of the role of the images requires a brief examination of the literary relationship between Eletta and Monica. Petrarch’s career begins and ends with his mother’s name: “Electa” (the Latin form of Eletta) appears at the beginning of the early elegy cited above: *regna tenes Electa Dei tam nomine quam re* [the elect/chosen of God not only in name but also in fact], and resurfaces at the end of the *Canzoniere*, the collection of lyrics Petrarch labored over until his death in 1374: *Sola tu fosti electa* [only you were elect/chosen].\(^7\) The importance Petrarch accords his mother is not surprising in view of the prominence of the maternal figure in the work of his intellectual father, Augustine.\(^8\) Petrarch’s 1318 elegy, in which thirty-eight lines of dactylic hexameter commemorate the thirty-eight years of Madonna Eletta’s life, can be seen as a compact version of book nine of his favorite text, the *Confessions*, since it offers a
brief account of a mother’s life from the point of view of her mourning son.  

Following Augustine’s lead, Petrarch makes his mother part of his literary self-fashioning. Scholars have long observed that at the heart of Petrarch’s writing is a calculated effort to leave a monumental self-portrait to posterity. My interest lies in the poet’s strategic use of his mother in shaping his literary persona and adding luster to his reputation. In the 1318 panegyric, for example, Petrarch’s goal is to render his mother famous along with and by virtue of his poetry: *vivemus pariter, pariter memorabimus ambo* [you and I will live together, together we will both be remembered]. The literary chiasmus in this line underscores the intimate connection between the lives and the fame of mother and son.

Madonna Eletta appears in her son’s major works, including the three epistolary collections: *Rerum familiarum libri* (Letters on Familiar Matters), *Epistolae metricae* (Metrical Epistles), and *Senilium rerum libri* (Letters of Old Age). In celebrated letters, such as *Familiares* 1.1 (the dedication to the largest collection) and the influential *Epistola Posteritati* [Letter to Posterity] the maternal figure is an essential part of autobiographical anecdotes in which Petrarch self-consciously presents himself to his readers. As I will discuss later, Petrarch uses the figure of his mother in recounting his dramatic birth in order to underscore his own exceptionality.

Petrarch’s description of Eletta bears a stronger resemblance to the images of Monica that surrounded him than it does to Augustine’s depiction of Monica in the *Confessions*. Augustine’s literary portrait of his mother is fuller than the visual images in Petrarch’s environment; the bishop of Hippo describes not only the death but also the life of Monica, presenting both her merits and her faults. Monica is a developed literary character, while Eletta, like the images of Monica adorning medieval churches, is reduced to a silent, approving gaze. Monica’s appeal to Petrarch is evident in two letters, in which Petrarch describes her anxiety for her son, her important role in his life, and her famous death—three essential features of the saint’s iconography.
In a 1350 letter of condolence, Petrarch quotes Monica’s deathbed farewell as recounted by Augustine (in *Confessions* 9.11):

Sed hoc religiosissima et vere tali digna filio mulier non timebat, que moriens ordinansque de sepulcro, ‘Ponite’ ait, ‘hoc corpus ubicunque; nichil vos eius cura conturbet.’

But that most pious and truly worthy mother of such a son did not fear such things when at the moment of death, she made arrangements for her burial saying: ‘Place this body anywhere. Do not let the matter concern you.’

In advising the Bishop of Cavaillon concerning burial arrangements, Petrarch appropriates Monica’s words on the subject of *contemptus mundi* and the blessings of death. The poet refers to Monica only as “that most pious and truly worthy mother of such a son.” He had no need to name the saint; throughout the fourteenth century, Monica was celebrated for her role in the life of her famous son and for her stoic death.

Monica’s death again serves as a powerful example for Petrarch in a 1352 condolence letter, written to Gui de Boulogne on the death of the latter’s mother. Petrarch opens the letter by describing his “experience with nearly all kinds of grief” (*omne fere miseriarum genus expertus*), explaining that his misfortunes began in his “earliest youth” (*nisi michi vulnus illud prima scilicet adolescentie parte perpesso*), a clear allusion to his mother’s death in 1318. The central part of the letter traces a history of great mothers and sons from Classical antiquity to early Christianity. Petrarch’s catalog of exemplary mothers and sons predictably culminates with Christ and the Virgin, but the lengthiest and most detailed description is devoted to Monica and Augustine:

Flevit Augustinus noster amantissimam genitricem, que eum terris et pelago secuta, omnes filii vias lacrimis sequacibus atque solicitis aspersit, et quem semel carne peperat, milies mente parturit. Flevitque tam dulciter ut nunc etiam post tot secula lacrimas egentibus excutiat.

Our Augustine wept over his beloved mother, who followed him on land and sea, and who shed solicitous and endless tears on all her son’s journeys. Thus she gave birth thousands of times in her anguished mind to that son whom she bore but once in the flesh. She wept over him so sweetly...
Petrarch’s assertion that “even today” Monica’s story elicits tears points to the contemporary prominence of the saint. Furthermore, a reference to Monica’s artistic representation can be gleaned from the last line in the passage: *Flevitque tam dulciter ut nunc etiam post tot secula lacrimas legentibus excutiat.* The principal meanings of the verb *lego* (*legere, legi, lectum*) are “gather,” “choose” and “select.” However, the semantic range of *lego* is broader, including, “catch with the eye,” “view,” “observe,” “behold” or “see.” Petrarch here uses *legentibus* in this visual sense (“from those who take in/pick out with the eyes”), indicating that Saint Monica elicits tears from those who see her, whether in a text or in an image.

Images of Monica adorned the places in which Petrarch lived and moved. However, despite the recurrent presence of Monica’s figure in her son’s iconography and Petrarch’s oft-cited interest in the visual arts, the saint’s importance in Petrarch’s body of work has not been taken into account by scholars. In what follows, I examine a selection of fourteenth-century images of Monica in order to demonstrate both the important role of the maternal witness and the power of the maternal gaze in accentuating important events in the life of her son. In these images, Monica is represented as either dead or at her son’s side, witnessing and affirming his life.

Petrarch worked with Augustinian intellectuals by contributing to the monumental *Milleloquium Veritatis Sancti Augustini*. The *Milleloquium* contains a review of Augustine’s entire literary corpus as well as a concordance of excerpts grouped under approximately one thousand keywords (e.g., *modestia, modus, monachus, Monica, mons*). More than forty extant manuscripts witness the success and wide diffusion of the *Milleloquium*. The Augustinian Bartolomeo da Urbino asked Petrarch to compose verses for use as embellishments at the end
of the text; Petrarch replied that he was doing so in a letter of 1347. The poet’s work on this influential text surely increased his already intimate knowledge of Augustine’s life and works, and enhanced his understanding of the contemporary veneration of the saint and his mother.

Petrarch also counted among his friends the most important artists of his time. In a letter of 1342, the poet mentions his personal acquaintance with Giotto (1267-1337), Simone Martini (1284-1344), and a number of sculptors. A panel painting of the Madonna and Child by Giotto was one of the poet’s most prized possessions, and around 1336 he commissioned a miniature portrait of his beloved Laura from Simone Martini, who also decorated the frontispiece of his Virgil. In addition to collecting art, the poet seems to have spent time contemplating it. In a 1353 letter written in Milan, where he lived next to the basilica of Saint Ambrose, Petrarch recounts his moments of reflection upon an icon of Ambrose, mentor of Augustine and Monica. The poet relates that he frequently stopped to admire a twelfth-century portrait of Ambrose—a tondo in colored stucco.

\[\text{Sed scio, imaginemque eius summis parietibus extantem, quamilli viro similissimam fama fert, sepe venerabundus in saxo pene vivam spirantemque suspicio. …dici enim non potest quantafrontis autoritas, quanta maiestas supercilii, quanta tranquillitasoculorum; vox sola defuerit vivum ut cernas Ambrosium.}\]

[I gaze upwards at his statue, standing on the highest walls, which it is said closely resembles him, and often venerate it as though it were alive and breathing [...] the great authority of his face, the great dignity of his eyebrows and the great tranquility in his eyes are inexpressible; it lacks only a voice for one to see the living Ambrose.]

This letter reveals that Petrarch closely observed the images of saints preserved in churches near to him. The poet’s own century witnessed the first flowering of iconographic cycles illustrating the life of Augustine. Monica was often portrayed by her son’s side; she is characteristically represented as a widow, with her hands folded in prayer.

of the text; Petrarch replied that he was doing so in a letter of 1347. The poet’s work on this influential text surely increased his already intimate knowledge of Augustine’s life and works, and enhanced his understanding of the contemporary veneration of the saint and his mother.

Petrarch also counted among his friends the most important artists of his time. In a letter of 1342, the poet mentions his personal acquaintance with Giotto (1267-1337), Simone Martini (1284-1344), and a number of sculptors. A panel painting of the Madonna and Child by Giotto was one of the poet’s most prized possessions, and around 1336 he commissioned a miniature portrait of his beloved Laura from Simone Martini, who also decorated the frontispiece of his Virgil. In addition to collecting art, the poet seems to have spent time contemplating it. In a 1353 letter written in Milan, where he lived next to the basilica of Saint Ambrose, Petrarch recounts his moments of reflection upon an icon of Ambrose, mentor of Augustine and Monica. The poet relates that he frequently stopped to admire a twelfth-century portrait of Ambrose—a tondo in colored stucco.

\[\text{Sed scio, imaginemque eius summis parietibus extantem, quamilli viro similissimam fama fert, sepe venerabundus in saxo pene vivam spirantemque suspicio. …dici enim non potest quantafrontis autoritas, quanta maiestas supercilii, quanta tranquillitasoculorum; vox sola defuerit vivum ut cernas Ambrosium.}\]

[I gaze upwards at his statue, standing on the highest walls, which it is said closely resembles him, and often venerate it as though it were alive and breathing [...] the great authority of his face, the great dignity of his eyebrows and the great tranquility in his eyes are inexpressible; it lacks only a voice for one to see the living Ambrose.]

This letter reveals that Petrarch closely observed the images of saints preserved in churches near to him. The poet’s own century witnessed the first flowering of iconographic cycles illustrating the life of Augustine. Monica was often portrayed by her son’s side; she is characteristically represented as a widow, with her hands folded in prayer.
During his extensive travels Petrarch had occasion to observe the proliferation of images devoted to Augustine and his mother. In a second striking coincidence, the appearance of the earliest medieval representations of Monica in Germany and France correspond with Petrarch’s voyages in those countries. The poet describes the journey in his Letter to Posterity.

Quo tempore iuvenilis me impulit appetitus ut et Gallias et Germaniam peragrarem. Et licet alie cause fingerentur ut profectionem meam meis maioribus approbarem, vera tamen causa erat multa videndi ardur ac stadium.

[At that time a youthful craving drove me to travel through France and Germany; and although I invented other reasons to have my elders approve my journey, the real reason was my ardor and curiosity to see many things.]

In 1330 Petrarch had another opportunity to view the innovative fresco of Monica’s death in Rabastens. The poet returned to southwest France, the region of his youth, and spent the summer in Lombez, near Rabastens in the Midi-Pyrénées region.

Petrarch traveled in Germany in 1333. The first medieval cycle dedicated to the life of Augustine is found in the stained glass windows for the church of the Canons Regular in Erfurt, dated to around 1312. Monica appears in five scenes, including: Monica Leading Augustine to School, Monica’s Dream and Consolation by a Bishop, Monica Consoled by a Bishop, Augustine Departs for Italy (Fig. 2), and Augustine’s Baptism. In the scene of his departure, Augustine appears seated in a boat, with a friend at his side. On the distant shore behind him, Monica witnesses the departure of her son, her hands folded in prayer. The figural arrangement of this pre-conversion scene in the life of Augustine emphasizes the distance between mother and son. Augustine turns away from his mother, his gaze fleeing the image. The sizable maternal figure looming behind the boat blends into the background, absorbed into the image of her son.

Petrarch’s description of his own mother as anxious witness to his departure recalls this scene. Seniles 10.2 (ca. 1367), is addressed to childhood friend Guido Sette. Reminiscing about
his adolescence in France, Petrarch recalls his mother’s anxiety over his eagerness to visit the source of the Sorgue River:

Atque ita matre omnium illa optima quas quidem viderim, que carne mea, amore autem communis mihi tecum fuit, vix tandem exorata sed multa pavente ac monente [...].

[And so, when at last my mother, the best of all I have seen, mine by birth but yours too through love, was barely convinced though full of fears and warnings, we set out on our way.]

In commenting on Petrarch’s description of Eletta in this letter, Marziano Guglielminetti has written that, “in questo caso la madre . . . appare così come non una volta sola Augustinus aveva effigiato Monica nelle Confessiones, trepidante per il destino del figlio” [in this case, his mother appears as Augustine had portrayed his mother more than once in the Confessions, anxious over the fate of her son].

Monica is famous for her maternal worry, particularly regarding Augustine’s travels, as depicted in the Erfurt departure scene. Petrarch describes Monica in precisely this manner in a letter cited earlier, writing that Monica “[…] shed solicitous tears on all her son’s journeys.” Here, Petrarch also underscores Monica’s “anguished mind.”

For the rest of his life, Petrarch was surrounded by images of Monica. In the Church of the Eremitani of Padua, Guariento Di Arpo painted scenes from the life of Augustine in 1338 (Fig. 3), eleven years before Petrarch moved to the city. Petrarch and Guariento likely knew each other, since Guariento was a court painter for the Carrara family, patrons of Petrarch. Padua remained important to Petrarch until his final days; between 1367 and his death in 1374 he traveled between the city and his home in nearby Arquà.

Guariento’s images occupy a prominent position in the Church of the Eremitani, since they appear at eye level, on the lower walls of the apse, to the left of the main altar. The Baptism of Augustine (Fig. 4) depicts six figures in a compact space. Attired as an Augustinian tertiary, Monica prays at the bottom of the scene, closest to the viewer, her figure enclosed by architectural columns. Ambrose leans forward on the font as he baptizes
Augustine. Facing Ambrose, the elderly Simplicianus (Ambrose’s mentor) looks on attentively. Monica is foregrounded; she kneels in prayer as she looks upward. The viewer’s eye is drawn to the figure of Monica by the dark color of her garb, which contrasts with the luminous colors used to depict Augustine, Ambrose and Simplicianus. Isolated from the action at the image’s front edge, Monica is a spectator herself. Guariento invites the viewer to identify with this watching figure; in this way, Monica serves as an intermediary between the worshipper and the saints depicted in the scene. Within a genealogical figurative scheme comprised of male mentors (Simplicianus is Ambrose’s mentor, Ambrose is Augustine’s mentor), Monica is presented as maternal intercessor.

In *Augustine Taking the Habit* (Fig. 5) Monica is again depicted in the foreground, on the left side of the scene. Haloed and genuflecting, Monica appears within a group of women witnessing Augustine’s investiture. Monica’s body is turned toward her son and the position of Augustine’s body mimics that of his mother. Yet the architectural elements of the painting counteract any sense of intimacy between mother and son. While directed toward Augustine, the women’s gaze is kept outside of the scene by the columns that enclose them. The two principal directions of the gaze (upward-downward, diagonally for the men, horizontally for the women) distinguish the two parts of the scene and separate the men from the women. The scene may thus be read as divided in three: the externally projected gaze of the women, the upward/downward, genealogical movement of the three main characters in the center (Augustine, Ambrose, and Simplicianus) and the circular conversation of the male figures (Augustinian Hermits) on the right. At the margin of the scene, Monica is presented as maternal witness within a hierarchical scheme. Here, as in the previous image by Guariento, the maternal body is simultaneously appropriated (and used to tell the story of her son) and distanced (by the architectural frame that excludes her).

Images of Monica were also created in Pavia, where Petrarch had a home in 1365. In the very church the poet names as a possible burial place in his last will and testament, he was able
to witness the construction and embellishment of the tomb of Augustine. Work on the monumental *Arca* began in the 1350s and was partially completed in 1362. The poet mentions the tomb in at least two letters, including a letter to Boccaccio of December 1365. Figures of saints, evangelists and apostles are represented on the lower level of the tomb. Below the gables, and above the effigy, three panels on either side depict scenes from Augustine’s life in low relief. On the front of the tomb, the top right panel illustrates *Augustine’s Baptism by Ambrose* (Fig. 6). A canopy of gothic arches and twisted columns defines the space in which two principal events take place: Augustine’s baptism by Ambrose and his reception of new clothes. At the center of the scene, Ambrose (and probably Augustine’s friend, Alypius) hand the vestments to Augustine who kneels before the baptismal font. On the other side of the font, Augustine’s son Adeodatus (372-388 CE) kneels, his head cast downward in prayer. Monica is depicted beneath the arch on the right, directly behind Augustine. She genuflects, with her hands folded in prayer, her powerful gaze fixed on her son.

On the opposite side of the tomb, *Monica’s Funeral* (Fig. 7) recalls the earlier depiction at Rabastens (Fig.1). Eight Augustinians support Monica’s corpse. On the far left Augustine closely observes his mother’s countenance. As the center of the scene, Monica is the object of her son’s gaze. In images of baptism and investiture, Monica bears witness to central events in her son’s spiritual life. At her death, however, Augustine’s gaze focuses upon the maternal figure, underscoring her importance in his life. Indeed, the depiction of Monica’s death inverts the mother-son gaze. Analyzing the figural arrangement and the gendered politics of looking in the previous images reveals the power of the maternal presence in narrating the life of a male subject. Mother bears witness to the life of the son, and at her death, the son affirms her importance in his life. In this way, the mother is a signifier of her son’s story and is part of his image.

In addition to the paintings and sculptures of Monica that existed in the places the poet frequented, the saint appears in many fourteenth-century miniatures. An image so often
depicted in contemporary codices and present in other figurative representations must have been familiar to Petrarch. The scenes selected for representation, furthermore, showcase precisely the iconic maternal gestures identified by Petrarch in his descriptions of Monica included in the letters of condolence cited earlier. In these verbal portraits Petrarch depicts Monica either as a widow at her son’s side during important moments of his life, or as dead. Petrarch drew upon the many visual examples of Augustine and Monica adorning the cities in which he lived, strategically employing the maternal figure in his texts. For instance, in his 1318 panegyric, Petrarch’s father is not mentioned, nor is his presence implied; Eletta—like Monica—is mother, not wife.

Petrarch repeatedly employs the figure of his mother in describing the dramatic beginning of his own life, in such a way as to spotlight his own uniqueness. For example, in Familiares 1.1 (ca. 1350), he writes:

\[Ego, in exilio genitus, in exilio natus sum, tanto matris labore tantoque discrimine, ut non obstetricum modo sed medicorum iudicio diu examinis habetur; ita periclitari cepi antequam naseret et ad ipsum vite limen auspicio mortis accessi.\]

[I was conceived in exile and born in exile, with so much danger to my mother that she was believed dead not only by the midwife but by the doctors; thus I began to be exposed to danger before I was born, and I approached the very threshold of life under the auspice of death.]

The image of the laboring, presumed-dead mother is a sign of Petrarch’s extraordinary beginning and accentuates the exceptional nature of the journey of his life as an incessant traveler, “conceived and born in exile.” In his famous Letter to Posterity Petrarch again deploys Eletta:

\[Primum illum vite annum, neque integrum, Areti egi, ubi in lucem me natura protulerat; sex sequentes Ancise, paterno in rure supra Florentiam quattuordecim passuum milibus revocata ab exilio genetrice.\]

[The first year of my life I spent partially in Arezzo, where nature had brought me to light; the six following years in my father’s country home in Incisa, fourteen miles above Florence, after my mother had been recalled from exile].
The first allusion to Eletta here is in Petrarch’s reference to being “brought to light;” next, Eletta is “recalled from exile,” in an ablative absolute, making her a grammatical accessory to the sentence. As Petrarch draws upon the figure of his mother in describing his own life, he buries her by describing her as dead, even when she is alive, thereby simultaneously appropriating and distancing the maternal figure. Petrarch’s depiction of his mother does not reveal a unique profile of Eletta Canigiani. Alternately eulogized (in the 1318 panegyric) and erased (in letters in which she is referred to indirectly or described as dead), Eletta is appropriated for Petrarch’s own purposes. As in the writings of Augustine, the maternal figure in Petrarch’s work primarily affirms the exceptionality of her son’s story.

The study of Petrarch’s texts together with images of Monica reveals the importance of the maternal presence in the story of a male subject. In his condolence letter to Gui de Bolougne,48 Petrarch describes his friend’s recently deceased mother. Even in the depiction of the mother of a friend, Petrarch draws upon the iconography of Monica:

Ipsa te alvo gravida usque in decimum mensem cum fastidio ac labore gestavit, ipsa cum gaudio ac dolore perperit, ipsa in cunis posito somnum blando murmure suasit, ipsa mollī fascia obvolutum vogentemque dulce bonus, amplexa est, ipsa reptantem sedula, ipsa gressus ambiguos tentantem trepida, ipsa coetaneis colludentem anxia, ipsa petentem scolas puernum solici, ipsa reducem adolescentem leta conspexit.

[Pregnant, she bore you for nine months in her womb with difficulty and suffering; with joy and pain she gave birth to you [...] she was solicitous when you crawled and anxious as you took your first uncertain steps; she was uneasy as you played with your young friends; she lovingly sought you out when you went to school, and she welcomed you happily when you returned as a young man.]

In this generic description, once the physical act of birth has taken place, “mother” is witness to the life of the male subject. For Petrarch, then, the mother is a symbol of life, a mirror reflecting the contours of the accomplishments and character of her son. This recalls the artistic representations of Saint Monica adorning
the poet’s environment, where the maternal witness reinforces the life story of Augustine. Petrarch draws upon Monica’s iconography in his literary representations of Eletta Canigiani and of “mother” in general. It is as if the poet has internalized the images of Monica depicted in the churches he frequented and the manuscripts he read, and has understood, through them, the relationship of a mother to a son.

1. I wish to thank Kristin Burr, Maria Marsilio, Courtney Quaintance, and Elissa Weaver for their helpful comments and suggestions.
6. Composed when the poet was just fifteen years old, the elegy is the first composition he wished to publish. Ernest Hatch Wilkins, A History of Italian Literature (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1974), p. 87. Years later (ca. 1366) Petrarch included the panegyric in his collection of Metrical Epistles (Epistolae metricae I.7).
Perhaps the most modern aspect of Petrarch’s oeuvre is the subjectivity that informs it. To be sure, Petrarch’s self-promotion through his poetry and prose has long been highlighted as an essential feature of his contribution to intellectual history. For an overview of critical discourse regarding Petrarch’s subjectivity, see Margaret L. King, “Petrarch, the Self-Conscious Self, and the First Women Humanists,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.3 (2005) p. 556 n. 13.

11. Petrarch mentions his mother in at least six letters: *Familiares* [Familiar Letter] 1.1, the *Letter to Posterity*, *Familiares*, 9.2, 10.4, 13.1, and *Seniles* [Letter of Old Age] 10.2. Although references to Eletta appear throughout Petrarch’s body of work, she has not been made the subject of an extensive scholarly investigation. Most studies that mention Eletta Canigiani do not cover Petrarch’s entire corpus, and are now out of date in many respects. See, for example, Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini, *La madre di Francesco Petrarca* (Florence: Stabilimento Pellas, 1903).


13. Monica died and was buried at Ostia in 387. However, serious veneration of Monica began only in 1162, when some of her bones were taken to an Augustinian monastery near Arras, France. Monica’s cult flourished particularly in the fifteenth century, largely as a result of Pope Martin V’s translation of her relics to Rome on April 9, 1430, and inspired many artworks and expressions of faith. For example, although childless, Antonia Pulci (1452–1501) was devoted to the Saint; Pulci became an Augustinian and paid for a chapel dedicated to Monica in the church of San Gallo in order to be buried there. Well-known *Quattrocento* representations of Monica include Benozzo Gozzoli’s (1420–1497) San Gimignano cycle, Ottaviano Nelli’s images at Gubbio (ca. 1410–1420, Church of St. Augustine), and the Santo Spirito altarpiece (ca. 1470), attributed to Pier Francesco Botticini. See Clarissa W. Atkinson, “Your Servant, My Mother: The Figure of St. Monica in the Ideology of Christian Motherhood,” in Edmondo Petti (ed.), *Il corpo glorioso: studi sui Trionfi del Petrarca* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977); Maria Bertolani, *Il corpo glorioso: studi sui Trionfi del Petrarca* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 20–23.

14. Monica died and was buried at Ostia in 387. However, serious veneration of Monica began only in 1162, when some of her bones were taken to an Augustinian monastery near Arras, France. Monica’s cult flourished particularly in the fifteenth century, largely as a result of Pope Martin V’s translation of her relics to Rome on April 9, 1430, and inspired many artworks and expressions of faith. For example, although childless, Antonia Pulci (1452–1501) was devoted to the Saint; Pulci became an Augustinian and paid for a chapel dedicated to Monica in the church of San Gallo in order to be buried there. Well-known *Quattrocento* representations of Monica include Benozzo Gozzoli’s (1420–1497) San Gimignano cycle, Ottaviano Nelli’s images at Gubbio (ca. 1410–1420, Church of St. Augustine), and the Santo Spirito altarpiece (ca. 1470), attributed to Pier Francesco Botticini. See Clarissa W. Atkinson, “Your Servant, My Mother: The Figure of St. Monica in the Ideology of Christian Motherhood,” in Edmondo Petti (ed.), *Il corpo glorioso: studi sui Trionfi del Petrarca* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977); Maria Bertolani, *Il corpo glorioso: studi sui Trionfi del Petrarca* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), pp. 20–23.


17. The parallelism of flevit at the beginning of the first sentence (Augustine) and flevisse in the last sentence (Monica) closely links mother and son through the action of weeping.

18. An example of lego is this sense occurs in Aeneid 6.755: tumulum capite undique omnis longo ordine pais adversos legere [he (Anchises) chose a mound from where he could scan (legere) all that moved toward them in a long procession]. The Oxford Latin Dictionary, under lego (legere, legi, lectum), #5, quotes this Vergil passage under the meaning “to pick out (sights, sounds).”


21. For example: Bartholomew da Urbino, Giovanni Coci, Jacopo Bussolano,


24. In *Familiares* 8.6, Petrarch writes: *Mitto paucos elegos eiusdemque sententie totidem, si malis, hexametros; utere vel utrisque vel utrislibet* [I am herewith sending you, therefore, a few elegiac verses and a like number of hexameters, if you prefer them, all containing the same meaning]. See B. M. Peebles, “The Verse Embellishments of the ‘*Milleloquium Sancti Augustini*,’” *Traditio* 10(1954): 555-66.


27. Petrarch mentions the portrait (now lost) in two sonnets (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* 77 and 78), and bequeaths it to Francesco da Carrara in his will (*Petrarch’s Testament*, ed. and trans. Theodore Mommsen (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1957), pp. 78-80).

28. *Familiares* 16.11. Petrarch lived in Milan from 1353 to 1354. Two Augustinian churches—La Chiesa dell’Incoronata and San Marco—contain many representations of Augustine. In San Marco, a mid-fourteenth century cross (usually attributed to Giovannino de’ Grassi) is preserved. Here, Augustine kneels at Christ’s feet. The cross is flanked by angels and saints. On the right, two female figures genuflect: Mary Magdalene, and a woman who is typically not identified, but who could be Monica, since she wears a traditional girdle, and the signal black of the Augustinian Hermits.

29. The *tondo* is conserved in the Museum of Sant’Ambrogio. In Petrarch’s time, it was set in the wall of a bay in the right aisle of the church. Ernest

30. The authoritative study is Jeanne and Pierre Courcelle, *Les cycles du XIVe siècle*, which describes eight cycles: Erfurt, Rabastens, Padua, Pavia, Verona (now in Munich), Fabriano, Gubbio and March of Ancona (now in the Vatican). In chronological order, this important study provides the state of preservation (as of 1965) as well as underlying literary sources for each cycle. Rudolf Arbesmann describes and contextualizes the important contribution of the Courcelles in “A Pioneering Work in Augustinian Iconography.” Valuable references for medieval images of Monica include the Princeton Index of Christian Art; *Augustine in Iconography: History and Legend*, eds. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren; and an online image bank: *Atlante generale dell'iconografia agostiniana dal VI al XX secolo*: http://www.cassiciaco.it/ITA/001ago/Data_base/data_base.htm.


33. Petrarch describes the trip in *Familiares* 1.5. See Foresti, *Aneddoti*, p. 43.

34. The windows were likely commissioned by Henry of Naumburg around 1316, when he was elected bishop, a position he held until 1334. For a detailed description of the Erfurt cycle, see Courcelle, *Les cycles du XIVe siècle*, pp. 2-38; and Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 65-66.

35. Augustine describes his departure, and “leaving [his mother] alone to her tears and prayers,” in *Confessions*, 5.8.


30. The authoritative study is Jeanne and Pierre Courcelle, *Les cycles du XIVe siècle*, which describes eight cycles: Erfurt, Rabastens, Padua, Pavia, Verona (now in Munich), Fabriano, Gubbio and March of Ancona (now in the Vatican). In chronological order, this important study provides the state of preservation (as of 1965) as well as underlying literary sources for each cycle. Rudolf Arbesmann describes and contextualizes the important contribution of the Courcelles in “A Pioneering Work in Augustinian Iconography.” Valuable references for medieval images of Monica include the Princeton Index of Christian Art; *Augustine in Iconography: History and Legend*, eds. Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren; and an online image bank: *Atlante generale dell'iconografia agostiniana dal VI al XX secolo*: http://www.cassiciaco.it/ITA/001ago/Data_base/data_base.htm.


33. Petrarch describes the trip in *Familiares* 1.5. See Foresti, *Aneddoti*, p. 43.

34. The windows were likely commissioned by Henry of Naumburg around 1316, when he was elected bishop, a position he held until 1334. For a detailed description of the Erfurt cycle, see Courcelle, *Les cycles du XIVe siècle*, pp. 2-38; and Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 65-66.

35. Augustine describes his departure, and “leaving [his mother] alone to her tears and prayers,” in *Confessions*, 5.8.


41. 1362 is inscribed on the back of the monument, indicating the year in which the lower tier was completed. The tomb was commissioned by Bonifacio Bottigella, prior of the Augustinian convent and lecturer at the University of Pavia. While the architect is unknown, the tomb is often attributed to the workshop of Giovanni Balduccio. On the history of the church, see Benedict Hackett, “San Pietro in Ciel d’oro, Pavia,” in Joseph C. Schnaubelt and Frederick Van Fleteren, eds. *Augustine in Iconography: History and Legend* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Gill, *Augustine in the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 40–44.

42. In this letter (*Seniles* 5.1), Petrarch mentions Augustine together with Boethius, who is buried in the same church. Petrarch also mentions Augustine’s *Arca in Familiare* 19.18.


44. Augustine’s conversion took place in the garden of his friend, Alypius.

45. Augustine describes Monica’s body being carried out for burial in *Confessions* 9.12. Three other figures view Monica’s body closely, possibly Alypius, Adeodatus and Evodio.


47. It was not until the fifteenth century that other aspects of Monica’s life, such as her representation as wife (highlighted for example in Antonio Vivarini’s “Marriage of Monica” [1441 CE]), become part of her iconography. The panel is preserved in the Accademia, Venice. On Vivarini, see Federico Zeri, “Un pannello della pala di Santa Monica di Antonio Vivarini,” *Paragone* II.19 (1951): 46–47.

48. See above note 15.
Figure 1. Anonymous, *Scene from the Life of Augustine: Death of Monica*, (ca. 1318) Chapel of Saint Augustine, Church of Notre-Dame du Bourg, Rabastens (image courtesy of L’Institut d'Études Augustiniennes)

Figure 2. Anonymous, *Scene from the Life of Augustine: Augustine Embarks for Italy*, (ca. 1312) Church of the Canons Regular, Erfurt (Foto Marburg/Art Resource, NY)
Figure 3. Guariento Di Arpo, *Scenes from the Life of Augustine* (ca. 1338) Apse, Church of the Eremitani, Padua [author’s photo]

Figure 4. Guariento Di Arpo, *Scenes from the Life of Augustine: Augustine’s Baptism by Ambrose* (ca. 1338) Apse, Church of the Eremitani, Padua [author’s photo]
Figure 5. Guariento Di Arpo, *Scenes from the Life of Augustine*: *Augustine Taking the Habit* (ca. 1338) Apse, Church of the Eremitani, Padua [author’s photo]

Figure 6. *Detail of Arca of St. Augustine: Augustine’s Baptism by Ambrose* (1350-1362) Church of San Pietro in Ciel D’oro, Pavia [Alinari/Art Resource, NY]
Figure 7. *Detail of Arca of St. Augustine: Monica's Funeral*, (1350–1362) Church of San Pietro in Ciel D’oro, Pavia [Scala/Art Resource, NY]