



Petrarch's Humanism and the Care of the Self

Gur Zak

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Petrarch was one of the founding fathers of Renaissance humanism, yet the nature and significance of his ideas are still widely debated. In this book, Gur Zak examines two central issues in Petrarch's works - his humanist philosophy and his concept of the self. Zak argues that both are defined by Petrarch's idea of care for the self. Overcome by a strong sense of fragmentation, Petrarch turned to the ancient idea that philosophy can bring harmony and wholeness to the soul through the use of spiritual exercises in the form of writing. Examining his vernacular poetry and his Latin works from both literary and historical perspectives, Zak explores Petrarch's attempts to use writing as a spiritual exercise, how his spiritual techniques absorbed and transformed ancient and medieval traditions of writing, and the tensions that arose from his efforts to care for the self through writing.

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