

**LES ENLUMINURES, LTD**  
2970 North Lake Shore Drive 11B  
Chicago, Illinois 60657

tel. 1-773-929-5986  
fax. 1-773-528-3976  
chicago@lesenluminures.com

**LES ENLUMINURES**  
Le Louvre des Antiquaires  
2 place du Palais-Royal  
75001 Paris

tél : 33 1 42 60 15 58  
fax : 33 1 40 15 00 25  
info@lesenluminures.com

**PETRUS HAEDUS (PIETRO CAVRETTO or CAPRETTO), *Nova de Miraculis Disputatio***  
**In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper**  
**[Italy, Friuli, almost certainly Pordenone], dated 11 May 1493**

*Iii (title laid down on iii) + 77 + iii leaves (collation: 1-7<sup>10</sup>, 8<sup>7</sup> [i a singleton]), on paper (watermarks, Briquet 9134, "lettre T dans un cercle surmontée d'une croix," Venice, 1492), vertical catchwords at inner lower margins of final versos, modern foliation in pencil, written in black ink in a semi-gothic cursive bookhand between two verticals and 19 horizontals in 19 long lines, ruled in plummet and pale brown ink (justification 88 x 58 mm.), rubrics in red, 3-line initial in red, a few marginal annotations in a different hand, the later title-page in black and red ink within ruled border. Bound in 18th-century paper over pasteboard, spine titled in black ink (joints rubbed, wear at head and foot of spine, textblock split in a few places, four leaves reinforced at gutter, very light browning to opening leaves, occasional smudging of red ink, generally in good clean condition). Dimensions 132 x 100 mm.*

Unique manuscript of a humanist dialogue on miracles by a little-studied provincial humanist, this copy an autograph lost sight of since the mid-eighteenth century. Infrequently printed, Cavretto's writings are largely unedited. His manuscripts are exceedingly uncommon and apparently unknown outside Italian public collections; none are in North America and none appear to have changed hands in the last century.

#### PROVENANCE

1. The work appears to be an autograph, written by Cavretto himself, and dedicated to Leonello Chierigato (1443-1506), Bishop of Concordia, and the papal nuncio in France (1487), who in 1490 was sent to England by Charles VIII to try and bring about peace between France and Henry VII.
2. Lorenzo del Torre of Cividale, in the mid-18th century (see "Text" below), born in Cividale del Friuli 1699, died in 1758, deacon of the cathedral chapter of Friuli, and author of *De codice evangelario Forojuliensi dissertatio epistolaris* in Venice in 1753; he renounced his position for his nephew Filippo del Torre, a famous historian, poet, and theologian in Cividale (*Biographia degli italiani illustri*, vol. 10, p. 157; and *Dizionario biografico friuliano*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. G. Nazzi, 1997, p. 637).
3. "The property of Thomas Thorpe," his sale, London, Robert Harding Evans, 2 March 1826, lot 168; Thomas Thorpe was himself a famed bookseller, who filed for bankruptcy in 1837.

4. William Henry Niger, London, 6 March 1851, inscription in Latin on front endleaf.
5. G[iuseppe] Martini (b. Borgo, 1870; d. 1944), published 39 catalogues describing around 500 manuscripts and over 2000 books.
6. Sold New York, H. P. Kraus, 1956, catalogue 189, lot 83, to Cornelius J. Hauck (1893-1967), heir to a Cincinnati beer brewery fortune, given to Cincinnati Museum Center (listed in OCLC, Accession Number, 47781278).
7. Sale New York, Christie's, "The History of the Book: The Cornelius J. Hauck Collection of the Cincinnati Museum Center," 27 June 2006, lot 117.

## TEXT

On guard page iii recto, Title Page, *Nova de Miraculis DISPUTATIO* Auctore Petro Haedo Sacerdote Portuanaensi dicata Reverendisimo in Christo Patri Domino. Domino Leonello Chieragato Episcopo Concordiensi Apostolicoque Legato. 1493. v. Idus Maja;

f. 1, Table of Contents, "Inventarium in sequentem de quibusdam miraculorum questionibus libellum ... Quomodo orandum sit. 25";

ff. 2r-3r, Prefatory letter of Petrus Haedus (Cavaretto) to Bishop Leonello Chieragato of Concordia, *Nova de miraculis disputatio* [Title in rubric], incipit, "Reverendissimo in christo patri et amplissimo domino .d. Leonello Chieragato Episcopo Concordiensi apostolicoque legato ... commorantem feci ita sum exorsus...." Petrus haedus [in rubric];

ff. 2r-77r, Petrus Haedus (Cavaretto), *Nova de Miraculis Disputatio*, incipit, "Video mi obseruande pater opportune me istuc hodie uenisse: quandoquidem et otiosus es et solus ..."; explicit, "... Et tu quando fac ut ualeas."

f. 77r, Colophon, "1493. v°. Idus Maia."

Petrus Haedus is known by at least six different names, Haedus (or Edus) or Petrus Portuanaensis in Latin; and Pietro Capretto or Cavretto or Pietro da Pordenone, as well as Del Zochul, in Italian. Born in Pordenone in Friuli in 1427, he spent the majority of his life there, until his death in 1504. From about 1475, he was parish priest at the church of San Marco (*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol 19, pp. 186-190). We know relatively little about his life, but his writings both in Latin and in Italian show him to be a poet-musician of some talent, committed to literature and to polemics, in short, a sort of provincial humanist.

The form favored by Pietro and many of his humanist contemporaries, the dialogue, is employed in the present text. In the *Nova de miraculis disputatio*, "Pietro" and "Jacobus" (Jacopo Gordinio of Aquileia), whose names are picked out in red in the text, discuss the nature of miracles, why God performs them, their role in the canonization process, and the difference between divine and diabolical miracles (recent miraculous happenings in the church near the castle of Fanna are the impetus for their conversation). The manuscript is dated 11 May 1493, and it is surely the one seen

by Gian-Giuseppe Liruti in the house of Lorenzo del Torre of Cividale in the middle years of the eighteenth century (Liruti, vol. 1, Venice, 1760, pp. 434-5, quoting the colophon). Liruti was convinced the book was an autograph on the basis of another Cavretto manuscript he himself owned; in the census of Cavretto's work drawn up in 1962, this manuscript is declared lost (Benedetti, 1992, p. 83). The unique manuscript of Cavretto's *Nova de miraculis disputatio*, the present copy is almost certainly his autograph, last sighted in the eighteenth century.

The first known work by Cavretto reveals the ambitions of this provincial priest. He wrote nineteen Italian poems in *terza rima* on the dangers of earthly love cast as a narrative in which the dreamer-poet, in direct imitation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, is accompanied through the kingdom of the slaves of Love by no lesser companions than Ovid and Boethius (Venice, Bibl. Naz. Marciana, It. Cl. IX, 96 [=6636]). Later, his *Anterotica* (published in 1492, 1498, 1503, and 1608) takes up the same themes, elaborating on the dangers of love and pride through a dense web of classical allusions. But this literary bent is tempered by a profound religious vocation that, in 1496, saw Pietro prepared to take on one of the towering figures of *quattrocento* humanist philology, Lorenzo Valla. In an *Antidotum* and an *Apologia* (both dedicated to the dedicatee of this manuscript, Leonello Chierigato, Bishop of Concordia), Pietro launches an assault on the Valla's *De falso credita et ementita Constantini Magna donatione*, the work in which Valla had challenged the basis of the Church's claim to temporal power. With an astute analysis of Valla's psychological flaws (envy, pride and his inability to submit to spiritual authority), and a passionate argument in favor of the necessity and reality of the Church's power, Pietro attempted to overturn Valla's arguments. His other works include *Constitutioni de la patria de Friuli* (ed. 1484), *De miseria humana* (ed. 1508), *De munanorum hominum* (ed. 1502), *De condordia pacisque dulcitudine* (ed. 1500), as well musical compositions (see Udine, Bibl. Com., MS 165 and 1325), some of it liturgical.

Manuscripts of Cavretto's works are generally rare, and his texts were infrequently printed. Apart from the letters, which have been edited by Benedetti (1962), and the *Anterotica*, of which there is an interesting study (see Adams) and which was published twice in the incunable period, his work is little-studied, and its circulation, seems to have been extremely restricted. Benedetti cites only four surviving manuscripts, all in Italian public collections, and provides a complete list of the scarce early printed editions. No copies of any of his writings are recorded in DeRicci's *Census* or its *Supplement*, and none appear in the Schoenberg Database.

## LITERATURE

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