

JACOPO (GIACOMO) DI NANNI DA LIVORNO, *Anthology of Letters*; PSEUDO-LENTULUS, *Letter of Lentulus*; MARSILIO FICINO, *Invectiva Marsilii Fighinensis ad suum Ghuardavillam Volaterranum* (An Invective by Marsilio Ficino to a Guardavilla of Volterra); Calendar  
In Italian and Latin, manuscript on paper  
Italy, Tuscany (Lucca, Volterra, and Pistoia), c. 1440-1458

*i + 119 + i* paper, three watermarks, each with motifs found in fifteenth-century Italian manuscripts: uncial M with a cross extending from top center, similar to Piccard 28841; horn with looped string, similar to Briquet 7686 and 7697; tulip with five petals and folded leaves, similar to Briquet 6653, early modern foliation in brown ink in upper recto corners, incomplete (*i*<sup>4</sup> [including first flyleaf] *ii*<sup>10</sup> [-9, f. 13 cancelled with text loss] *iii-xii*<sup>10</sup> *xiii*<sup>6</sup> [+1, singleton added to quire front, now loose]), catchwords in bottom margin of quires *iii-xi*, first quire ruled in drypoint (justification 90 x 150 mm.), final quire ruled only with left-hand bounding line, all other folios frame ruled (justification 145 x 85 mm.), written above top line in 25-34 long lines by one scribe writing at different registers in humanistic minuscule, limited rubrics in red (most now pink-brown), flourishing and faces added to one- to three-line initials set outside the textblock, in delicate condition with flecking and discoloration of all folios and edges somewhat tattered, rust stain from modern paperclip between ff. 23 and 24, some folios and quires secured to spine with discolored cellophane tape, ff. 33 and 114 loose, "PESTE" written in top corner in modern pencil (probably referring to mold damage most apparent in the margins of that folio and those adjacent), besides loss of f. 13 all text is intact and legible despite wear. ORIGINAL BINDING characteristic of fifteenth-century Italy, bound in Pistoia parchment pastedowns of recycled city statutes, square-cut wooden boards covered in smooth dark brown tanned goat or sheep leather stamped and tooled identically on front and back with three layers of framing around central panel: outer frame blocked in blind and beveled with geometric design stamped in corners, second frame of blind-stamped leaf and vine tiles, third frame beveled with geometric design stamped in corners, central panel blind-stamped with interlocking geometrical pattern, tongue-style corners on turn-ins, three split tawed-leather sewing supports attached to boards by outer-channel tunnel lacing, supports detached from board at front but secure at back, endband cores originally laced into boards at head and foot of spine, quires prepared for sewing with punched, not slit, holes, parchment pastedowns now lifted, modern paper note pasted on inside of front board reading "62 £ [lira]," "Si forla della Chiese di San Sisto in Volterra" and "Manca il Carte 13," written on board underneath paper note "AVE MARIA GrATIA plen de [illegible]," brass bosses at corners of front and back with one missing on inner top corner of back, catch side of clasp present on back cover but hinge side missing from front with only decorative nail remaining, four holes of 10-20 mm. diameter in front leather covering sealed by restoration, some surface abrasion and mild worming on back cover, wear along board edges, lost endbands, spine cracked and weathered but sealed by restoration. Dimensions c. 215 x 145 mm.

Preserved here is the only extant manuscript copy of a youthful work, by the celebrated neo-Platonic philosopher, Marsilio Ficino, along with the only known copy of an anthology of letters by the humanist teacher, Jacopo di Nanni da Livorno. Ficino's work is an important manuscript witness to an invective against the tutors of Florence and their employers. Jacopo's anthology – in Latin and Italian – is the author's autograph of 400 letters to use in teaching good epistolary etiquette and style.

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Tuscany between c. 1440 and 1458 in various stages, and perhaps in Lucca, Volterra, and then in Pistoia. The main text is an anthology of letters and orations collected and corrected by the priest Jacopo (also known as Giacomo) di Nanni da Livorno for the teaching of grammar and rhetoric. This is almost certainly an autograph text by Jacopo da

Livorno himself; it features ongoing revision by the main text hand and notes that would be useful for teaching (see below), which point to it being the author's own working copy.

The examples of formal addresses on ff. 1-3 mention known figures active around the 1440s, offering an approximate *terminus post quem* for this manuscript. The following letters on ff. 4-107 were copied later; they name additional famous Italians, which place them more specifically in the years 1446-1449 (Cristiani, 1966, p. 211). The two texts on ff. 107v-108v date after 1451: the second, by Marsilio Ficino, can be dated according to the author's known employment history (Cristiani, 1966, pp. 212-13; Black, 2007, p. 428), and the *Letter of Lentulus*, was copied at the same time; both were copied before the addition of the note on the pastedown in 1458 (see below).

2. A note on the recto of the lifted back pastedown reads "a di 12 di maggio 1458." Thus, the contents of this manuscript were bound together prior to this date; front pastedown, notes in two hands, the first in Italian, "1466 a di 29 di luglio presi per donna la Costanza figliuola di ser Iacopo di Giusto di potente ... a di 26 di novembre l'ammenai nel 1466: the second in Latin (very difficult to read), "In nomine jesu ..." They may be drafts of documents, perhaps intended to be written elsewhere at a later date (or alternatively, may be copies).

The pastedowns preserve statutes of the city of Pistoia written in Latin by two scribes in a semi-cursive Italian documentary hand, from the first half of the fourteenth century. The text on the front pastedown outlines duties of the ruler ("capitaneus vel potestas") of Pistoia to provide armed defenses for the city. The back pastedown is a decree from the same unnamed 'capitaneus' prohibiting the playing of dice or 'tables' and other games (recto), and discussion of the provision of weaponry in defense of Pistoia (verso). Because the pastedowns are specific to Pistoia, the manuscript was probably bound there after Jacopo di Nanni da Livorno arrived in 1454.

3. The recto of the front flyleaf holds, in a hasty fifteenth-century hand, calendrical notes related to finding the date of Easter; together with the various other roughly contemporary hands, it demonstrates that this manuscript, initially written for personal use, became accessible to a number of readers before the end of the fifteenth century and into the sixteenth.
4. A slip of paper pasted inside front cover records in two twentieth-century hands in ink: "62 £ [lira]" (approximately 10 cents!); "Si forla della Chiese di San Sisto in Volterra," and "Manca il Carte 13." The town of Volterra did not have a Church of San Sisto. However, there was (and still is) a Church of San Sisto in Pisa near the Piazza dei Cavalieri, where Jacopo di Nanni da Livorne was prior and parish priest from 1476 (Vivoli, 1843, pp. 234-35; Pera 1867, p. 110, n. 1) and it is, moreover, probably where he died; did Jacopo bring the manuscript with him to Pisa?
5. Private collection of Dr. Cesare Alvarotti Rasi, Florence, Italy, until at least 1967 when it was described in Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, vol. 5, pp. 620-621.
6. Modern pencil note, front pastedown, "976 | 02," enclosed in a box at the top edge.

## TEXT

ff. 1-3, *Ad papam*, incipit, "Sanctissimo in Christo patri et Domino ... [f. 3] de malatestis habendo tanquam fratri carissimo."; [f. 3v blank];

Examples of formal addresses for letters to various public and familiar people, roughly sorted by rank, beginning with the pope, cardinals, archbishops, abbots, and so on, followed by rulers (the emperor or king, dukes and barons, military leaders, and nobles), professions follow, then family, friends (including *Ad mulierum pulcherrimam*), and more distant relatives. Finally come bureaucrats, including the final address for an influential rector or clerk. Important figures, all active in the 1440s or shortly before, are used as examples: Bartolomeo Zabarella, Archbishop of Florence (r. 1439-45), Frederic III (r. 1440-93), and Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), among others (Cristiani, 1966, p. 211 n. 3).

ff. 4-107, incipit, "Vergogna sarebbe adere signori senatori e insufficiente lufficio della lingua ... civitates qua re remota omnis mos sanctus in nihilum redigi necesse est Vale";

Unedited epistolary anthology composed by Jacopo di Nanni da Livorno, which includes nearly 400 letters, either factitious or heavily abridged from authentic correspondence, to use in teaching good epistolary etiquette and style. They alternate between Latin and Italian. Occasional notes placed in the margins help navigate through the entries: "exordium" or "exordio," point out the opening lines of some – perhaps those most used or favored by Jacobo while teaching – while "imperfecta" prompts the reader to skip over others. Most marginalia, however, is corrective, in the margins, over erasures or unclear text, and interlineally by the author's hand, and by a later scribe in black ink.

The sources of numerous entries are still unidentified, but some draw from well-known works: for example, f. 12v, the first two paragraphs, heavily abridged, of Cicero's *Pro Marcello*; ff. 76rv, recognizable material from Cicero's defense of Ligarius to Caesar (*Pro Ligarius*). Like the sample addresses in the previous section, some letters reference known Italians (whether in real or constructed letters) and events and help date this text. For example, Alfonso V of Aragon's first military expedition into Tuscany in 1447-1448 is recorded (f. 23v), and Francesco Sforza is addressed as "conte" (f. 58v), apparently before his elevation to Duke of Milan in March 1450 (Cristiani, 1966, pp. 211). Several locations near Livorno are mentioned: Pisa on ff. 20 and 87; Volterra on ff. 27, 45v, and 74; and Bibbona on f. 65v. Jacopo himself may be addressed on f. 72 (see Cristiani, 1966, pp. 210-211). Many entries, however, follow a more general narrative without a known addressee: they begin with an expression of affection, mention prior meetings, and discuss other letters sent, received, or anticipated from the reader.

Adding to its value as a teaching tool, there are multiple letters in duplicate, first in Italian, followed in Latin, to serve as linguistic comparisons; for example: ff. 27v-28, letters describing Mark Anthony; ff. 38-39, letters purportedly from Cicero to Caesar; ff. 43v-44, letters mentioning Piero della Francesca; f. 97rv, letters featuring Boccaccio.

f. 107v, *Temporibus Octaviani cesaris cum exuniverses mundi partibus illi quod preaberant provinciis scriberent senatoribus ... herodis regis scripxit senatoribus sic de christo jesu*, incipit, "Apparuit temporibus istis et adhuc est homo magnae virtutis ... in colloquio gravis rarus et modestus inter folios [sic] hominum. Valete";

*Letter of Lentulus*, Pseudo-Lentulus. This is an apocryphal letter credited to Publius Lentulus, a fictional Prefect in Judea said to precede Pontius Pilate, addressed to the Roman senate during the reign of Tiberius, which describes Jesus's appearance. The rubric here, however, attributes it to the reign of Octavius. Ernst von Dobschütz's 1899 study identifies over 75 manuscripts produced in Germany, France, and Italy that include this letter; all are fifteenth century; only 35 are currently registered in the Schoenberg Database. The rubric in this manuscript places it within Dobschütz's 'c' recension (pp. 308, 319). The *Letter* first appeared in print in c. 1471-1474.

ff. 108-113, *Invectiva Marsilii Figlinensis ad suum Ghuardavillam Volteranum*, incipit, "Cogis me tetrum ac detestandum non hominum dico sed infimum belluarum genus ... [f. 113] ut inquit ille irisci [sic] poterit in quod ante dese confiteri voluerit finis," *Explicit invectiva [Marsillii: expunged] Figlinensis in inferos Pedagogos ad suum [Ghuardavillam: expunged] [Volteranum: expunged] Ego sum Testis*; [f. 113v blank];

Marsilio Ficino, *Invectiva Marsilii Fighinensis ad suum Ghuardavillam Volaterranum*, ed. Cristiani 1966, pp. 214-22. Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) was one of the most influential Neoplatonist humanist philosophers of his time. This tract, however, was written between 1451 and 1454 when he was still a young scholar working as a tutor (*ripetitore*) for the family of Piero di Messer Andrea de'Pazzi, a wealthy Florentine and friend of the Medici (Cristiani, 1966, pp. 212-13). It was written at the request of a member of Guardavilla family of Volterra, an influential family with connections to the Medici, Biagio di Michele di Neri (Cristiani, 1966, p. 212, n. 3). His invective is full of scathing criticism of the *ripetitores*, primarily senior students of grammar and law, explicitly depicting them as ignorant, shallow, greedy, and even sexually depraved. He then rounds on their employers, whom he blames for the *ripetitores*'s behavior, who work for almost nothing, and who are treated by their employers as nursemaids and the lowliest of family servants. Although filled with rhetorical hyperbole, there is some evidence to support his accusations of both parties (Black 2007, pp. 441-46).

Cristiani used this manuscript for his edition, the first and only of this text, in 1966. The ending in our manuscripts asserts that the scribe witnessed the delivery of this invective. There are, however, some errors (including in the author's name) that suggest it was copied from an imperfect exemplar (Cristiani, 1966, p. 212 n. 2). This remains the only known copy of this invective and is thus a remarkably rare and especially intriguing insight into fifteenth-century Florentine society and the author's early career.

ff. 114-119v, Calendar, beginning in January and ending with December, with one folio per month. Rubrics at the top of each folio provide the number of days, hours, and moon cycles, followed by standard calendrical tables including the moon's position, dominical letters, and the nones, ides, or calends. The astrological position of the sun is also noted for each month, however, only a single feast – that of the Circumcision of Christ on the first of January – is added.

Information about Jacopo di Nanni da Livorno is fragmentary. The earliest possible record of Jacopo dates to 1428 in Siena and records his membership in the College of Doctors in Law (the name given is Giacomo di Nanni; Minnucci and Košuta, 1989, p. 267). He next appears as a

teacher of grammar and rhetoric in the public schools of Lucca from 1443 until 1448 (Barsanti, 1905, p. 117), then in Volterra from 1448 until 1451 (Battistini, 1919, p. 17). Jacopo relocated to Pistoia in 1454 (Battistini, 1919, p. 36), presumably to continue teaching. The last record of Jacopo dates from 1476, stating he was sent by the Archbishop to the Church of San Sisto in Pisa to act as the prior and parish priest, as the previous one had just died of the plague decimating Tuscany. While his efforts to console his parishioners are praised and memorialized, it is unknown whether he died of the same plague (he would have then been in his seventies) (Vivoli, 1843, pp. 234-35; Pera, 1867, p. 110, n. 1).

Epistolography (the art of writing letters) was “perhaps the most extensive branch of humanist literature” (Kristeller, 1974, p. 109, cited by Constable, 1976, p. 39). The tradition of letter writing dates from antiquity. The epistolary genre expanded in the Middle Ages to include almost any written work with a greeting and a signature, while at the same time was constrained by a traditional rhetorical style echoing that of orations or sermons (Constable, 1976). Letters became increasingly a scholastic tool meant for public consumption, until the revival of the familiar letter in early Renaissance Italy. Letter writing was then embraced as a classical art, and humanists began to produce epistolographies of single authors, starting with Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374), in imitation of Cicero’s *Epistolae ad familiares*. In the fifteenth century, letters were used, as this manuscript was, to teach grammar, rhetoric, and epistolography, and letter-writing manuals began to circulate.

While epistolographical anthologies were a common genre – one so broad that the number of surviving examples is virtually impossible to estimate – this manuscript appears to be unique. No other examples of Jacopo di Nanni da Livorno’s anthology are presently found in institutional collections. As outlined above, it is likely to be the autograph working copy of Jacopo di Nanni himself, used in his lessons on grammar, rhetoric, and epistolography. The invective by Marsilio Ficino, written in his youth before he embarked on his career as a famous humanist philosopher, exists only in this manuscript. Its singularity makes it a fascinating and exclusive social commentary of the educated, and the educators, of humanist Florence, as well as a valuable insight into Ficino’s early career. While aesthetically modest, the tiny expressive faces added in opening initials throughout, as well as its original mid-fifteenth-century binding, add visual interest to this volume.

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