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**FRANCESCO PETRARCA, *Canzoniere* [*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*]**  
**In Latin and Italian, decorated manuscript on parchment**  
**Italy, Rome?, c. 1500-1525**

145 ff., preceded and followed by a single paper leaf, complete, mostly in quires of 10 leaves (collation: i<sup>12</sup>, ii-ix<sup>10</sup>, x<sup>12</sup>, xi-xiv<sup>10</sup> + <sup>[1]</sup>), written in a humanistic Italian cursive script by at least 4 different hands (preliminary texts in different hands but the main portion of the text copied in a single uniform hand), in brown ink on up to 30 lines (justification 120 x 60 mm.), ruled in pale red ink, manucula pointing to passages in the margin (some traced in red or purple ink), certain words underlined, initials of first verse of each sonnet set off to the left, with some traced in light purple ink, large epigraphic Roman capital "V" in blue wash introducing main text, with figure of winged Cupid and ornamental and floral penwork in red. Bound in a rigid vellum binding (likely 18<sup>th</sup> c.), smooth spine, pastedowns and first flyleaves of 18<sup>th</sup> century decorated paper (Good overall condition, some very light staining to parchment). Dimensions 187 x 117 mm.

Later Renaissance copy, in a fine cursive script, of the most celebrated and enduring collection of poems by Petrarch, the *Canzoniere*, perhaps made for a follower of the literary movement known as Petrarchism that extended into the Cinquecento and here copied well before the papal ban of the Babylon Sonnets in 1595. The winged Cupid painted at the opening of the *Canzoniere* underscores Petrarch's love of Laura as the main source of inspiration.

**PROVENANCE**

1. Script and decoration both suggest an Italian origin for this manuscript, likely first quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Roman numerals traced in the top margin of the first folio are discernable with difficulty, in what seems to be a date beginning: "MCCCCXC" [1490?]. The last two Roman numerals are not easily legible: this date certainly cannot be considered a date applicable to the entire manuscript. The first 13 folios of the manuscript have been copied by different hands, and added perhaps at a slightly later date (although still 16<sup>th</sup> c.). Contemporary foliotation from 1 to 132 begins with the *Sonetti-Canzoni* proper, confirming the *Vita*, the *Tavola* (Table of contents) and Poetic correspondence that precedes the *Sonetti-Canzoni* were added later. The core of the manuscript was most certainly copied earlier, likely in the first quarter or first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Added inscription on last folio (later seventeenth-century hand?): "Anno Domini MCCCXLIX [1349] indicti .ii. die .xxiii. maii ista ecclesia consecrata fuit per D. Thomasium Cervicensem episcopum in die dominico intra octavo ascensionis Domini et concessit .xl. dierum indulgentiam ad presentibus Gabriele Cuato Carraro dicto Boino (?),

Viviano Marrucco (?), Stephano de Carrara, Manfredo et Berto q. Ugi. / Hac verba reperiunt in quodam marmora antiqua extra ecclesiam Deipare ville Cervacensii prope Janiculis sub fornice ipsius aedis ad dextera introcuntibus" [These words are found engraved on an ancient marble plaque outside the church Deipare ("Mother of God") of the Villa di Cervia near the Janiculum Hill (...)]. Monte Janiculo is one of the hills across the Tiber (Trastevere), West of Rome, home to a great number of villas, of which the most celebrated is the Villa Pamphili. The quoted marble plaque commemorates the consecration of a small church or chapel located or adjacent to the Villa Cervia by D. Tomaso, bishop of Cervia and the indulgences granted to four (or five?) men. Could this villa be the Palazzo del Vescovo di Cervia, located in Rome in the Rione Ponte?

## TEXT

ff. 1-3, Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370-1444), Short form of *Vita Francisci Petrarcae* [Life of Petrarch], heading in Roman capitals: *Vita et mores Francisci Petrarcae poeta*; incipit, "Ex antiqua familia patre Petrarcho fuit qui patria pulsus aretii in exilio natus est anno M<sup>o</sup> CCC<sup>o</sup> III<sup>o</sup> die lune..."; explicit, "[...] Buccolicam librum epistolarum ad Barbatum et Africam. Finis" (Long version published in A. Solerti, *Le vite*, 294-299);

ff. 3v-10, Table of contents, with alphabetical list of first verses from the *Rerum vulgarij fragmenta*, incipit, "Apie de colli; ove la bella vesta..."; explicit, "[...] Zephiro torno, e'l bel tempo rimeno. Fine de la Tavola";

ff. 10v-11v, *Sonnetti al Petrarca* [Excerpts from Petrarch's poetic correspondence with Muzio Stramazzo da Perugia, Geri Gianfigliuzzi, Sennuccio del Bene, Giovanni Dondi Dell'Orologio, Jacopo Colonna], headings, *Stramazzo da Perugia al Petrarca*, incipit, "La santa fiamma..." (Solerti, 1909, p. 129; Mestica, 1896, pp. 39); *Riposta del Petrarca à le consonanze*, incipit, "Se l'honorata fronde..."; heading, *Geri di Gian Figliozzi al Petrarca*, incipit, "Messer Francesco con Amore sovente (published in Solerti, 1909, p. 130 ); *Riposta del Petrarca à le consonanze*, incipit, "Geri, quando talhor meco..."; heading, *Sennuccio a Messer Francesco Petrarca*, incipit, "Oltra l'usato..." (Solerti, 1909, p. 129); *Riposta del Petrarca à le consonanze*, incipit, "Signor mio caro ogni pensier..." (Solerti, 1909, p. 129; Mestica, 1896, pp. 373-374); heading, *Jacopo [Giacomo] Colonna al Petrarca*, incipit, "Se le parti del corpo..." (Solerti, 1909, p. 129; Mestica, 1896, pp. 145-146); *Riposta del Petrarca à le consonanze*, incipit, "Mai non vedranno..."; heading, *Giovanni de Dondi al Petrarca*, incipit, "Io non so ben..." (Solerti, 1909, p. 129; Mestica, 1896, pp. 340-341);

The poetic correspondence of Petrarch with his contemporaries is discussed by Solerti, "Corrispondenze in rima di Francesco Petrarca con contemporanei," 1909, pp. 129-132.

ff. 12-13, Francesco Petrarca, *Rime disperse*, heading in Roman capitals: *Altri sonetti dell detto*; incipit first sonnet, "Anima dove ch'adhora adhora / Di pensier in pensier, di mal in peggio..." (Solerti, 1909, *Rime disperse...*, no. XLVIII, p. 145); incipit last sonnet, "Quella che'l giovenil meo core avinse..."; explicit last sonnet, "[...] O ver com'uom ch'ascolta e nulla intende" (Solerti, 1909, *Rime disperse...*, no. XXIII, p. 97);

ff. 13v-104v, Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* [Prima parte], heading in Roman capitals: *I Sonetti e le canzoni di M. Francesco Petrarca*, incipit, "Voi ch'ascolate in rime sparse il suono / Di quei sospiri, ond'io nudriva il core..."; last incipit "Arbor vittoriosa triumphale..." (no. I-CCLXIII) (published in Contini, 1964, prima parte);

f. 105, blank;

ff. 105v-144, Francesco Petrarca, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* [Seconda parte], heading in Roman capitals: *I'vo pensando, e nel pensier m'assale / una pieta si forte di me stesso / che mi conduce spesso / ad altro lagrimar ch'i non soleva...*; to incipit, "Vergine bellam che di sol vestita..."; explicit, "[...] spirto ultimo in pace. Il fine de'sonetti, e de le canzoni di Messer Francesco Petrarca (no. CCLXIV-CCLXXX; CCCXXI-CCCXXXVI; CCCL; CCCLV; CCCXXXVII-CCCXLIII; CCLXXXI-CCCXX; CCCXLIV-CCCXLIX; CCCLVI-CCCLXV; CCCLI-CCCLII; CCCLIV; CCCLIII; CCCLXVI) (published in Contini, 1964, seconda parte);

f. 144v, blank;

f. 145, Added inscription (likely later seventeenth-century hand), see Provenance above;

f. 145v, blank.

The earliest of the great Renaissance humanists, Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) wrote widely on the classics, but he is best known for the series of love poems addressed to Laura, the *Canzoniere*, written in vernacular Italian. Laura, whom he first saw in 1327 at Avignon (possibly Laure de Noves, married in 1325 to Hugo de Sade), inspired him with a passion that has become proverbial and is placed at the center of his vernacular poetic opus.

The *Canzoniere*, Petrarch's masterpiece, and one of the enduring monuments of the world's literature, was first assembled by the author and made known by him under the title of *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* or "Fragments of vernacular matters." This collection of 366 poems consists of sonnets (and these are the more numerous), of *canzoni*, of *sestine*, of *ballate*, and of madrigals. Intensely self-reflective, the majority of the poems champion the love motive, celebrating the Poet's love for Laura as the idealized woman, but political, patriotic, moral, and religious themes also underlie some of the most famous poems.

The critical editions of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* are based on the autograph codices, Vatican, Cod. Vat. lat. 3195 (final version) and lat. 3196 (early draft). Although in the present manuscript the first part ("in life") of the *Canzoniere* follows quite literally the order adopted in modern editions (we have referred to Contini, 1964), the second part ("in death") contains all the sonnets, but the order differs somewhat towards the end (see Text above). The two parts of the *Canzoniere* are distinguished in the present manuscript by a blank folio. Also noteworthy, this copy still includes the sonnets known as the "Babylon sonnets" ("De l'empia," "Fiamma," and "Fontana"), later submitted to papal ban in 1595.

An important census of all extant Petrarch manuscripts in public collections is underway, the results of which are published under the title "Censimento dei Codici Petrarqueschi" (Padua, ed. Antenore). There are over 30 copies of the *Canzoniere* in the United States alone (see Dutschke, 1986). To our knowledge the present manuscript is hitherto unrecorded and thus should be confronted with other later fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century copies of the *Canzoniere* to determine better the context and circumstances of its production. Further inquiry into the incunable tradition of the *Canzoniere* might reveal whether this manuscript could be a copy of an early edition (first incunable edition, Venice, 1470; followed by Rome, 1471 and Padua, 1472; see Goff, P-371-373; E. H. Wilkins, "The fifteenth-century editions of the Italian Poems of Petrarch," in *Modern Philology* 40 (1943), pp. 229 and ff.). Was the manuscript intended for an amateur of Petrarchism, a literary trend that extended through the Renaissance and well into the seventeenth century?

## LITERATURE

Contini, G., ed. *Francesco Petrarca. Canzoniere*, Turin, Einaudi, 1964 [*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*].

Dutschke, Dennis. *Census of Petrarch Manuscripts in the United States*, Padua, Editrice Antenore, 1986 [Censimento dei codici Petrarqueschi, 9].

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Pellegrin, E. *Manuscripts de Pétrarque dans les bibliothèques de France*, Padua, Editrice Antenore, 1986 [Censimento dei codici Petrarqueschi, 2].

Solerti, A., ed. *Rime disperse di Francesco Petrarca o a lui attribuite, per la prima volta raccolte a cura di A. Solerti*, Florence, 1909.

Solerti, A. *Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio scritte fino al secolo decimosesto*, Milan, 1904.

Steinby, E. M., ed. *Ianiculum, Gianicolo: Storia, topografia, monumenti, leggende dall' antichità al rinascimento*, Rome, 1996 [Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae, 16].

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Bilingual e-text of the *Canzoniere*

<http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/canzoniere.html>

Petrarch at the Beinecke Library--Curator Dennis Dutschke

<http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/brbleduc/petrarch/about.html>

Exhibition of books and manuscripts from the collections of Cornell University Library and the University of Pennsylvania Library

<http://www.library.upenn.edu/exhibits/rbm/petrarch/petrarch.html>