

**PETRARCH, Trionfi [Triumphs]  
In Italian, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Italy, probably Florence, c. 1450**

*i [paper] + 52 + i [paper], parchment of Italian preparation, complete (collation: i-iv<sup>o</sup>, vi<sup>i</sup> [2 and 3 canceled, probably blank]), written in a fine and neat humanistic bookhand in light brown ink on a single column on 21 lines, ruled in blind (120 x 70 mm., measured to outer line of double vertical frame), eleven 2-line initials in burnished goldleaf on blue grounds of lapis lazuli, last initial (f. 48v) 3 lines, in gold leaf without ground, one 3-line initial A in goldleaf with white vine decoration in blue and green, f. 1 trimmed at the upper border, some initials smudged, some soiling of the leaves, margin of f. 35 repaired with a square parchment plug, generally in sound condition, a nice copy of a good text. Bound in a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup>-century vellum over half boards, gilt on spine "PETRARCA," on front cover in cursive ink "Petrarque Laure," various shelf marks, Cb/38, 724, and 112 on the inside front cover and flyleaf, colored speckled edges (Stain on front cover, some internal staining, never affecting text; strip of parchment cut from upper portion of f. 1). Dimensions 172 x 110 mm.*

Petrarch's vernacular poetry enjoys a near-mythic status in Renaissance literature, and the Triumphs, perhaps more than his other writings, exerted enormous influence. Written to his beloved Laura, the Triumphs inspired woodcut illustration, tapestries, even playing cards. This compact pocket-size manuscript in a beautiful legible humanistic script encourages today's readers to recreate the experience of fifteenth-century devotees of Petrarch. With its many variants, it contains elements of different stages of Petrarch's composition.

**PROVENANCE**

1. Written in Italy, likely Florence, based on the script and decoration. Further research might identify the humanist hand of the scribe.
2. Heraldic ex-libris, pasted on front pastedown (engraved bookplate "Bibliothecae Ferrandianae").
3. Maurice de Lambert, in pencil on the pastedown of the front cover. The manuscript was in France in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when the title was written on the front cover in French.
4. European Private Collection.

## TEXT

ff. 1-17, [Triumph of Love], incipit, "Al tempo che rinova i miei sospiri ..."; explicit, "Vien chatenato giove innazi al carro" (f. 4v); incipit, "Era si pieno el chor di meraviglia ..."; explicit, "... Et qual e el me le temprato choll assenzio" (f. 9); "Poschia che mia fortuna in forza altrui"; explicit, "... Chel pie va inanzi et lochio torna indietro (f. 13); incipit, "Stancho gia di mirar non sazio anchora..."; explicit, "... Et dun pome beffata alfin cydippe" (f. 17v). These stanzas appear in a different order from that in the standard edition(s) (cf. Muscetta below).

ff. 17v-22, [Triumph of Chastity], incipit, "Quando adun gioco et in un tempo quivi..."; explicit, "... Fra gli altri vidi ypolito et yoseppe";

ff. 22-30v, [Triumph of Death], incipit, "Questa leggiadra et graxiosa donna..."; explicit, "... Morte bella pareo nel suo belviso" (f. 26); incipit, "La nocte che segui l'orribil chaso..."; explicit, "... Tu starai in terra senza me gran tempo";

f. 31-44v [Triumph of Fame], incipit, "Eel [Nel] cor pien d'amarrissima dolceza..."; explicit, "... Poi alla fine vidi arthuro et carlo" (f. 34v); incipit, "Da poi che morte triumpho nel volto..."; explicit, "... Si chome adviene achi virtu relinque" (f. 38); incipit, "Pien d'infinita et nobil meraviglia"; explicit, "... Magnanimo gentil constante et largho" (f. 41v); ; incipit, "Non sapea da tal vista levarme..." [ends with line not in the edition], explicit, "... Qui lascio et piu dilor non dico avante";

f. 45-48 [Triumph of Time], incipit, "Nel taureo albergo choll'aurora innazi..."; explicit, "... Chosi il tempo triumpho i nomi e'l mondo";

ff. 48v-51v, [Triumph of Eternity], incipit, "Da poi che sotto 'l cel chosa non vidi..."; explicit, "... Or che fia addunque a rivederla in cielo. Finis."

There are many spelling and other textual variants, including the internal order of the sections of the Triumphs, with published editions of the Triumphs. The present manuscript reflects the extended evolution of the text and contains elements from different stages of Petrarch's composition: for example the Triumph of Fame opens on f. 31 with "Nel cor pien damarissima dolceza," the chapter that Petrarch discarded in favor of that opening "Da poi che Morte triumpho del volto," which follows it on f. 34v. The manuscript thus merits further study for this and other variants by Petrarch scholars.

Petrarch's *Triumphs*, written in terza rima, followed the allegorical works of Dante, setting out a triumphal procession of the allegorical figures Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Divinity. The poet describes the effect of each on his beloved Laura with imagery drawn from his encyclopedic knowledge of ancient history, including the fall of Carthage, the march of Xerxes into Greece, and the legends of Perseus, Andromeda, Pygmalion and Camilla and her Amazons. Chastity triumphs over Love, and finally Divinity triumphs over them all, and the poet is united with his love in eternity.

The public fame of Francesco Petrarca (1304-74), the celebrated scholar and composer, father of Renaissance humanism and friend of Boccaccio, was based on these poems. Despite the widespread dissemination of his works in Latin, it was his Italian verse (and notably these compositions), which gave him a vast public following in Italy. They form part of the corpus of poetry composed after Petrarca had given up his vocation as a priest, and after he supposedly caught sight of Laura on Good Friday 1327 in the church of Sainte-Claire in Avignon. He was struck with a lasting passion and pursued her, only to be rebuked as she was already married (if she existed then she may in fact have been Laura de Noves, the wife of Count Hugues de Sade, and the ancestor of the infamous Marquis de Sade). They had little contact after that, and he channeled his energies into the writing of love poetry until her sudden and early death in 1348. In the sixteenth century, Pietro Bembo principally based his model for the modern Italian language on these vernacular works of Petrarca.

The Triumphs of Petrarca are not uncommon in manuscript, and they were also extremely popular in print in the incunabular period. Over 300 manuscript copies are recorded (see McGowan, p. 319), most of them in European libraries. DeRicci and Wilson listed only 23 copies in North American Collections (Wilkins, 1947, p. 23), a number that has assuredly grown in the last half century. Ullman and Jasenas include a more up-to-date list. A richly illuminated humanist copy of Petrarca's Triumphs, along with other texts, made approximately 570,000 USD in November 2009 at Christie's, London (lot. 5). We could find no auction record for the present copy, which must always have been in private hands, initially in Italy, and by the nineteenth century in France.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Triumphs in Italian

<http://www.classicalitaliani.it/petrarca/poesia/trionfi01.htm>

The Gutenberg Project: Sonnets, Triumphs, and other Poems

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/17650>

The Petrarch Timeline

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

Online Exhibition: Petrarch at 700 (in 2004)

Census of Petrarch Manuscripts in the United States

<http://scriptorium.columbia.edu/petrarch/toc.html>

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