

"France vs. Italy: French Literary Nationalism in 'Petrarch's Last Controversy' And A Humanist Dispute of ca. 1395"

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In April, 1367, Pope Urban V left Avignon for Rome, ending the "Babylonian captivity" of almost sixty-three years. Before his departure Urban received a diplomatic mission from the king of France, Charles V. Headed by Ancel Choquart, a professor of Canon Law at the University of Paris, this mission added the young king's personal pleas to the already weighty voices of the French party among the cardinals in an attempt to persuade Urban to remain in France. ¹

Master Ancel's speech, delivered *coram Papa Urbano V... & Cardinalibus ex parte Regis Franciae* ² is composed of practical, political arguments. Urban himself is praised most fulsomely. The king's love, concern, and loyalty are repeatedly expressed. Ancel carefully dismisses the religious and historical argument which seemed to urge the return of the papal see to Rome. ³ Again and again Choquart stressed Avignon's one cardinal advantage: the relative security the pope enjoyed there as compared to the warfare and political turmoil wracking the Italian peninsula. It had been the imprisonment at Anagni of Pope Boniface VIII -- a captivity which hastened his death -- by the warlike Colonna family of Rome in 1303 which had prompted Pope Clement V (French by birth, like Urban) to move the papal see to Avignon in 1305. ⁴ Choquart emphasized the tranquillity enjoyed under the French monarchy and the religiosity of the French, both historical and contemporary, contrasting to them Rome's disreputable origins and its persecution of early Christian martyrs and popes. ⁵ Other, secondary virtues of France, according to Ancel, were her central location within Christendom, and the pope's nearness to the University of Paris. ⁶ Choquart's pride in his own institution later drew Petrarch's heavy fire; the status of the University remains a central aspect of the nationalist French response in this and the subsequent dispute.

Italy did not long await her champion. Already in August, 1366, Petrarch had sent Urban V a long letter (*Seniles IX, i*) urging the return of the pope to Rome. ⁷ Francesco Bruni, papal secretary and humanist, had no doubt told Petrarch of Choquart's speech and of the intense French pressure upon Urban to return to France, a pressure made more palpable by the disorders which greeted the pope's arrival at Viterbo. ⁸ Much of *Sen. IX, i* is an attack on the French cardinals. But just as Choquart had stressed France's political tranquillity so Petrarch, trying to show Italy to advantage, developed a lengthy and disparaging comparison between Italian and French culture. Of the four Fathers of the Church, *Nullus est gallicus. Nullus doctus in Gallia*, while as for eloquence, *Oratores et poete extra Italiam non querantur; de latinis loquor vel hinc orti omnes vel hic docti*. And Petrarch adds a contemptuous reference to the University of Paris: *Unus hiis omnibus* [Italy's cultural superiority] *fragosus straminum vicus obicitur*. ⁹

On 4 January 1369 Coluccio Salutati (like Bruni a young papal secretary) wrote to tell Petrarch of the furor *Sen. IX, i* (sent to Avignon from Pavia in the spring of the preceding year) had stirred up. The French cardinals were all at work developing refutations of the charges made therein. The fact that most of the arguments from the French side that Salutati lists appear in Jean de Hesdin's *Invectiva Contr Fr. Petrarcham* makes us suspect that his was a semi-official work representing the French cardinals at the court. ¹⁰ If so, Hesdin, long closely associated with Cardinal Guy de Boulogne (part of the French party and himself a correspondent of Petrarch's) and author of several biblical commentaries pulsating with quotations from all possible *auctores*, was a logical choice: he was probably the closest thing to a humanist Petrarch's adversaries could muster. ¹¹

Like Choquart, Hesdin primarily stressed France's relative political stability (the Hundred Years' War had not yet caused

widespread devastation and political disruption). but Hesdin could hardly allow Petrarch's affront to French culture to pass unrequited. His *Invectiva* is divided into thirteen sections, the eleventh of which confronts Petrarch's disparagement of French learning. ¹² Hesdin is not at his strongest here. He begins by deliberately misconstruing Petrarch's statement, "Nullus [i.e. of the four Doctors of the Church] doctus in Gallia" to mean, "there are not, and have not been, any learned men in France," after which follows a list of fourteen learned Frenchmen. ¹³ Next, confessing that he does know what Petrarch really meant, Hesdin replied that many learned men have not been Italian, while not all Italian men of learning were Roman. Rome was always preeminent in poetry, but Plato banned poets from the well-ordered kingdom, so France has nothing to regret in this, ¹⁴ avers Hesdin (no doubt with special satisfaction, for Petrarch had been crowned with the laurel in Rome on 8 April 1341, after having rejected an offer for coronation by the University of Paris).

Jean de Hesdin's *Invectiva* is still primarily political. But Petrarch's entry into the lists on Italy's behalf had shifted the focus towards literary debate. Petrarch himself calls his exchange with Hesdin *certamen* and *disceptatio* (at the beginning ¹⁵ and end of the *Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italiae*. Hesdin had probably not viewed it as such, since his first purpose was to strengthen the hand of those who were urging Pope Urban's return to Avignon. But by 1370, within a year or so of Hesdin's writing, Urban had transferred the Papacy back to France and died shortly thereafter. By 1 March 1373, when Petrarch dated his *Invectiva*, the political immediacy had diminished and the cultural issue -- Italy vs France -- naturally came to the fore. ¹⁶

Petrarch pays little attention to the original matter of the location of the papal see and concentrates instead on belittling French culture. Of Hesdin's proudly proffered list of fourteen learned Frenchmen Petrarch sneers, "profert dehinc sancto agmine multa suorum plebeia nomina, quos ego non existimo ultra suam viciniam notos esse" ¹⁷ (he excepts Hilary of Poitiers). Of the University of Paris, "numquam -- quod audierim -- Parisiensis quidam ibi vir clarus fuit." It is clear that he is no longer concerned here with the relative advantages of the papacy's presence in France or Italy (for Petrarch concedes there have been many famous men at the University); rather he wishes to demolish any claims of a superior national French culture (the famous scholars have not been Parisian). ¹⁸

Salutati informs us that the literary controversy involving Choquet, Petrarch, and Hesdin attracted much attention at the papal court. When the dispute erupted again in 1395, a single reference to it by Pietramala was enough to elicit an indignant refutation of Petrarch's charges; thus the debate was obviously still well known both at Avignon and in Paris. ¹⁹ But much had changed. The close diplomatic and cultural ties with Avignon, together with the high esteem in which Italian humanism was held there had steadily increased the influence of Italian letters upon Parisian cultural circles. Classical Latin style and letters, the passion for which had distinguished Petrarch and his circle, now found proponents in the royal and ducal chanceries of northern France and at the University of Paris. Translations into French of works of classical antiquity and Italian humanists show that the interest in humanist pursuits spread far beyond the narrow circle of aspiring humanist secretaries. In the twenty-two years since the sage of Vaucluse had dated his attack against French culture a French humanist movement, grounded in imitation of an (sometimes) outright admiration for Petrarch, had been born. ²⁰

Politically, too, a great change had occurred. The Great Schism was approaching its third decade. The French crown was weakened by military defeat, economic insolvency, and the centrifugal tendencies of the great French lords, all exacerbated by roving armies of pro-British *condottieri* who owed allegiance to the Roman, not the French, pope. To the king and the University of Paris, the guardians of French interests, the political liabilities of a divided papacy began to seem greater than the advantages of having one of the popes in Avignon. French diplomacy was increasingly concerned with the problem of Church reunification, even if this meant (as it almost certainly would) a Roman, rather than an Avignon, pope.

Upon Pope Clement VII's death in 1394 Nicholas de Clamanges, a secretary of the University, drafted on its behalf a

strongly-worded letter to the cardinals at Avignon urging them to defer the election of a new pope. Soon thereafter Clamanges wrote to the newly elected Pope Benedict XIII, urging the University's view that the pope take the first steps to hasten the reunification of the Church without waiting for parallel moves on the part of the Roman pontiff Boniface IX. ²¹ Struck by the eloquence of these letters the Avignon Cardinal Galeotto di Pietramala wrote the Parisian humanist, expressing in warm terms his admiration and friendship. He explained his surprise at finding such eloquence among the French by criticizing Petrarch's by now famous statement from *Sen. IX, i*, that "orators and poets were not to be found" among them. ²² But the Italian's astonishment at finding a humanist among the French provoked Clamanges and Jean de Montreuil, a ducal secretary with humanist inclinations, to develop lengthy defenses of French letters and to insist, as Hesdin had not dared, that French letters, which combined eloquence with Christian wisdom and virtue, were thereby superior to the Italian. ²³

This defense of French culture includes five major arguments. First, Clamanges and Montreuil provide examples of what they considered excellent Latin prose in refutation of Petrarch's statement and the cardinal's suspicions. Second, they defend the University of Paris. They introduce the notion that French culture has surpassed Italian (*translatio studii*). Clamanges presents a list of French masters of eloquence and wisdom, to which Montreuil alludes approvingly. Last, both Clamanges and Montreuil insist that French authors are the more eloquent, since true *eloquentia* must be subordinated to *sapientia*, which Petrarch and the Italians lack.

Pietramala had expressed surprise at the excellence of style in the letters written by Clamanges on behalf of the University, and Nicolas takes umbrage at this slight to his compatriots. His opening paragraph however, intended as a demonstration of stylistic excellence, shows instead a pedantic fascination for rare words and curious, but far from lucid, constructions (Jean de Montreuil's attempts at such stylistic *tours de force* are even less happy). ²⁴ Second, both are anxious to refute the slight to the University of Paris implied in Pietramala's assumption that Clamanges' eloquence is due to an education at the university of Bologna. Clamanges outlines a philosophy of study in which the role of a *magister* is of secondary importance only. He cites the Frenchman St. Bernard of Clairvaux as an example of the preeminent importance of "studium usum, exercitium assiduum, attentamque lectionem auctorum eloquentium, cum aliqua forte ingenii aptitudine." ²⁵ When combined with practice, reading the authors themselves is much more important than studying rules of rhetoric under some professor (though Clamanges says he has read Cicero and Quintilian too). He stops short of claiming he has learned his eloquence by himself as did St. Bernard, but he has read and conferred with *preceptores* rather than *magistri*. These *preceptores* were no doubt the group of similar-minded Parisian humanists of whom Clamanges was the acknowledged master. As for Bologna, he has never been there: "Credit mihi Bononiam vestram, quam matrem studiorum vocas, numquam omnino vidi ... ne nihil extra Italiam posse disci aut scire aestimes..." (21 -- really 22A). Both Frenchmen defend the university of Paris directly, but without being very specific as to the nature of classical studies there. According to Clamanges, both rhetoric and poetry are taught there; Montreuil merely declares that he writes "zelo patrie et tot venerabilium universitatum accensus amore." ²⁶

Nicholas even raises the notion of a *translation studii* from Italy to France, since the cultivation of eloquence proceeded better in France after the time of St. Bernard than anywhere else, including Italy. His conclusion is twofold. First, in Petrarch's day there had been, besides Petrarch himself, practically no eloquent men anywhere. Thus in claiming that there were no poets or orators outside Italy, Petrarch was in effect boasting that he himself was the only one in the world! Second, France had in effect been preeminent for a longer period than Italy, from the time of Gregory to Bede, and at the time of St. Bernard again. ²⁷

Jean de Hesdin had listed fourteen eloquent French writers; Clamanges expands the number to eighteen. ²⁸ In addition he describes the kind of literary education he himself had obtained, thus indirectly giving another defense of French culture. Montreuil seconds these views; Petrarch must have been ignorant of the "absentium tante multitudini" (No. 96, l. 27) of orators and poets of France. In Clamanges's list, unlike Hesdin's Christian writers far outweigh the classical. Clamanges is shifting the ground of the argument in his favor, since Christian writers certainly preponderate in French letters.

There was of course no fundamental disagreement between Pietramala and the two French humanists on the matter of submitting *eloquentia* to *sapientia*.²⁹ The letter Pietramala had sent to the Romans in defense of Benedict XIII, "Hortatur patriae," is a pious exhortation for an end to the schism and contains no classical citations at all.³⁰ But the differences between the cardinal and the secretaries are in a general way typical of the gap between the French and Italian humanists of that period. Pietramala emphasizes the more purely classical elements and incorporates elements of classical values themselves; Clamanges, in contrast, explicitly subjugates these values to a Christian, traditional context. In "Sepe alias" Pietramala employs the word *virtus* in a classical -- not a Christian -- sense³¹, and praises Clamanges primarily for his style and mastery of Latin rhetoric. Clamanges rejects this definition; the primary meaning of *virtus*, under which the other meanings must be subsumed, is *caritas*.³² There is no sign of this in Pietramala:

Nec nunc illam appello virtutem, quam Stoici definiere ... Sed de his hactenus, non enim mens est philosophorum scrutari sententias, aut inter Stoicos, Peripateticosque arbiter fieri. (*Ampl. Coll.* I, 1545 D)

That is, he will not enter into a discussion of *virtus*; but if he were to do so, he would see it as a dispute between Stoics and Peripatetic concepts of the term.

Clamanges' letters to Pietramala are detailed reminders of the necessity of making eloquence subservient to the needs of wisdom. St Bernard's undoubted eloquence owed nothing to classical studies or professors. Quoting Cato (from Augustine) that "orator est vir bonus dicendi peritus," Clamanges reminds the cardinal that *virī bonitatem* precedes *dicendi peritiam*.³³ In the course of disproving Petrarch's statement, "Non esse extra Italiam oratores aut poetas quaerendos,"³⁴ Clamanges lists two kinds of writers. First he notes the many non-Italian orators and poets of classical times, and in doing so displays the extent of his classical learning (25B-26B). The second list is of French writers (26B-27B), preceded by quotations of classical authors from Jerome to Juvenal attesting to the eloquence of French writers. Among poets he mentions Statius, second only to Vergil; or orators, Hilary of Poitiers; of historians, Gregory, Sulpitius Severus, and Martin (of Tours). Finally he divides the rest of the French authors into two groups, the *antiquos* -- Irenaeus, Hilary of Arles, Gennadius, Radulphus Flaviacensis, Prosper and Cassinus; and the *recentiores* -- St Bernard, Hildebert, Ivo of Chartres, Odo, Hugo, and Peter of Cluny, Hugo and Richard of St Victor, and Alanus de Insulis. He adds that there are many other orators and poets outside Italy, if one but look for them (27B).

Jean de Montreuil's letter to Pietramala "Non dici" (No: 96) seconds Clamanges' in stressing the unity of eloquence and wisdom. He congratulates Pietramala for "sermo tuus ille mellifluo Lactancii rore delibutus," but adds "... sententiis ornator [*sci l. sermo*] quam verbis."

...a puero semper honoravi, semper amavi rethores, et potissime bonitatis nomine insignitos. (No: 96, ll. 12-13)

Jean modestly leaves final judgment over these matters up to Pietramala, wishing that the cardinal's discretion "render the psalter consonant with the lyre."³⁵ Both ancient stringed instruments, psalter and lyre have different connotations; the Psalms of David were called *psalterium*, while *cithara*, the Greek bardic instrument, refers to classical poetry. Thus Jean is concerned to make Christian and pagan eloquence (poetry) compatible, and the basis for this compatibility is the recognition that wisdom is the basis of all eloquence. Were this kept firmly in mind by the Italians, Jean implies, there would be no question of undervaluing the French contributions to eloquence, as Petrarch did.

Together with the newly-born humanism a literary nationalism had developed in France in the fewer than thirty years between the two disputes. In Choquet and Hesdin there is only an inkling of pride in the traditions, lineage, and culture of the inhabitants of France -- what we recognize today as cultural nationalism. What predominates instead is the expression

of loyalty to the King of France, his realm, and his political interests. Even with Petrarch forcing the issue Hesdin only devoted one of thirteen sections of his essay to a defense of French culture. Furthermore Hesdin misconstrued Petrarch's criticisms, for he listed writers who had (or so he thought) been born in France, a point which is really irrelevant, as Petrarch pointed out, to a definition of specifically French culture. Similarly Hesdin's defense of the University of Paris is a sense of pride in a possession of the French king; he does not claim that there is anything else specially "French" about it (and Petrarch wryly denies that there is). Choquart had in fact stressed the international significance of the University, not its "Frenchness," as its prime advantage to the papacy.

Petrarch, in contrast, expressed an abstract love for Italy as a whole without reference to (in fact in spite of) its contemporary political discord and disunity. This was a true cultural nationalism, founded in admiration of a classical Roman culture in which, despite its paganness, Petrarch takes great pride. It is a sense of "Italy" drawn from the past. This concept, novel at the time, must have seemed to contemporaries such as Jean de Hesdin to bear little relevance to the contemporary reality of the peninsula. Furthermore -- and this Clamanges and Montreuil share with him -- Hesdin believed that Christian *sapientia* was far more important than mere verbal *eloquentia*.³⁶ Thus a list of noted French churchmen could more than offset Petrarch's pagan Latin authors. In a word Petrarch and Hesdin had quite different concepts of culture, the former's more secular and nationalist, the latter's more traditionally feudal and Christian. If we judge Petrarch the hands-down winner today, it is because his humanist nationalism appears to us more "natural," more modern. But it could hardly have seemed so at the time.

By the 1390s the first French humanists had begun to develop a French nationalism based upon the idea of the grandeur of French culture past and present. As with their humanism, so their sense of nationalism developed largely in imitation of Petrarch; in fact, the two are inseparable. Neither Clamanges nor Montreuil mention the French king or the tranquillity of his kingdom; instead, they concentrate upon justifying a sense of pride in French cultural history. This poses somewhat of a contradiction for them, for the language in which they wrote and the classical writers they especially admired were all Roman or at least Italian. However, they argue that for any Christian *sapientia* is the most important element in *eloquentia*, and French ecclesiastical writers may be shown to be numerous and also "eloquent." Thus France can carry the day before Italy, whose famous poets and orators were pagan.³⁷

Like Italian literary humanism, moreover, the new French humanist style was developed by notaries and secretaries -- men whose desire to spread its acceptability was inseparable from their desire for self-advancement in the profession of writing. Nicolas de Clamanges left the University of Paris for Avignon shortly after his debate with Pietramala and took a position with Pope Benedict XIII at Avignon. His demonstrated eloquence, noted admiringly by the classicizing Avignon cardinal, was in part a successful attempt to facilitate this promotion.³⁸ Montreuil's correspondence with other French humanist-secretaries discloses their common concern for career advancement and their willingness to change princely employers. Their admiration for France as a whole had already displaced the traditional feudal notion of lifelong fealty to one overlord, be he king, pope, or prince (in Clamanges's case it even led, not without some justification, to charges of treason to the French king being laid against him in 1408).³⁹

In the late 1360s French literary culture was as yet medieval; by the 1390s a literary Renaissance is already in the making. This is the significance of the different responses to Petrarch's challenge.

NOTES

1. The sequence of events of this quarrel, a list of the documents, and the essential bibliographical references are given in Pier Giorgio Ricci, "La cronologia dell'ultimo 'certamen' petrarchesco," *Studi Petrarqueschi*, IV (1951), 47-59. A more recent discussion, with emphasis on Petrarch's contributions, is in Ernest H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's Later Years* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1959), 233-240. What is known of Ansel Choquart's biography is in R.

Delachena I, *Histoire de Charles V* (Paris: Picard, 1927), III, 516 and nn. 1 and 2. [Back](#).

2. Choquart's speech is printed in Du Boulay, C.E. (Bulaeus), *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris: Apud Petrum de Bresche ..., 1668), III, 396-412; the circumstances of its delivery are on p. 396. [Back](#).

3. Du Boulay, 396-403. Choquart understandably passes over in silence what was probably an equally crucial factor in Urban's decision to leave Avignon -- the intense political pressure from the powerful French throne and its supporters which the pope's presence on the Rhone subjected him to. Choquart's speech is briefly summarized in Delachenal, 519-523. [Back](#).

4. The standard discussion of the Avignon period is G. Mollat, *Les papes d'Avignon*, 9me édition (Paris, 1949); English translation, *The Popes at Avignon* (Edinburgh:Nelson, 1949).[Back](#).

5. Du Boulay, 406-408. [Back](#).

6. Du Boulay, 408-409. [Back](#).

7. Given the high regard in which Petrarch was held at the papal court and by the pope personally, several modern scholars believe that this letter may have had some influence on Urban's decision. See Henry Cochin, "La grande controverse de Rome et Avignon au XIVe siècle (un document inédit)," *Études Italiennes*, III (1921), 5; Wilkins, 106. [Back](#).

8. For Bruni, see Wilkins, 105-106, and 128 for Urban's arrival in Italy, the disturbances at Viterbo, and the pressures upon him from the French party. [Back](#).

9. There is no modern edition of Petrarch's *Seniles*. The most available text is the translation into Italian by Giuseppe Fracassetti, *Lettere senili de F. Petrarca*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1869-70), which I have used. [Back](#).

10. This letter is in Francesco Novati, ed., *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (Rome: Tipografi del Senato, 1891), I,viii,72-76. For the preparations of the French cardinals, see p. 74, ll 4-6; 75, ll. 19-20; the arguments they were using are given on p. 75, ll. 6-19. These are: (1) the Italians boast of the glorious past to cover up the ignominious present; (2) the vices of the Italian cities; (3) the healthful properties of the wine of Beaune (i.e. the Rhone), in contrast to the deleterious effects of Italian wine upon the reason. Jean de Hesdin's *Invectiva* contains all these points. According to Wilkins, 234, Jean de Hesdin's reply "had been well known in papal circles in Avignon." [Back](#).

11. For this information on Jean de Hesdin, see Pierre de Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'Humanisme* (Paris: Champion, 1907), II, 307-309, and pp. 310-311, for Petrarch's relations with Cardinal Guy de Boulogne. Alas for France, Hesdin was no match for Petrarch. That Hesdin knew this is evident from the defensiveness of his strategy. For example, he copies Petrarch's *Sen.* IX,i, by beginning his *Invectiva* with a biblical quotation which he then applies to Italy and France. For Petrarch, France is the "Egypt," the French the "populus barbarus," of Ps. 113, 1; for Hesdin, in contrast, France is the "Jerusalem," Italy the "Jericho," of Luke 10:30 (the Parable of the Good Samaritan). [Back](#).

12. The text is in Enrico Cocchia, ed., "Magistri Iohannis de Hysdinio Invectiva Contra Fr.Petrarcham et FR. Petrarcae Contra Cuiusdam Galli Calumnias Apologia," *Atti del Reale Accademia de Archeologie, Letterature, ed Arti* (Naples), VII (1920), 112-139. Section XI on literature and culture is found on pp. 131-134. [Back](#).

13. Hesdin, 131, XI, ll. 1-4: "Quid etiam Itatorum gravitatem et scientiam sic extollit, immo etiam in tantam prorumpit iniuriam, ut dixerit: *nullus doctus in Gallia*? Certe in Gallia et multi sunt et plures praefuerunt, sal va reventia, valde docti." Petrarch's actual words had referred only to the four Doctors of the Church, of whom "nullus est gallicus. nullus doctus in gallia." (Wilkins, 134). [Back](#).

14. Hesdin, 133-134. [Back](#).

15. Petrarch, "Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italiae," ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci, in G. Martellotti *et al.*, eds., *Francesco Petrarca: Prose* (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi Editore, 1955), 768. This is a re-edited and improved text over that published by Cocchia (see note 12 above), but is not complete. The title used by Ricci is now accepted by Petrarchan scholars as the standard one; on this question, see pp. 1176-1177 of the Martellotti volume. Salutati's letter also implies that the debate had, after Petrarch's contribution, become as much literary as political: "...ipse Christi vicarius se iudicens futurem in hac disceptatione predixit." (*Epistolario* I, p. 75, ll. 24-25). Petrarch again refers to the debate as a *certamen* at the end of the *Invectiva* (ed. Cocchia, p. 201; this part is omitted in the abbreviated Ricci edition). [Back](#).

16. A letter -- *Variae* III -- which remained unpublished in his lifetime shows Petrarch's immediate and passionate response upon learning of the pope's decision to leave Italy for Avignon once again in 1370. See Giuseppe Fracasseti, *Francisci Petrarcae Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus et Variae* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1863), III, 311-314. The fact that this letter was not sent, together with Petrarch's three-year delay in replying to Hesdin, indicates that he had basically abandoned any hope of influencing the new pope's decision and was concerned with the cultural aspect of the *certamen* alone. The contents of Petrarch's *Invectiva* are consistent with this also; see text below. [Back](#).

17. Cocchia ed., Sec. XVIII; see Wilkins, 239. [Back](#).

18. Wilkins, 240. [Back](#).

19. There are several pieces of evidence which tend to show that "Petrarch's Last Controversy" (as Ricci calls it) was well-known and widely studied in Paris -- presumably at the royal and ducal chanceries -- not only in its own day but for decades thereafter. First, one of the principal MSS B[iblioghèque] N[ationale] lat. 14582 contains the works of Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. Recent research has shown that Gerson's Latin style was widely admired among early French humanists and specifically by Jean de Montreuil, who figures prominently in this debate. See Ezio Ornato, *Jean Muret et Ses Amis Nicolas de Clamanges et Jean de Montreuil* (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1969), 151; *Jean de Montreuil: O pera. Vol. I, Parte Prima: Epistolario*, ed. E. Ornato (Turin: Giappichelli, 1963), No. 132, ll. 35-44 (p. 195), where Gerson is listed among other masters of eloquence, including Salutati (l. 42). This would explain the presence of Hesdin's *Invectiva* in a MS of Gerson's works. Second, another MS of Petrarch's *invectives*, which also includes Hesdin's reply, contains an anonymous and amateurish "response" to Petrarch's *Invectiva contra eum* (B.N. lat. nouv. acqu. 1985). This work shows that the whole debate lived on actively in the minds of some French students. See Henry Cochin, "La grande controverse... (Suite)," *Études Italiennes*, III (1921), 83 (for the MS), and 89-94 (for the text). Finally, there is the fact that, in the debate to be discussed below, Cardinal Pietramala had only to make a brief reference to Petrarch's attack on French letters to elicit a lengthy, passionate, and very detailed defense, together with a counter-attack against Petrarch, from Nicolas de Clamanges and Jean de Montreuil. Thus the Petrarch-Hesdin *certamen* was well known among aspiring humanists in Paris in the 1390s. [Back](#).

20. For a summary and a bibliography of the exciting work done in recent years by the Franco-Italian team of researchers on early French humanism and its relationship with Italy, see Ornato *Jean Muret, passim*; the articles in Franco Simone, ed., *Miscellanea di Studi e Ricerche sul Quattrocento Francese* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1967), especially the articles by D. Cecchetti, G. Di Stefano, Ornato, and G. Ouy. The fullest bibliography is in my dissertation (see note 23 below). The

burst of translating activity is documented in Robert H. Lucas, "Mediaeval French Translations of the Latin Classics to 1500," *Speculum*, XLV, No. 2 (April 1970), 225 ff. See also Jacques Monfrin, "Les traducteurs et leur public en France au moyen-âge," *Journal des Savants* (Jan.-Mar. 1964), 5-20; and "Humanisme et Traductions au Moyen Âge," in *L'Humanisme Médiéval dans les Littératures Romanes du XIIe au XIVe siècles* (Paris: Fourrier, 1964), 217-246. On the importance of Avignon, see Franco Simone, *Rinascimento francese*, 9 ff. [Back](#).

21. See Nicole Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme d'Occident* (Paris, 1891-1902), III, 22-27. The letters by Clamanges are published in Du Boulay, IV, 682-700. [Back](#).

22. Galeotto di Pietramala, "Sepe alias," in Dom Edmond Martène and Dom Ursin Durand, *Veterum Scriptorum et Monumentorum ... Amplissima Collectio* (Paris, 1724; repro. New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), I, 1534-1546. Petrarch's sentence in full was: "Oratores et poete extra Italiam non querantur, de latinis loquor uel hinc orti omnes uel hinc docti," Wilkins, 134. [Back](#).

23. This literary debate has been briefly studied by the following scholars: E. Ornato, "La prima fortuna del Petrarca in Francia," *Studi Francesi*, 5 (1961), 201-217 and 401-414; Alfred Coville, *Gontier et Pierre Col e t l'Humanisme en France au temps de Charles VI* (Paris: Droz, 1934), 167-71; Franco Simone, *Il Rinascimento Francese; studi e ricerche* (Turin: Società editrice internazionale, 1961), 48-49; Ornato, *Jean Muret*, 28 ff.; Dario Cecchetti, "L'elogio delle arti liberali nel primo Umanesimo francese," *SF*, 10 (1966), 1-14; "Sulla fortuna del Petrarca in Francia: un tesoro dimenticato di Nicolas de Clamanges," *SF*, 11 (1967), 201-222. The most extensive and recent study is in my dissertation, *The Quarrel of the 'Roman de la Rose' and Fourteenth Century Humanism* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1978), Appendix I. [Back](#).

24. Clamanges' "purple prose" is as follows:

Perpulchras pater Reverendissime litteras tuas, multa dicendi copia, nec minori suavitate, mentem pariter auremque mulcentes, laetus accepi, nec sum magis gaudens admiratione, lacteum eloquentiae fontem nectareos quacumque cursum suum egent riuulos parientem, ex incluto & tam diu arenti, in tam facundum repente flumen, nouis scaturiginibus erupisse, hortumque oratorum olim amoenissimum, aspera diuturnae hyemis inclementia gelidique Aquilonis histili vredine, iamdumdum decussis floribus, squalientem, nunc Zephiri tepentis afflatu, rursus in pristinam redolent iam, vernanti caelorum varietate reflorescere iamque; adeo suae refragarantiae odorem spargere, ut florigelae ad illum apes, tanta captae dulcedine, passim convolent; roscidi inde mellis haustus merito sugere cupientes.

Nicolai de Clemangiis...opera omnia que' partim ... edidit Iohannes Martini Lydius... (Leiden, 1613), II, 20, Ep. IV, "Perpulchras Pater." For Montreuil, see Ornato ed., No. 96, pp. 135-137. d'Asornato notes elsewhere, "...il barocchismo degli umanisti francesi verso la fine del secolo XIV e ormai un fatto accertato." ("L'umanista Jean Muret ed il suo dialogo 'De contemptu mortis,'" Simone, ed., *Miscellanea*, 286, n. 310). No wonder that among these early humanists, as their Italian correspondent Giovanni Moccia remarked sadly, "... quisque suum vix carpit amicum." (*ibid.*, 287). [Back](#).

25. Ed. Lydius, II, 21A. Further references in the text to Clamanges' letters are to Vol. II of this edition. [Back](#).

26. Ornato ed., No. 96, ll. 43-44. Further references to Montreuil's letters in the text are to Ornato's edition. Little is known about the state of classical studies at the University of Paris at this time; see Cecchetti, "Sulla fortuna del Petrarca," 217, n.6. However, it is significant that neither Clamanges nor Montreuil -- both very anxious to defend their institution -- mentions any professors of rhetoric there, though this is a golden opportunity to do so. Since Clamanges also develops a theory of eloquence according to which *magistri* are not needed, and admits only to *preceptores* at Paris (see above), we

can probably conclude with some assurance that there were no such *magistri* there in fact. In other words, Pietramala's doubts about the University of Paris were quite correct! [Back](#).

27. Ep. V., "Quod in superiori," ed. Lydius, II, 27B-28A. See also A.G. Jongkees, "Translatio Studii: les avatars d'un thème médiéval," in *Miscellanea Mediaevalia in memoriam Jan Frederik Niermayer* (Groningen:Walters, 1967), 41-51. [Back](#).

28. Ed. Lydius, II, 26B-27B. It is probably this list to which Montreuil refers in No. 96, l. 27 (see text below). [Back](#).

29. On the *topos* see Franco Simone, "La *Reductio artium ad sacram Scripturam* quale espressione dell'Umanesimo medievale fino al secolo XII," *Convivium*, n.v. (1949), 887-927; and the book by Seigel (see note 38 below). [Back](#).

30. Martène and Durand, *Amplissima Collectio*, I, 1543-1545. This letter and "Sepe alias" are the only two known letters of Pietramala, who was obviously an important mediator of humanist Italian influences at Avignon. [Back](#).

31. "Sed de illa [*scil.* virtute] loquor, quae reipublicae parere jubet, privatosque tuetur ac moderatur affectus, cujus officia antiq̄ media vocavere." (*Ampl. Coll.* I, 1545 D). The term *officia media* appears to come from a passage in Cicero's *De officiis* 1.3.8: "Medium officium id esse dicunt [*scil.* graeci] quod cur factum sit, ratio probabilis reddi possit." [Back](#).

32. It is interesting to note that Jean de Hesdin, by no means a "humanist" in the Petrarchan sense, also used the term *virtus* in the completely secular and classical sense of "manliness in warfare": "Laudem autem Galliae omnimodam Gallorumque virtutem..." (Cocchia ed., 129, IX. ll. 3-4) (there follow quotations from Solinus and Justin concerning the Gauls). [Back](#).

33. "Hinc est quod Cato ille superior, magnus vir ac doctissimus, Oratorem definiens ait: *Orator est vir bonus*, dicendi peritus. Ubi attende quod in definitione, non primum posuit dicendi peritiam, sed viri bonitatem quas i illa loco generis sit, quod sole in definitione, primum locum tenere, & cui tanquam fundamento totam superiectam structuram inniti oportet" (Ed. Lydius, II, 24A). [Back](#).

34 This is how Pietramala paraphrases Petrarch's statement originally made in *Sen.* IX, i, for which see note 22 above. [Back](#).

35. "De his tamen tua, dignissime pater, videat altissima discretio, quorum constituo correctricem, ut psalterium unisonum reddet ad citharam..." (No. 96, ll. 40-42). [Back](#).

36. In general French humanists of this time are less secular (i.e. more explicitly Christian) than their Italian contemporaries. Also, each succeeding generation of fourteenth and early fifteenth century Italian humanists is more boldly secularizing than its predecessor. In this sense it is legitimate to speak of French humanism as being "behind" the Italian. On these points see Furr, Chapter II (on Italians) and Chapter III (on the French), where the relevant scholarship is also summarized. [Back](#).

37. To the fourteenth century humanists the style of the church Fathers appeared far more "classical" than it does to the modern student armed with historical dictionaries and critical texts, the fruits of almost seven centuries of "humanist" research. Jean de Montreuil openly acknowledged his admiration for Petrarch as a humanist, despite the latter's attack on French culture, and quoted him in numerous letters; Clamanges, in contrast modeled his *epistolario* on the *F amiliares* but never mentions Petrarch by name. See Ornato, *Jean Muret, 272-273*; *Jean de Montreuil, Epistolario*, 373, under "Petarca,

Francesco." [Back](#).

38. On Clamanges' careerism in his letter and elsewhere, see Ornato, *Jean Muret*, 13 ff; 33; 35, n. 142. On the interesting question of humanism and careerism in general, see Furr, Chapter III; Jerrold E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 214; Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 15. [Back](#).

39. Ornato, 178-181, esp. 180, n. 363; Furr, Ch. III. [Back](#)

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