Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304–1374), best known for his influential collection of Italian lyric poetry dedicated to his beloved Laura, was also a remarkable classical scholar, a deeply religious thinker, and a philosopher of secular ethics. In this wide-ranging study, chapters by leading scholars view Petrarch’s life through his works, from the epic Africa to the “Letter to Posterity,” from the Canzoniere to the vernacular epic Triumphi. Petrarch is revealed as the heir to the converging influences of classical cultural and medieval Christianity, but also to his great vernacular precursor, Dante, and his friend, collaborator, and sly critic, Boccaccio. Particular attention is given to Petrach’s profound influence on the Humanist movement and on the courtly cult of vernacular love poetry, while raising important questions as to the validity of the distinction between medieval and modern, and what is lost in attempting to classify this elusive figure.

Albert Russell Ascoli is Gladyce Arata Terrill Distinguished Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance (1987); Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento (co-edited with Krystyna von Henneberg, 2001); Dante and the Making of a Modern Author (Cambridge, 2008); and A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance (2011). He is co-founder and volume editor of the electronic journal, California Italian Studies.

Unn Falkeid is Research Fellow at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, affiliated with the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University. She is the author of Petrarca og det moderne selv (Petrarch and the Modern Self, 2007), the editor of Dante: A Critical Reappraisal (2008), and the co-editor of Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry (with Aileen A. Feng, 2015).

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of the book.
THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO PETRARCH

EDITED BY ALBERT RUSSELL ASCOLI AND UNN FALKEID
For Emma, Therese, and Bernhard
and
for Mary and Sam
CONTENTS

Notes on contributors page x
Acknowledgments xiv
Chronology xv
List of abbreviations xix

Introduction 1
ALBERT RUSSELL ASCOLI AND UNN FALKEID

PART I LIVES OF PETRARCH

1 Poetry in motion 13
THEODORE J. CACHEY, JR.

2 Petrarch and his friends 26
HANNAH CHAPELLE WOJCIEHOWSKI

PART II PETRARCH’S WORKS: ITALIAN

3 Rerum vulgarium fragmenta: structure and narrative 39
PETER HAINSWORTH

4 Making the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta 51
LUCA MARCOZZI

5 Petrarch’s singular love lyric 63
ULLRICH LANGER

6 The Triumphi 74
ZYGMUNT G. BARAŃSKI
## CONTENTS

### PART III PETRARCH’S WORKS: LATIN

7 The Latin hexameter works: Epystole, Bucolicum carmen, Africa  
   RONALD L. MARTINEZ  
   87

8 The defense of poetry in the Secretum  
   VICTORIA KAHN  
   100

9 De vita solitaria and De otio religioso: the perspective of the guest  
   UNN FALKEID  
   111

10 Epistolary Petrarch  
   ALBERT RUSSELL ASCOLI  
   120

### PART IV PETRARCH’S INTERLOCUTORS

11 Petrarch and the ancients  
   GUR ZAK  
   141

12 Petrarch and the vernacular lyric past  
   OLIVIA HOLMES  
   154

13 Petrarch’s adversaries: the Invectives  
   DAVID MARSH  
   167

### PART V PETRARCH’S AFTERLIFE

14 Petrarch and the Humanists  
   TIMOTHY KIRCHER  
   179

15 Bembo and Italian Petrarchism  
   STEFANO JOSSA  
   191

16 Female Petrarchists  
   ANN ROSALIND JONES  
   201

17 Iberian, French, and English Petrarchisms  
   WILLIAM J. KENNEDY  
   210
PART VI CONCLUSION

18 Petrarch’s confrontation with modernity
GIUSEPPE MAZZOTTA

Guide to further reading
Index

221

239

252
CONTRIBUTORS

Albert Russell Ascoli is Terrill Distinguished Professor of Italian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley and current President of the Dante Society of America (2014–17). He is the author of *Ariosto’s Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance* (1987), *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge, 2008), and *A Local Habitation and a Name* (2011), as well as of numerous essays on Petrarch and other medieval and early modern topics.

Zygmunt G. Barański is Serena Professor of Italian Emeritus at the University of Cambridge and Notre Dame Chair of Dante & Italian Studies at the University of Notre Dame. He has published extensively on Dante, paying particular attention to the poet’s ideas on literature and to his intellectual formation. Barański has also written on Petrarch, Boccaccio, Dante’s reception, and modern Italian literature and culture. For many years he was senior editor of the interdisciplinary journal *The Italianist*: the position he now holds with *Le tre corone*.

Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. is professor of Italian at the University of Notre Dame. He specializes in Italian medieval and Renaissance literature. He is the author and co-editor of several books, including *Petrarch’s Guide to the Holy Land* and, with Zygmunt G. Barański, *Dante and Petrarch: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*. His essays have appeared in such journals as *California Italian Studies*, *Intersezioni*, and *Modern Language Notes*.

Unn Falkeid is Research Fellow at the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, affiliated with the Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University. She has published extensively on Dante, Petrarch, and early modern literature. Among her recent publications is *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry* (2015), co-edited with Aileen A. Feng. She is currently completing a monograph, *The Avignon Papacy Contested: Power and Politics in Fourteenth-Century Literature*, in which she explores how the city of Avignon became a context for textual and intellectual exchanges between different cultures of early modern Europe.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

PETER HAINSWORTH is an Emeritus Fellow of Lady Margaret Hall. After lectureships at Hull and Kent Universities, he taught at Oxford University from 1979 until his retirement in 2003. As well as Petrarch the Poet (1986), he has written widely on other Italian authors, including, most recently, with David Robey, a Very Short Introduction to Italian Literature (2012) and a similar Very Short Introduction to Dante (2015). Following on The Essential Petrarch (2012), his translations of select stories from Boccaccio’s Decameron will be published by Penguin in 2015.

OLIVIA HOLMES is Associate Professor of Medieval Studies and English at Binghamton University, and has previously taught Italian literature at Dartmouth College and Yale University. Her research is mostly devoted to medieval lyric and the Italian Trecento. Her first book, Assembling the Lyric Self: Authorship from Troubadour Song to Italian Poetry Book, won the American Association of Italian Studies Book Award in 2001. Her second book, Dante’s Two Beloveds: Ethics and Erotics in the “Divine Comedy,” came out in 2008. She is working on a new book project tentatively titled Boccaccio and Exemplarity: Setting a Bad Example in the “Decameron.”


STEFANO JOSSA is Reader in Italian at Royal Holloway University of London. Among his contributions on Petrarchism are: “Petrarchismo e petrarchismi. Forme, ideologia, identità di un sistema” (with Simona Mammana), in Luigi Collarile and Daniele Maira (eds), Nel libro di Laura (2004), 91–115, and two edited special issues on European Petrarchism of the journal Italique (numbers 14, 2011 and 15, 2012). His research interests span from the Renaissance to the Italian national identity as expressed through literature, in which field he has published L’Italia letteraria (2006) and Un paese senza eroi. L’Italia da Jacopo Ortis a Montalbano (2013).

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WILLIAM J. KENNEDY is Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities in the Department of Comparative Literature at Cornell University. His research focuses on the history of European literature and literary criticism from antiquity to the early modern period, with particular interest in Italian, French, English, and German texts from Dante to Milton. His books include *Rhetorical Norms in Renaissance Literature* (1978), *Jacopo Sannazaro and the Uses of Pastoral* (1983), *Authorizing Petrarch* (1994), and *The Site of Petrarchism* (2003), as well as the forthcoming *Contextual Economies: Poetic Transactions from Petrarch to Shakespeare*.


ULLRICH LANGER is Alfred Glauser Professor of French and Director of the Center for Early Modern Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. His most recent publications include *Penser les formes du plaisir littéraire à la Renaissance* (2009) and *Lyric in the Renaissance: From Petrarch to Montaigne* (2015). He is currently interested in the concurrence between gesture, meaning, and empathy in the Orpheus–Eurydice myth and its poetic repercussions. Another project is the form of the “remonstrance” in early modern political and literary writing.

LUCA MARCOZZI is Associate Professor of Italian Literature at Roma Tre University. He studies mainly medieval and Renaissance literature, from Dante to Bembo, and its role in developing a cultural identity. His most recent books are *Petrarca platonico* (2011) and, as editor, *Nello specchio del mito* (2012), on classical mythology in Italian literature, and *Dante e il mondo animale* (2013). He has been Fulbright distinguished lecturer at the University of Notre Dame.


RONALD L. MARTINEZ is Professor of Italian Studies at Brown University. In addition to some four dozen articles on topics from Guido Cavalcanti’s lyrics to Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, he has collaborated on several projects with Robert M. Durling, including a monograph on Dante’s lyric poetry, *Time and
Giuseppe Mazzotta is Sterling Professor in the Humanities for Italian at Yale University, where he has also been serving as Chairman of the Department of Italian. He is the author of *The Worlds of Petrarch* (1993), and intends to finish a second volume that gathers his scattered articles on Petrarch, which will be published with the title *A World of Words: The Empire of Culture*. He has recently published two unrelated volumes on Dante: *Confine quasi Orizzonte. Saggi su Dante* (2014) and *Reading Dante: Open Yale Courses* (2014). He is presently completing his Dante trilogy with the manuscript, *Dante at the Frontiers of Thought*.

Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski is Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin and an Affiliate of UT’s Program in Comparative Literature. A cultural theorist specializing in the history of subjectivity, Wojciehowski has written on Petrarch’s *Secretum* and the *Familiares*, and on his life during the post-plague years. Her recent and forthcoming publications include a study of globalization in early modernity entitled *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* (Cambridge, 2011), essays on literary and performance theory and embodied cognition, and a performance-oriented edition of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (2014).

Gur Zak is a lecturer in Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His research focuses on the inter-relations of literature and ethics in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His book, *Petrarch’s Humanism and the Care of the Self*, was published by Cambridge in 2010. He has also written several articles and book chapters on Petrarch, Boccaccio, Alberti, and the history of autobiography. He is currently working on his second monograph, entitled *Boccaccio and the Consolation of Literature*. 
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When we first decided to collaborate on this volume five years ago, we had, despite past editorial experiences, no idea how long it would ultimately take. On the other hand, we expected – and our expectations were fulfilled, if often in unexpected ways – that this collaboration, in addition to filling a major scholarly lacuna, would give us each great satisfaction. Such satisfactions came abundantly, both in the dynamic of exchange that we were able to establish between ourselves (despite living on different continents!) and in our work with our distinguished authors and with Cambridge University Press, in particular Linda Bree and Anna Bond. We thank all of them for their excellent work and their (oft-tried) patience with us.

We both owe numerous debts to our home institutions and to our families for essential support at crucial moments. Unn Falkeid acknowledges the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, which during the completion of this volume has generously funded her position as an Academy Research Fellow at Stockholm University. She also thanks the University of Oslo for her postdoctoral fellowship (2008–13) and Yale University, which hosted her during her stay as Fulbright Visiting Scholar in the academic year 2010–11. And she thanks her husband, Hans, for being who he is. Albert Ascoli thanks the University of California, Berkeley for sabbatical support and a Humanities Research Fellowship during academic year 2011, as well as the Center for Advanced Study at Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich for a month-long residential fellowship in spring 2011. And he thanks Barbara for everything.

Finally, we thank each other.
CHRONOLOGY

1304
Born in Arezzo, July 20, to Eletta Canigiani and Pietro di ser Parenzo (ser Petracco), a notary and White Guelf, who, like Dante Alighieri, was exiled from Florence in 1302.

1305
Moves to Incisa Valdarno with his mother.

1307
His brother, Gherardo, is born.

1311
The family gathers in Pisa with other exiles from Florence, among them probably Dante.

1312
His father gains employment at the papal court in Avignon and the family settles in Carpentras, fifteen miles from the city.

1312–16
Studies with the grammarian Convenevole da Prato, another White Guelf refugee.

1316–20
Studies law at University of Montpellier. His mother dies in 1318 or 1319, and soon after he writes a Latin elegy for her [Epistole, I.7].

1320–26
Studies civil law at the University of Bologna, together with his brother Gherardo and his friend Guido Sette, interrupted only by a short stay in Venice and two short returns to Avignon in 1321 and 1325. Befriends Giacomo Colonna and starts to be interested in vernacular poetry.

1326
His father dies. The brothers return to Avignon without finishing their studies.

1327
Meets Laura, April 6, in the church of St. Claire in Avignon and falls in love.

1328–29
Works on the philological restoration of Livy’s Decades.
CHRONOLOGY

1330  Enters service as chaplain of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, Gia-
como’s brother. Becomes friends with Lello Stefano de’ Tosetti
from Rome (“Laelius”) and the Flemish musician Ludwig van
Kempen (“Socrates”).

1333  Travels to northern Europe. In Li`ege, he discovers orations
by Cicero, among them the Pro Archia. On his return, he
probably meets Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, an Augus-
tinian monk who gives him a copy of Augustine’s Confessions.
He buys a house in Vaucluse and begins his friendship with
Philippe de Cabassoles, Bishop of Cavaillon.

1335  Appointed by Pope Benedict XII as canon in the cathedral of
Lombez, where, however, he never goes to live.

1336  Undertakes the ascent of Mont Ventoux, as described in
Fam. IV.1.

1336–37  His first trip to Rome, where he visits Giacomo Colonna.

1337–39  Back in Vaucluse, he starts to work on the De viris illustribus
and the Africa, with hopes for future glory. His illegitimate
son, Giovanni, is born.

1340  Invited to be crowned poet laureate by both the University of
Paris and the Senate of Rome.

1341  Leaves Avignon for Naples, where, as a preparation for the
coronation in Rome, he is examined by King Robert the Wise.
Meets Barbato da Sulmona. Crowned in Rome, April 8, and
gives his speech, the Collatio laureationis, or Coronation Ora-
tion. Declared a Roman citizen. Visits Parma and the house in
Selvapiana, his “Italian Helicon,” offered to him by Azzo da
Correggio, lord of the city.

1342  Returns to Vaucluse. The first version of Rerum vulgarium
fragmenta (RVF), or Canzoniere as it will later come to be
known, is collected.

1343  His daughter, Francesca, is born. Begins a friendship with
Cola di Rienzo, who stays in Avignon for several months.
His brother, Gherardo, becomes a Carthusian monk in Mon-
trieux. Starts work on the Rerum memorandarum libri. In the
fall, sent by Pope Clement VI on a diplomatic visit to Queen
Joanna of Naples, where he experiences disillusion at the
difficult political situation following King Robert’s death earlier the same year.

1343–45
Petrarch’s second stay in Parma, cut short in February 1345, when he flees the city after it is attacked by troops of the Gonzaga and the Visconti, and returns to Avignon.

1346
Writes the first draft of *De vita solitaria* during Lent.

1347
Visits his brother in the monastery of Montrieux, and writes *De otio religioso*. Supports Cola di Rienzo’s revolution and the establishment of a new Republic in Rome during Pentecost, but by the following fall is increasingly disappointed at Cola’s failures.

1348
The Black Death spreads quickly in Europe. In Parma, Petrarch receives the news of the demise of both Giovanni Colonna and Laura (April 6). In this period, he probably composes *Psalmi penitentiales*, *Epistola metrica I.14* (“Ad se ipsum”), and *Bucolicum carmen 9–11*.

1349
Obtains a canonry in Padua, which he probably holds until his death. Starts to collect the letters for the *Familiares*.

1350
Travels to Rome for the Papal Jubilee. During a stop in Florence, meets Giovanni Boccaccio, among others.

1351
Boccaccio visits him in Padua and offers him, in vain, a chaired professorship in Florence, along with the restitution of his family’s property. Petrarch returns to Vaucluse for the last time (remaining there until 1353). Writes anti-papal letters for *Sine nomine*.

1352
Composes the first draft of *Invective contra medicum*, completed in 1355, and probably the first versions of the *Triumphi* (*Triumphus Cupidinis* and *Triumphus Fame*).

1353
Leaves Avignon for good and settles in Milan under the Visconti.

1354
Meets Emperor Charles IV in Mantua and expresses admiration for his learning. Starts composing *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (completed in 1360).

1355
Composes the *Invectiva contra quendam magni status hominem*. 
1356
Sent as an ambassador by the Visconti to Emperor Charles IV in Prague. The hypothetical Correggio form of the RVF collected (1356–58).

1358
In Padua. Writes the Itinerarium ad sepulcrum Domini.

1359
In Milan. Supports the Visconti against Pavia. Receives a visit from Boccaccio in the spring. Composes the extant Chigi form of the RVF (1359–62/63).

1361
Moves to Venice because of the plague outbreak in Milan. His son, Giovanni, who has come to live with him, dies of the plague. His friend Socrates also dies. Starts to compose Seniles.

1363
Boccaccio visits him in Venice.

1364
Publishes the Epystole.

1366
Encourages Pope Urban V to transfer the papacy to Rome (Sen. VII.1). Concludes the Bucolicum carmen.

1367
In Padua. Writes De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia (completed in 1370).

1370
Moves to his house in Arquà. Writes his Testamentum before a journey to Rome to celebrate Urban V’s return. Has to return to Padua because of a sudden illness. Urban returns to Avignon, where he dies.

1371
Health problems increase, but he still works.

1373
Translates Boccaccio’s story of Griselda (Decameron X.1) into Latin and sends it to Boccaccio (Sen. XVIII.3), though it never arrives. Composes Invective contra eum qui maledixit Italie. Sends the Malatesta form of the RVF to Pandolfo Malatesta. Composes the Queriniana form of the RVF in the same year.

1374
Completes the last version of the RVF and the last version of De viris illustribus (1371–74). Writes Triumphus Eternitatis. Dies in Arquà July 18 or 19.
This list provides cited editions and translations of the works of Francesco Petrarca, with abbreviations.

**Africa**


**Buc. carm.** = *Bucolicum carmen*


**Canzoniere** = see RVF

**Coll. laur.** = *Collatio laureationis*


**De otio** = *De otio religioso*


**De remediis** = *De remediis utriusque fortunae*

[No modern critical edition of the Latin text exists.]

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

De viris = De viris illustribus
[There is no published English translation.]

De vita = De vita solitaria

Disperse = Lettere disperse
[There is no published English translation.]

Epistole = Epistole metriche
[There is no complete English translation.]

Fam. = Rerum familiarum libri

Invective
Contra eum = Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italie (Invective against a Detractor of Italy)
Contra medicum = Invectiva contra medicum (Invective against a Physician)
Contra quendam = Invectiva contra quendam magni status hominem (Invective against a Man of High Rank with No Knowledge or Virtue)
De ignorantia = De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia (On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others)
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Itinerarium = *Itinerarium ad sepulcrum Domini*


*Psalmi* = *Psalmi penitentiales*

*Rerum memorandarum* = *Rerum memorandarum libri*

RVF = *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (*Canzoniere*)


Secretum


*Sen.* = *Seniles*


Sine nomine = *Liber sine nomine*


Testamentum

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Triumphi


$TC = \text{Triumphus Cupidinis}$ (Triumph of Love)
$TP = \text{Triumphus Pudicititie}$ (Triumph of Chastity)
$TM = \text{Triumpus Mortis}$ (Triumph of Death)
$TF = \text{Triumphus Fame}$ (Triumph of Fame)
$TT = \text{Triumphus Temporis}$ (Triumph of Time)
$TE = \text{Triumphus Eternitatis}$ (Triumph of Eternity)