NOT BY VICTOR: THE CODEX BARB. LAT. 812 AND *DE VIRIS ILLVSTRIBVS* RECONSIDERED

ABSTRACT

In 1911, Franz Pichlmayr listed Vatican codex Barb. Lat. 812 as a manuscript attributing De uiris illustribus *to Aurelius Victor—a unique and significant claim. Later scholars, notably Sage, questioned the reliability of the claim and urged caution owing to past cataloguing errors. A 2025 examination of Barb. Lat. 812 revealed that it contains records from the Council of Trent, not* De uiris illustribus*. Attempts to resolve the discrepancy by checking related shelfmarks were unsuccessful. Whether Pichlmayr's manuscript ever existed—and, if it did, what its identity was—remains unknown.*

Keywords: *De uiris illustribus*; Aurelius Victor; Pichlmayr; Vatican manuscripts; textual attribution; Barb. Lat. 812

In the preface to his 1911 edition of *De uiris illustribus*, Franz Pichlmayr listed, as the second of the manuscripts he had not examined, the codex Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 812, in which the work was attributed to Aurelius Victor.[1] As Sage later pointed out, this was the only manuscript known to assign the text to that author.[2] It is well established that the erroneous ascription to Pliny the Elder is common to the manuscripts of Pichlmayr's Class C. Such an attribution to Victor would therefore represent a rare exception, especially considering that the first ascription of *De uiris illustribus* to him that is otherwise known dates only to the edition of Andreas Schottus in 1577.[3]

Sage, however, also urged caution regarding Pichlmayr's accuracy, noting that another unexamined manuscript of the same list (no. 16, *Claromontanus*), allegedly attributing the work to Aemilius Probus, was in fact a manuscript of Cornelius Nepos.[4]

During a research visit to the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana in January 2025, I was able to verify that codex Barb. Lat. 812 does not in fact contain *De uiris illustribus* but rather a collection of records from the Council of Trent. This paper codex, written in a single sixteenth-century hand, includes the following: fols. 1–156 *Diarium Concilii Tridentini sub Pio Quarto per Ioannem Astulfum Servatium Septempedanum Picenum* (so identified in the index on fol. 1v), beginning on 2 October 1560 and ending on 10 December 1563; fols. 157–78, papal bulls and official documents dating from 1561 to 1563.

I also investigated whether modifying or inverting the shelfmark digits might resolve the confusion, but these attempts were without avail. For instance, Barb. Lat. 821 contains a *Diarium Angeli Massarelli de Severino post et ante discessum ex Urbe ad Concilium Tridenti celebrandum die 23. Februarii 1545 usque ad diem primam Februarii anni 1546*, while Barb. Lat. 128 has materials from Seneca's *Epistulae ad Lucilium* and *Tragoediae*. I also explored other collections: for example, Vat. Lat. 812

[1] F. Pichlmayr (ed.), *Sexti Aurelii Victoris, Liber de Caesaribus. Praecedunt Origo gentis Romanae et Liber de uiris illustribus urbis Romae. Subsequitur Epitome de Caesaribus* (Leipzig, 1911), xv n. 2: '*Barberinus* 812 Au. Victor. d. v. i. 4°'.

[2] M.M. Sage, 'The *De uiris illustribus*: authorship and date', *Hermes* 108 (1980), 83–100, at 85.

[3] R.D. Sweeney, 'The ascription of a certain class of mss. of the *De uiris illustribus* of the Pseudo-Aurelius Victor', *RhM* 101 (1958), 191–2, at 191.

[4] See P. D'Elia, *Cornelio Nepote* (Rome, 1968), 80 n. 22.

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(fols. 1r–447r) includes *Guibertus Tornacensis, O.F.M., m. 1284, Sermones dominicales*; Ott. Lat. 812 contains *Guillame Peiraut, Tractatus spiritualis de virtutibus et vitiis*. None of these proved helpful.

As a result, and in the absence of additional information, it is impossible to determine the source of Pichlmayr's information. Thus, hopes fade of identifying the only manuscript said to attribute *De uiris illustribus* to Aurelius Victor.

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AUSONIUS' *CENTO NVPTIALIS* AND THE DATE OF THE *PERVIGILIVM VENERIS*

ABSTRACT

This note argues that imitation of Ausonius' Cento nuptialis *in the* Peruigilium Veneris *establishes 374 C.E. as the* terminus post quem *for the* Peruigilium Veneris. *The note enlarges on the argument of Danuta Shanzer, who identified debts to Ausonius in the* Peruigilium Veneris *and dated the latter poem accordingly: the approach is to locate evidence for Ausonian imitation that Shanzer missed, and thus to reinforce and confirm her position. While the note does not propose a poet for the* Peruigilium Veneris*, it shows that certain figures to whom the work is commonly attributed, notably Florus and Tiberianus, cannot be its author.*

Keywords: *Peruigilium Veneris*; Ausonius; *Cento nuptialis*; imitation; Florus; Tiberianus

When was the *Peruigilium Veneris* written? This note argues that evidence in the poem for its imitation of Ausonius' *Cento nuptialis* establishes a *terminus post quem* of 374 C.E., the probable date of the cento.[1] My proposed dating has significant implications for the authorship of the *Peruigilium Veneris*: specifically, it counters common attributions of the poem to pre-370s poets, including the second-century C.E. Florus and the early fourth-century Tiberianus.[2] I make no claim for who the author might have been.

[1] On the date of the cento, see S. McGill, *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity* (New York, 2005), 92–3, who argues that the occasion described in the poem is the wedding of Gratian and Constantia in 374.

[2] For attributions to Florus, see e.g. E.K. Rand, 'Sur le *Peruigilium Veneris*', *REL* 12 (1934), 83–95 and the discussions in L. Catlow (ed.), *Peruigilium Veneris: Edited with a Translation and Commentary* (Brussels, 1980), 21–2 and W.M. Barton (ed.), *The Peruigilium Veneris: A New Critical Text, Translation and Commentary* (London, 2018), 13. Meanwhile, Alan Cameron, *Studies in Late Roman Literature and History* (Bari, 2016), 7–30 (a revised version of 'The *Peruigilium Veneris*', in *La poesia tardoantica: tra retorica, teologia, e politica. Atti del V Corso della Scuola Superiore di archeologia e civiltà medievali* [Messina, 1984], 209–34) argues that Tiberianus composed the poem in the early fourth century. H. MacL. Currie, '*Peruigilium Veneris*', *ANRW* II.34.1 (Berlin and New York, 1993), 207–24, at 214 also suggests Tiberianus as the author, while Barton (this note), 21 proposes

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