

PLUTARCH, *Pompei viri illustris vita [Life of Pompey]*, Latin translation by Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus [or Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia]

In Latin, decorated manuscript on paper

Northern Italy, Lombardy, perhaps Ferrara or Mantova?, c. 1470-80

71 ff., preceded and followed by [3] paper flyleaves, complete (collation: i-vi¹⁰, vii¹⁰+1), vertical catchwords, on thick paper with watermark of the type Briquet, "Basilic," no. 2671: Ferrare, 1471 or no. 2672-2673: Mantoue, 1478-1483, written in an Italian humanistic slightly sloping cursive script, in brown ink, on up to 21 long lines (justification 140 x 90 mm.), headings in margins in pale red ink, blank space left for initial on fol. 1, contemporary marginal annotations in brown ink. Nineteenth-century English brown Russia binding, smooth back with blind tooling and gilt lettering: "Pompei Vita / Plutarchus / MS.", blind-stamped and gilt with monogram and motto on upper board, and arms on lower cover, brown paper endleaves, edges gilt (Upper inner hinge loose, binding a bit scuffed, occasional minor stains to paper, else in very good condition). Dimensions 215 x 155 mm.

Containing Plutarch's life of Pompey the Great, the Roman republican hero often hailed as an antagonist of tyranny, this is one of about 50 recorded Renaissance manuscripts of the Latin translation from the Greek original completed by either Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus or Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia. The present manuscript provides testimony that the lives continued to circulate independently in manuscript form, even after their assembly into one common collection.

PROVENANCE

1. Script and watermarks all point to an Italian origin for this manuscript, likely Northern Italy, Lombardy.
2. John Broadley, F.S.A. (1774-1833), with his monogram and device (JB; "Honor post funeral vivat" on the upper cover and his arms on the lower cover. Doubtless in his sale, Evans 12 July 1832 or 19 June 1833. There is a cutting from a French catalogue on the verso of the second flyleaf, in which this manuscript was no. 122: "Librairie Pierre V[...] (?)".

TEXT

ff. 1-71, Plutarch, *Pompei viri illustris vita [Life of Pompey]*, Latin translation by Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus or Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, heading, *Pompei viri illustris vita ex Plutarcho per Antoneium Tudertinum versa*; incipit, "[E]rga Pompeium mox ex ipso initio videtur populus romanus affectus quemadmodum Prometheus Eschili adversus Herculem..."; explicit, "[...] Pompei reliquie ad Corneliā delate apud albanum posite sunt. Finis."

Written in the early decades of the second century A. D., Plutarch of Chaeroneia's *Parallel Lives* (Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans) is a series of biographies of famous men, arranged in tandem, the lives of famous Greeks alternating with those of famous Romans, to illuminate their common moral virtues or failings. There are twenty-three pairs of biographies, and there are four unpaired single lives. The work was an instant success, and already in the late second century

Aulus Gellius frequently quoted from it. In the Middle Ages, however, Plutarch's work was almost totally unknown in the Latin West, but it was rediscovered in the Italian Renaissance and quickly became immensely popular. When Manuel Chrysolaras came to Italy to teach Greek in the 1390s, his pupils practiced translating into Latin from the *Lives* (see Weiss, 1977, pp. 3-12).

This manuscript contains the life of Pompey the Great (106-48 B.C.), the distinguished military and political leader of the late Roman republic and Julius Caesar's military rival, included in Plutarch's *Lives* (see the Teubner edition, C. Lindskog and K. Ziegler, *Plutarchus: Vitae Parallelae*, 2nd ed., 1957-1971). Along with Crassus and Caesar, Pompey formed a political alliance called the First Triumvirate, which dominated the late Roman republic. Plutarch originally paired the life of Pompey with that of the Greek hero, Agesilaus, the lame king of Sparta (444-360 B.C.). The present manuscript isolates the Life of Pompey from its Greek parallel.

According to the heading in the present manuscript, Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* is said to be supplied here in the Latin translation by Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus, who also translated a number of other Plutarchan *Lives* such as the *Life of Timoleon*, the *Life of Romulus* or the *Life of Theseus* (for the translations ascribed to Antonius Tudertinus, see Giustiniani, 1961, and Pade, 1998). Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus (or Antonio Pacini da Todi) was a humanist and scholar about whom little is known of his life except that he studied Greek under Francesco Filelfo (see Kristeller, 1971, p. 63-64).

The present rendition is usually commonly ascribed not to Antonius Tudertinus Pacinus but to Jacobus Angelus de Scarperia, an attribution accepted by Weiss (1940), Giustiniani (1961) and Bertalot (1990). (See L. Bertalot, 1990, no. 5940, p. 323; Giustiniani, 1961, who records 26 manuscripts, pp. 33-34; Pade, 1995, p. 173 and 182, who firmly attributes the translation to Jacopo Angeli, completed in 1411; and Pade, 1998, p. 276, who provides the most recent recension of known manuscripts of the Latin translation: in all 51 extant manuscripts with the *Pompeius* of Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia). Weiss discusses the significance of Jacopo Angeli as a scholar (1360-1410/1411), who appears to have been the first Italian humanist to go to Constantinople and the first of his generation of Italian scholars to collect manuscripts. In 1456, Bartolomeo Facio includes Jacopo Angeli in his *De viris illustribus* (ed. Florence, 1745, p. 9) and confirms he is the translator of many of Plutarch's *Lives*, including the present *Vita Pompeii*, beginning "Erga Pompeium mox..." (see Weiss, 1940, p. 824). A student of Manuel Chrysolaras, Jacopo Angeli is, in fact, one of the earliest Latin translators of Plutarch, and his translation initiative was initially placed under the patronage of Coluccio Salutati, to whose circle Jacopo Angeli belonged (see Giustiniani, 1961, p. 3).

Thus we are faced with a problem of attribution, as the present manuscript clearly states that the translation is that of Antonius Tudertinus, although tradition attributes the translation to Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia. A systematic analysis of all extant manuscripts should clarify which one of the two scholars actually translated the celebrated *Life of Pompey* from the Greek. Whereas Pade has recorded several hundreds manuscripts containing one or a selection of the Latin Lives (see Pade, 1995, p. 177), the present Latin translation is recorded in just 51 manuscripts (see Pade, 1998, p. 276). It was common for manuscripts of single lives or partial collections to circulate independently. Translated as much as fifty years earlier, the isolated lives (or the pairs or "parallels" of Greek and Roman heroes with their moral comparison) were first gathered together by the bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci, who assembled in 1458 a complete collection of *Lives* dedicated to Piero de Medici (Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Laur. Lat. 65, 26-27)

[Plutarco Mediceo della bottega di Vespasiano]. Thus by 1460, all 48 lives were extant in Latin translations. They were first published by G. A. Campano, printed in Rome by Ulrich Han in 1470, and again famously in Venice by Nicolas Jenson in 1478. The *Lives* were immediately diffused all over Europe and, as the present manuscript testifies, continued to be copied independently in manuscript form.

It is tempting to see the early translations of Plutarch's *Lives* as somehow conditioned by the political situation of Florence in the years around 1400: indeed, Florence considered itself the heir of the Roman Republic, whose heroes were generally held in high esteem. Most of the *Lives* translated by Jacopo Angeli in the first years of the fifteenth century are lives of Roman heroes before the Empire, often hailed as antagonists of tyranny.

LITERATURE

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Weiss, R. "Jacopo Angeli da Scarpeia", in *Medioevo e Rinascimento. Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi*, vol. II., Florence, G.C. Sansoni, 1940, pp. 803-827.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Plutarch Gateway

<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/classics/chaironeia/>

Introduction to the Parallel Lives

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/>

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