

*PSEUDO-CICERO, Rhetorica ad Herennium*

In Latin, decorated manuscript on parchment

Northeastern Italy, likely Venice, c. 1440-1460

*i (parchment) + 130 + i (parchment) folios on parchment (moderate quality, with original imperfections), modern foliation in pencil top outer corner recto and every ten folios, bottom corner, complete (collation, i-xiii<sup>10</sup>), horizontal catchwords middle lower margins, no signatures, ruled very lightly (often indiscernible) in lead, single full-length vertical bounding lines (justification 76-74 x 55-53 mm.), written below the top line in a Gothico-Antiqua script in eighteen long lines, majuscules in the text highlighted in pale yellow, blue rubrics at the beginning or ends of books, otherwise red, alternating red and blue paragraph marks, two-line alternating red and blue initials with pen decoration in the contrasting color, often extending the full length of the text, books begin with three- to four-line red or blue initials with violet or red pen decoration respectively, f. 1, 4-line blue initials with three-quarter-pen work border, f. 1, darkened and damaged from damp so text is illegible, and initial and border are only partially visible, ff. 1v-3, also slightly damaged by damp (text remains legible), f. 130rv, darkened and stained on the verso, otherwise in very good condition. Bound in modern brown calf, tooled in blind on the front and back covers and spine, spine with three raised bands, covers slightly bowed, but in very good condition.*

*Dimensions 120 x 85 mm.*

This is an interesting copy of the earliest comprehensive Latin rhetorical treatise, generally regarded as the most important text for the study of Rhetoric in the medieval and Renaissance periods. Attractive and legible, the manuscript is in a strikingly small format. A complete census of manuscripts is still lacking, although the more than six hundred surviving copies of this text affirm its importance (its classical author remains anonymous). It is, however, surprisingly rare on the market (since 1980, only two copies are listed as sold in the Schoenberg Database).

## PROVENANCE

1. Written in Northeastern Italy, possibly in Venice, around the middle of the fifteenth century, c. 1440-1460, based on the evidence of the script and decoration. The script is an example of Gothico-Antiqua script (also called Gothico-Humanistica or Fere Humanistic; see Derolez, 2003, pp. 176-179), characterized by a mixture of humanistic and gothic traits. Scripts of this type remained common in Northern Italy throughout the fifteenth century.

There are a few interlinear additions on ff. 1v-2, but otherwise the manuscript is free from annotation; the text was a basic school text, but in this case we can speculate that it was perhaps not owned by a very zealous student. It is a notably small-format copy (the Schoenberg Database lists only one smaller, now Folger Library, Smedly Collection, SM 13A, 114 x 76, also Italian and fifteenth century; and one comparable in size, Ravenna, Bibl. Classense MS III). This is certainly not a luxury manuscript – it is not illuminated, and the parchment shows original imperfections -- but the pen initial on f. 18 is quite fine.

2. Inside back cover, price code and dealers' annotations in pencil; front flyleaf, f. i, title and date in a modern hand in pencil.

## TEXT

ff. 1-130, [f. 1, damaged, text illegible] f. 1v, incipit, "//conquisiuerunt que nichil attinebant ... hoc accumulantiissime tue largiamur voluntati," *Marci Tuli C. Rhetoricorum explicit liber primus*; f. 17v, *Incipit liber secundum M. T. C. Rhetoricorum*, incipit, "In primo libro herenni breuiter exposuimus ... faciemus tue voluntati morem geramus," *Expleto libro secundo*; f. 48v, *Tertius incipit sequenter*, incipit, "Ad omnem iudicalem ... est ex[er]citatione confirma," *Explicit liber Tertius*; f. 73, *Incipit liber quartus*, "Quoniam in hoc libro Hereni de elocutione ... sed in ipsis rebus quandam habet dignitatem; f. 86v, *Liber Quintus. De Repetitione*, incipit, "Repetitio est cum continenter ..."; f. 109, *Incipit liber sextus, De Distributione*, incipit, *Distributio est cum in plures ... diligentia consequemur et exercitatione*," *Deo Gratias M. T. C. Rhetoricorum liber explicit vi* [f. 130v, blank].

*Rhetorica ad Herennium* (or *Ad C. Herennium de ratione dicendi*); the opening folio is damaged, so the text now begins imperfectly in the first chapter (line 14); it is divided into six books, with book five beginning in book 4, chapter 13, section 19, and book six in book 4, chapter 35, section 47 (these divisions also reported in other manuscripts; see Marx, 1964); important editions include, Achard, 1989 (with French translation), Calboli, 1969, and Marx, 1923, reprinted 1964; English translation, Harry Caplan, 1954 (often reprinted). Between 1475 and 1566 there were 183 editions of the text (most with Cicero's *De inventione*), as well as eleven editions in Italian between 1475 and 1566 of three Italian translations.

The text survives in more than six hundred manuscripts dating from the ninth century onwards (see discussion of textual families by Ruth Taylor-Briggs in Cox and Ward, 2006, pp. 77-108). There is no complete census of the surviving manuscripts, but John Ward and Ruth Taylor-Briggs have announced that they are compiling one, together with a census of commentaries and glosses on the text (see Ward, in Cox and Ward, 2006, p. 67, note 327).

Interest in the *Ad Herennium* was particularly important in Italy from the thirteenth century on. It was translated into Italian as early as the thirteenth century (in abbreviated versions, the earliest complete translation in Italian is fourteenth century), and many of the surviving Latin manuscripts are of Italian origin, with a marked increase in numbers in the fifteenth century (see Cox in Cox and Ward, 2006, pp. 109-143). Classical rhetoric was important to the urban life of the independent city-republics in central and northern Italy, an interest that continued, although with different emphases, among the Italian humanists in the fifteenth century. Guarino Da Verona (1374-1460), for example, is said to have lectured on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* for more than thirty years, and his commentary on the text survives in more than twenty fifteenth-century manuscripts and in six printed editions.

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the earliest comprehensive Latin rhetorical treatise, was written by an unknown author in the first century B.C. Together with the *De inventione* by Cicero (106 BC-43 BC), it was the most important text of the classical rhetorical corpus throughout the Middle Ages, and its influence continued into the Renaissance. From the fourth century it circulated as an accepted work by Cicero; some modern scholars have suggested that its author may be the author, Cornificius, mentioned by Quintilian, but this remains a hypothesis. As early as the Renaissance, in Italy in the 1480s, questions about its author were in fact already

raised. Some of these queries appeared in print for the first time in the 1492 pamphlet by Raffaele Regio (c. 1440-1520), *Quaestio utrum ars rhetorica ad Herennium falso Ciceroni inscribatur* (see Cox, 2003, pp. 684-686).

Rhetoric can be defined simply as training in writing and delivering speeches; it was the primary form of higher education in the Ancient World. The *Ad Herennium* presented rhetorical theory in a concise, yet comprehensive manner, and its principles were easily adapted to many different contexts (see Ward, 58-59), including texts on prose composition, letter writing, poetic composition, preaching, and political oratory. It also provided a basic introduction to both Roman, and with twelfth-century glosses, Canon Law. It presents the three genres of rhetoric as established by Aristotle, organized by the five necessary skills (invention, disposition, delivery, memory, style), and the six parts of the oration – Book four with its detailed examples of figures of speech was especially useful.

Modern scholars now see Ciceronian rhetoric, and in particular the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, as a text central to the intellectual history of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. The importance of the tradition of classical rhetoric throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance has been convincingly argued in recent scholarly studies (see especially Cox and Ward, 2006), replacing the traditional view that saw rhetoric as peripheral to the intellectual history of the Middle Ages – its influence restricted to treatises that provided instruction in letter writing (the *ars dictamina*) and indirectly, in manuals on preaching.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

Loeb edition of the *Ad Herennium*, Open Library

<http://archive.org/stream/adcherenniumdera00capluoft#page/n65/mode/2up>

Introduction from Caplan's 1954 Loeb edition

[http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Rhetorica\\_ad\\_Herennium/Introduction\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Rhetorica_ad_Herennium/Introduction*.html)

Gideon Burton, on the *Ad Herennium* (detailed outline), at the *Silva Rhetoricae*, an online introduction to rhetorical terminology and sources

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/primary%20texts/Ad%20Herennium.htm>

On rhetoric in general, see

<http://rhetoric.byu.edu>

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