

PSEUDO-HOMER, *Batrachomyomachia* (*The Battle of Frogs and Mice*); LIBANIUS OF ANTIOCH, Select Letters; Anonymous Grammatical Treatise; ST. BASIL OF CAESAREA, *Address to Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*
In Greek and Latin, manuscript on paper
Northern Italy (the Veneto?), c. 1440-1470

iii+38+iii folios on paper, assembled from independent four booklets, certainly with text lacking at the beginning of section three and the end of section four, the first text also ends imperfectly (collation i¹² ii⁶ [through f. 18v] iii⁴ [through f. 22v] iv⁶ [probably originally a quire of 8, now missing 1 and 8; through f. 28v] v¹⁰), no catchwords or signatures, layout varies: (1), ff. 1-18, paper folded in 8°, chain-distance 40 mm., watermarks similar to Piccard, 1980, Fabeltiere, nos. 600-607 (attested mostly in Ferrara, c. 1445-1465), ruling LEROY P2b 20D1, (justification 158 x 82 mm.), copied in two columns of 29 lines per page; (2), ff. 19-22, paper folded in 4°, chain-distance 35 mm., watermarks unclear, ruling LEROY 20D1 (?), (justification 132 x 92 mm.), 22 lines per page; (3), ff. 23-28, paper folded in 4°, chain-distance 36 mm., watermarks similar to Piccard, 1980, Fabeltiere, nos. 453-524 (attested mostly in Ferrara, c. 1400-1440), ruling 20D1 (?), (justification 143 x 83 mm.), 19 lines per page; (4), ff. 29-38 paper folded in 4°, chain-distance 31 mm., watermarks very similar to Online Piccard no. 150094 (attested in Malpaga, 1462), ruling LEROY P2b 20D1, (justification 153 x 85 mm), 28 lines per page, leaves frayed, some water stains. Bound in fifteenth- or sixteenth-century brown leather over squared wooden boards, tooled in blind with a border of multiple fillets and amphora, metal corner-pieces and center bosses, cover boards worm-eaten, leather partially lost, especially on the spine and back cover; lower inner cornerpiece on back cover partly detached, clasps lost. Dimensions 210 x 145-135 mm.

The disparate contents of this codex illustrate the interest of educated Renaissance humanists in the language and literature of Ancient Greece. It includes sections from four different manuscripts, now collected together in a fifteenth- or sixteenth century binding, possibly to serve as a school book and provides specimens of the handwriting of three different Greek humanists. Two sections of the text appear to have been copied by a known scribe, Francesco Rolandello, a printer, scholar, and municipal chancellor in fifteenth-century Treviso.

PROVENANCE

1. This manuscript is a convolute, that is several manuscripts collected together in one codex, in this case consisting of four separate parts, now bound together in a near-contemporary binding. The first and last of these, ff. 1-18v, and ff. 29-38v, are copied by a single hand, that can very likely be identified as that of Franciscus Rholandellus or Francesco Rolandello (1427-1490), a printer, scholar and municipal chancellor in Treviso (Hunder, 1989, no. no. 519; and Tomè, 2012, pp.59-78). The remaining two parts, ff. 19-22, and 23-28, were written by two different Italian hands of the fifteenth century, probably by roughly contemporary scribes, also from Northeastern Italy. As a whole, the book's disparate contents illustrate the interest of educated Renaissance humanists in ancient Greek language and literature, possibly collected together from different sources to serve as a school book.
2. The manuscript was in Venice by 1578; f. 22r (by a sixteenth-century owner of the manuscript), "Ετουτω το χαρτη υνε του Ηουανη του Πεκουλη απο τα Ηουανηνα κ(αι) οπου τω κλεψη να εχη την καταρα του Χρηστου κ(αι) της Κυρ(ας) της Παναγη(ας).

Αμιν, αμιν, αμιν. Εγραψα εγω ω Ηουανης ο Πεκουλης εις την Βενετηα | 1578
νοεβριου εις 19 εις την Βενετηα εις την κουντα της Σαντα Μαρηνας Φορμοζας” (“This
paper [sic] belongs to me, John Pekoulis from Ioannina, and should anyone steal it, let
him have the curse of Christ and of [Our] Most Holy Lady. Amen, amen, amen. I, John
Pekoulis, wrote [this] in Venice, on 19 November 1578, in Venice, in the quarter [?] of
Santa Marina Formosa.”)

3. Remained in Italy in the seventeenth century, f. 28r (by a seventeenth-century owner of
the manuscript) “Questo libro sia di me Nicolo Oreccia (?) qual mi ho donato
presoneria di anire a suo tutto.”

4. Private European Collection.

TEXT

I. ff. 1 = 18v: ff. 1r-15v, *Τὰ προσκεφάλεια τοῦ μυθοῦ τοῦ Ὁμήρου ἀρχεῖ* (“Here begin the chapters of the
Homeric fable”), incipit, “Ἀρχόμενος πρώτης σελίδος χορὸν ἐξ Ἑλικῶνος / Incipiens primum
musarum chorum ex Helicone ... στράτος ἀλλ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον / exercitus sed etiam magis” [ff. 16r-
18v, blank];

Batrachomyomachia (falsely attributed to Homer), ending with verse 290 (the complete poem
includes about 300 verses, with the number varying somewhat in different copies); with an
anonymous Latin translation in prose (Knauer, 1996, 23-26, esp. p. 26). Numerous modern
editions including Gleib, 1984, with a German translation, and Migoubert, 1998, with a French
translation; English translation, Hine, 1972.

The *Batrachomyomachia*, or the “The Battle of Frogs and Mice” is a short jocular poem once
attributed to Homer but most probably written in the last centuries BC. It was extremely
popular in its time: one hundred and fifty-five manuscript copies of it survive, about half of them
from the fifteenth century. The Latin prose translation found in this manuscript served as a crib;
“dozens of sixteenth-century editions and reprints of Homer’s works” (Knauer, 1996, p. 26)
contain a Latin text almost identical to the one in this manuscript.

The poem was adopted as a school text that served as a short and entertaining introduction to
Homer. The poet summarizes the plot in its first line, “Fain would I sound in all men's ears that
awful strife, that clamorous deed of war, and tell how the Mice proved their valor on the Frogs
and rivalled the exploits of the Giants, those earth-born men, as the tale was told among
mortals. Thus did the war begin.” It was the first Homeric work to be translated into Latin, in a
translation by the humanist Carlo Marsuppini (1399-1453) about 1429. A second translation
has traditionally been attributed to the printer Aldus Manutius or to the German humanist
Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522). The Latin translation included in our manuscript does differs
from both these translation, and may have been composed as a school exercise.

II. ff. 19r-22v [now bound incorrectly; correct order, ff. 19r-20v, 22r-v, 21r-v; letter 397], *Δόξα
τῷ Θεῷ καὶ αὐτοῦ Μητέρι* (“*Glory to God and to His Mother*”), incipit, “Ἐθρέψαμεν ὑμῖν ἄρχοντα
καὶ μέγα φρονοῦμεν ... [Letter 509] ... καὶ γὰρ οἱ λύκοι μισοῦσι τοὺς κύνας”

Libanius, Letters 397, 398, 391, 553, 547, 379, and 509, ed. R. Foerster, *Libanii opera*, vol. 10,
Leipzig 1921, pp. 368-370, 384-388, 391f., 483f., 511, and 518.

Libanius (c. 314-393), a pagan, was the outstanding Greek rhetorician of the Late Imperial period. Born in Antioch, he taught in Athens, Constantinople, Nicomedia, as well as in his hometown. He was the author of numerous works, including a large corpus of letters of more than 1,500 letters – the largest letter collection from any author this period. They date from the period between the beginning of the 350s and 366, and from 387 and 393; among them are letters to famous contemporaries, including the emperors Julian and Theodosius, Themistius, Ammianus, and to Christian bishops, as well as letters to people who are otherwise unknown people. His letters, like the letters of his Christian student, St. Basil (see ff. 29-38v, below) were considered models of refined writing style, and survive respectively in some three hundred manuscripts from the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

III. ff. 23r-27r [correct order: 23r-24v, 26r-v, 25v, 25r, 27r], incipit, "Τί ἐστὶ πνεῦμα; Ποιότης συλλαβῆς τρέπουσα τὰ ψυλὰ σύμφωνα εἰς δασέα ἐν τῇ συνθέσει, ἢ φυλάττουσα αὐτὰ οἷα εἰσὶ ... Διατί λέγονται ἀμετάβολα; Διότι οὐ μεταβάλλονται· οὔτε ἐν τοῖς μέλλουσι τῶν ῥημάτων, οὔτε ἐν ταῖς κλίσεσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων. Ἐν μὲν τοῖς μέλλουσι τῶν ῥημάτων «ψάλω» - «ψαλῶ», «νέμω» - «νεμῶ», «κρίνω» - «κρινῶ», «εἶρω» (τὸ λέγω) - «ἐρῶ». Ἐν δὲ ταῖς κλίσεσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων οἷον «Νέστωρ» - «Νέστορος», «Ἕλλην» - «Ἕλληνας»); [ff. 27v-28v are blank];

An anonymous grammatical treatise, now beginning imperfectly; the text is very similar to the "Scholia Marciana," edited by A. Hilgard, 1901, pp. 295-335. Consisting of short questions and answers, this must have served as a textbook of Greek grammar and is likely to have been compiled by a schoolmaster in the late Byzantine period (1261-1453).

IV. ff. 29r-38v, (inc. [Π]ολλά με τὰ παρακαλοῦντά ἐστι ξιμβουλεῦσαι ἡμῖν, end lost, des. ἐπιμέλει ἀνωφέλει αὐτοῦς ἔσεσθαι. ὥς),

Basil of Caesarea, *Address to Young Men on How They Might Derive Benefit from Greek Literature*, here ending imperfectly; Greek text and translation, Deferrari, 1934, pp. 378-385. The Letters of St. Basil, a student of Libanius, were very popular and survive in some two hundred and sixty manuscripts. This particular text was read widely in the schools. It was translated into Latin by Leonardo Bruni in 1403, and the first edition appeared in 1496 from the Florentine press of Lorenzo de Alopa.

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