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MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO, *Laelius de amicitia [On Friendship]; Cato Maior de senectute [On Old Age]*

In Latin, illuminated manuscript on parchment
Northern Italy, likely Lombardy, c. 1460-1475

47 ff., preceded by a single parchment flyleaf, with last two leaves ruled but blank, complete [collation: i-v8, vi7 (of 8, with last leaf of quire canceled and vi-vii ruled but blank)], written in a fine humanistic script, in brown ink on up to 24 long lines (justification: 145 x 85 mm), decorated catchwords, rubrics in pale red, 2- to 3- line-high initials in blue or light red, two 5- to 6-line high large white-vine initials in burnished gold infilled in blue, green and pale pink with dots in white or yellow, with two moths or butterflies (f. 1) and a grasshopper (f. 25), erased arms placed originally in lower margin with gold vine-leaves on hairline stems (added slightly later), some marginal corrections and annotations. Original Italian 15th c. binding (probably Lombard) of paneled brown goatskin over wooden boards, sides with triple fillets marking three frames, outer frame with repeated imprints of a stylized ornament of the Kopfstempel type, intermediary frame with repeated winged gryphons and lions rampant (only on back cover) stamped in blind, central section with quadrilobed floral motifs, two brass catches (wanting clasps) engraved with rosaces, spine sewn on 3 raised bands (A few small wormholes to parchment, restorations to binding, rebacked, corners and joints restored, arms and monogram in lower margin effaced). Modern cloth box, tan back with gilt lettering. Dimensions 260 x 170 mm.

Very elegant Italian humanistic manuscript in its original binding, of two major classical texts, often associated. The script of the present manuscript is quite distinctive and merits further comparison. The manuscript contains copies of two of Cicero's best-known works on the subjects of friends and friendship (specifically political friendship) and old age. This previously unknown manuscript offers excellent evidence of the practice of classical scholarship in Rome during the Renaissance.

PROVENANCE

1. The script and illumination show that the manuscript was made in Italy, where it continued in use as shown by the marginal notes and corrections in more than one Italian humanistic hand. Albinia de la Mare identified the scribe as from the region of Genoa.
2. Effaced arms in the lower margin, those of the first owner, originally flanked by two initials, the first scratched out (perhaps a "V"), the second "A". The arms appear to have been added slightly later. A note once found in f. 46v is now entirely illegible: better ultraviolet technology might allow for better identification.
3. Inscription in code on upper pastedown: "pdgbn de bgrldsgd", and the initials "AG".

4. From the collection of T. E. Marston (see Faye and Bond, *Supplement to the Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, 1962, p. 64:3, "bought from Stonehill in 1949"), one of the manuscripts in the Marston Collection that was not given to Yale University, the Beinecke Library.

5. London, Sotheby's, 10 December 1962, lot 119, as "Lombardy, mid-15th century" to Dawson.

TEXT

ff. 1-24, Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De amicitia seu Laelius* [On Friendship or Laelius], Book I (ff. 1-14), rubric, *M. Tullii C. De amicitia liber primus incipit*; incipit, "Quintus Mutuis augur scevola multa narrare de C. Lelio socero suo memoriter et iocunde solebat..."; Book II (ff. 14-24), rubric, *Amicitie liber primus explicit, incipit secundus*; incipit, "Constituendi sunt autem qui sunt in amicitia fines..."; explicit, "[...] ut ea excepta nihil amicitia prestabilius esse putetis. Finis" [published a number of times, including W.A. Falconer, *Laelius de amicitia*, pp. 108-211 [Loeb Classical Library, Cicero, vol. XX, 1971];

The *Laelius* became very popular in the Renaissance, and accordingly there are a large number of fifteenth-century copies extant. The only complete *Laelius* from the ninth century is or was the manuscript found in the Didot private library in Paris (fittingly named Parisinus Didotianus), described by R. W. Hunt, "An Opportunity Missed: the Didot Manuscript of Cicero, *De amicitia*," *Bodleian Library Record*, 7, no. 5 (July 1966), p. 275.

f. 24v, blank;

ff. 25-45v, Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De senectute* [On Old Age], rubric, *Marci Tullii Ciceronis. De senectute liber incipit*; incipit, "Q [sic, for "O"] Tite si quid ego adiuto curam levaso que te nunc coquit et versat in pectore fixa..."; explicit, "[...] que ex me audistis re experti probare possitis" [published a number of times, including W.A. Falconer, *Cato Maior de Senectute*, pp. 8-99 [Loeb Classical Library, Cicero, vol. XX, 1971];

f. 45v, Added in Italian, in a late sixteenth or early seventeenth century hand (old descriptions claimed it to be fifteenth century), "Ben m'obligava la virtu, o gentilesa di ve (?) a tenerre continua memoria di lei, e desiderio di servila, ma la cortesia amor vole che ella usa verso di me nella sua m'obliga tanto quanto io mi sento manco meritarla perche inverso la fortuna in questo come in molte altre cose m'e stata asai contraria, non m'offerendo mai occasione di poterla servire" (f. 45v). This note presents a courtesan's (?) laudatory considerations addressed to a second party;

The *Cato Maior* survives in about 400 extant manuscripts: this mostly reflects its popularity in the Renaissance, since all but fifty of these are of fourteenth or fifteenth century date (see G. S. Vogel, 1939). *De senectute* is an essay written by Cicero in 44 BC on the subject of aging and death. In addition to its profound subject matter, it has remained popular because its clear and beautiful language has made it a useful example for teaching Latin to students.

ff. 46-46v, blank;

f. 47, Inscription in brown ink, same sixteenth or seventeenth century hand as added inscription on

f. 45v: "Giorno e note non penso ad altro fuori che alla fine della vita";

f. 47v, blank.

Both the *Cato Maior* and *Laelius* are dedicated to Titus Pomponius Atticus, a close friend of Cicero. More than 400 letters from Cicero to him are extant to prove the rare intimacy and deep affection between the two men. Within the rich manuscript tradition, including the later humanistic tradition, the two works have been natural companion pieces, often united from the twelfth century onwards. Each work contributed to the other's circulation. See Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmission*, 1983, in particular, "Cato Maior de senectute," pp. 116-120; "Laelius de amicitia," pp. 121-124

The most important orator that Rome produced, Cicero was of lasting greatness due to his exceptional mastery of the Latin language which appealed to Renaissance Humanists. His prose became a model for later writers in Latin. Hundreds of manuscripts of both the *De amicitia* and *De senectute* survive, and most of the research on the manuscript tradition concentrates on the numerous early, pre-twelfth century copies (e.g., Powell, 1998). Noting that the text in the four or five hundred surviving manuscripts from the later Middle Ages and Renaissance was a "vulgate," in other words the "product of a continuous process of corruption and contamination," Powell therefore doubts the utility of a study of these later manuscripts as an aid to an edition. However, since many of the later, especially fifteenth-century manuscripts are glossed, like the present copy, a census of glossed copies and a careful study of them would likely reveal much about the appreciation of Cicero in the Renaissance.

The first edition of Cicero's *Laelius seu de amicitia* was published in Cologne, Ulrich Zell, c. 1467 (Goff C-559), that of *De senectute*, also printed by Ulrich Zell in 1467 (Pellechet, 3679), thus both probably contemporary with the production of the present manuscript.

ILLUSTRATION

Elements of the decoration of the present manuscript are clearly Lombard, the beautiful foliate and floral decoration on the opening folio, as well as the penwork initials with trilobed decoration. More uncertain is the decoration of the two initial miniatures, which share elements with Florentine decoration

LITERATURE

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *Cato maior. Laelius*, ed. K. Simbeck, Leipzig, Teubner, 1917 (repr. Stuttgart, 1961).

Cicero, Marcus Tullius *De senectute. De amicitia. De divinatione*. tr. William Armistead Falconer, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992 (The Loeb Classical Library, 154).

Garzelli, A. *Miniatura fiorentina del Rinascimento. I, Un primo censimento. Le immagini, gli autori, i destinatari : 1440-1525* [followed by] New research on humanistic scribes in Florence di Albinia de la Mare, Florence, 1985, 2 vol.

Powell, J.G.F. "The Manuscripts and Text of Cicero's Laelius de Amicitia," in *The Classical Quarterly* n.s., 48 (1998), pp. 506-518.

Reynolds, L. D. ed. *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983.

Vogel, G. S. *The Major Manuscripts of Cicero's de Senectute*, Chicago, 1939.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Cicero, *De amicitia*, The Latin Library:

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/amic.shtml>

Cicero, *De senectute*, The Latin Library:

<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/cicero/senectute.shtml>