

# A PLAY BY POMPONIO LETO:



Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana,  
Vat.lat. 7192, fols 297r–298v.

By Paul Gwynne

*The miscellany BAV, Vat. lat. 7129 once in the possession of the humanist and antiquarian Angelo Colocci (1474–1549) contains a single bifolio unrelated to any of the surrounding texts (fols 297r–298v). This paper argues that the text (a free Latin verse translation of a Lucianic dialogue) is a fragment of a play performed by members of the Roman Academy, and furthermore, that it is an autograph sheet written in the hand of polymath Pomponio Leto (Pomponius Laetus, 1425–1498).*

## Introduction

BAV, Vat. lat. 7129 is an interesting miscellany that collates papers once in the possession of the humanist and antiquarian Angelo Colocci (1474–1549).<sup>1</sup> Amid this mixed collection there is a single bifolio unrelated to any of the surrounding texts (fols 297r–298v; plates 1–4). Written in a distinctive hand with rubrication in the same script, this folded sheet contains a free Latin verse translation of the Lucianic dialogue *Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἔρωτος* (of Venus and Cupid) in which the goddess of love encourages her son to attack Pallas Athene and the Muses. This paper, offered to Marianne Pade on the occasion of her birthday, proposes that this is the text of a short, fragmentary play performed by members of the Roman Academy, and furthermore, that it is an autograph sheet written in the hand of polymath Pomponio Leto (Pomponius Laetus, 1425–1498).<sup>2</sup>

---

I thank George F. Franko, Frances Muecke and Keith Sidwell for reading previous drafts of this paper and their helpful comments.

<sup>1</sup> See Ubaldini 1969; Fanelli 1979; also [Petrucchi] 1982.

<sup>2</sup> The standard work on Leto remains Zabughin 1910; see also Accame 2008 and more generally, Pade & Abbamonte & Bianca & Gaisser & Modigliani & Osmond & Rammingner 2007.

### The Academy of Pomponio Leto

Although the meetings of the Academy, centred around Leto, had been cruelly suppressed by Pope Paul II Barbo (r.1464–1471) when various members including Leto himself had been incarcerated in Castel Sant’Angelo, the group reformed during the pontificate of Sixtus IV Della Rovere (r.1471–1484).<sup>3</sup> From 1483 onwards they met annually on 21 April to celebrate the foundation of Rome and the history of the city in a ceremony modelled upon the ancient *Palilia* (or *Parilia*).<sup>4</sup> The Roman diarist Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra (1434–1516) notes that during the first celebration of this revived ancient festival, a privilege granted by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III (r. 1452–1493) was read to those assembled for permission to revive secular theatre and for the presentation or recitation of a play (or plays).<sup>5</sup>

In his encyclopaedic *Commentaria Urbana* the humanist and theologian Raffaele Maffei (1451–1522) gives an impression of the founder and their meetings:

Eodem quoque tempore in urbe Pomponius Laetus, Porcellius, et Chalcidius profitebantur. Pomponius natione Calaber Graecorum ignarus, tantum antiquarium sese factitaverat, ac siqua nomina exoleta ac portentosa invenerat, scholis ostentabat. Iuventutem Romanum erudiit, labore alioquin adsiduo, noctibus totis vigilabat, libros ipsemet scriptitando, simul et discebat, et proficiebat. Ex salario et discipulorum mercedibus parvum agellum et domunculam in Quirinali sibi paraverat, ubi sodalitatem literatorum, ut ipse appellabat, instituit.<sup>6</sup>

Also, at that time Pomponio Leto, Porcellio and Chalcidius gave public lectures in Rome. Pomponio was born in Calabria yet he did not know Greek, but he had made himself a great scholar of the past, and if he had discovered any ancient and important inscriptions, he often used to show them to his students. He taught the young men of Rome, with continual labour, he stayed awake through the night, regularly copying out the books himself, and so was both learning and teaching at the

---

<sup>3</sup> On the conspiracy see Dunston 1973; Palermino 1980; more recently, D’Elia 2009.

<sup>4</sup> It seems that dramatic performances and recitals of Latin poetry formed an essential element of these celebrations. A number of compositions associated with the festivities have survived. For example, a miscellany (BAV, Vat. lat. 3351) ascribed to the Roman poet Fausto Capodiferro contains a short dialogue between Venus, Ilia and Mars, introduced by the Genius of Rome, which was performed in 1499 (*Inc. Cum Genio laeto celebrate Palilia coetu*, fols 33v–36r). The same manuscript contains verses recited in honour of Pope Alexander VI (*Inc. Dicite Alexandro laudes quo principe salvo*, fol. 72r–v) and a performance by a breeze *Aura acta Palilibus* (*Inc. Aura ego sum, sedes nobis est mobilis aer*, fol. 77v).

<sup>5</sup> Gherardi 1904, 163 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Maffei 1544, 246v.

same time. From his salary and his students' fees he provided himself with a small plot of land and a little house on the Quirinal hill where he set up a "sodality for literary men" as he himself called it.

Pomponio's Academy was continued after his death by the apostolic secretary Paolo Cortesi (1465–1510) and then, after Cortesi's death, by Angelo Colocci, who also seems to have acquired Leto's house on the Quirinal hill and inherited a number of his books.<sup>7</sup> The poet Vincenzo Calmeta (c. 1460–1508) has left a brief account of these later gatherings frequented by the literati of the Borgia court including (among others) the Catalan humanist Cardinal Juan de Vera (1453–1507), Cesare Borgia's secretary Agapito Geraldini (1450–1515), Pope Alexander VI's secretary Adriano Castellesi (c.1460–c.1521), and the poet Michele Ferno (1463–1513):

Fioriva medesimamente in Roma a quel tempo la nostra Accademia in casa di Paulo Cortese, giovene per dottrina, grado e affabilità in la Corte assai reverito, per modo che non casa di corteggiano ma officina di eloquenza e recettaculo d'ogni inclita virtù se poteva chiamare. Concorrevano ivi ogni giorno gran multitude de elevate ingeni: Gianlorenzo Veneto, Petro Gravina, Montepiloso Episcopo, Agapito Gerardino, Manilio, Cornelio e molti altri eruditi, sotto la cui ombra altri di minore etade, che de amplettere la virtù tuttavia erano desiderosi, a soggiornare e prendere delectazione ancora se reducevano. Erano de' poeti vulgari in grandissimo pregio li ardori de lo Aretino, né ancora de' nostri frammenti si faceva poca essistimazione.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time at Rome our Academy also flourished at the house of Paolo Cortesi, whose learning, ability and affability was beyond his years and he was held in great esteem at the papal court, the Academy was not a house of manners but a workshop of eloquence and a repository of every respectable virtue that could be named. Every day a great crowd of educated people gathered there: Gianlorenzo Veneto, Petro Gravina, the bishop of Montepiloso, Agapito Geraldini, Manilio, Cornelio and other scholars, into whose orbit, younger scholars, who wanted their talents to increase, betook themselves to take delight. Among the vernacular poets Aretino's passions were of the greatest renown, nor yet were our fragments held in little esteem.

### **The *sodalitas* of Angelo Colocci**

Born into a noble family at Jesi in the Marche, Angelo Colocci was educated in Bologna, and had studied with Giovanni Pontano in Naples, before coming

---

<sup>7</sup> See Muecke 2005. For the various dwellings on the Quirinal hill see Coffin 1979, 187 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Calmeta 1959, 63–64.

to Rome in 1498, where his personal wealth allowed him to buy several curial offices. Although Colocci himself wrote little, he was an avid collector of classical archaeological remains and of manuscripts. Early in 1513 Colocci bought a garden property on the Quirinal hill, near the Trevi fountain, on the site which, it was believed, was once occupied by the ancient gardens of Sallust. This setting, as Phyllis Pray Bober has remarked, provided a congenial locale for convivia of poets and gatherings of those antiquarians who carried on the Accademia Pomponiana after the death of Leto.<sup>9</sup>

Looking back nostalgically to the meetings held in his garden during the reign of Pope Leo X de' Medici (r.1513–1524) as he recovered from a protracted illness, Colocci would remember a time of intense antiquarian study.<sup>10</sup>

### **“The play’s the thing”**

Leto’s Academy was the prime mover behind the revival of classical theatre in late fifteenth-century Rome.<sup>11</sup> In his biography of Leto, the Venetian humanist Marcantonio Sabellico (1436–1506) notes the important role that theatrical performances played in Leto’s pedagogy:

Pari studio veterem spectandi consuetudinem desuetae civitati restituit, primorum antistitum atriis pro theatro usus, in quibus Plauti, Terentii, recentiorum etiam quaedam agerentur fabulae, quas ipse honestos adulescentes et docuit et agentibus praefuit.<sup>12</sup>

With equal enthusiasm Leto revived the ancient tradition of the spectacle for the unaccustomed citizens, using the courtyards of important clerics for theatres; here certain stories of Plautus, Terence and more recent authors too were performed; he himself both taught these to the honest youths and directed those acting.

Although written in Vergilian hexameters, the fragmentary drama from the Vatican miscellany is formed by a series of brief encounters and exchanges in the manner of the satiric dialogues on the gods *Θεῶν Διάλογοι* composed by the second-century rhetorician Lucian of Samosata (c.125–c.180). Indeed, it is a free adaptation of the dialogue *Ἀφροδίτης καὶ Ἔρωτος* (of Venus and

---

<sup>9</sup> Bober 1977, 225.

<sup>10</sup> In a letter to Pier Vettori of 17 April 1543 “Vorrei hormai riposarmi et attendere alli studi, il che dalla morte di Leone in qua non ho possuto fare”, London, British Library, Add. 10265, fol. 274r; Fanelli 1979, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Licht 1996, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Sabellico 2008; also cited in Cruciani 1983, 187. This claim is repeated by Giovanni Antonio Sulpizio da Veroli in the prefatory letter to his edition of Vitruvius (*editio princeps*: Vitruvius [1486–16 Aug. 1487]); Cruciani 1983, 222 ff.; see also Krautheimer 1948.

Cupid) in which the goddess of love encourages her son to attack Pallas Athene and the Muses. In Leto's version Pallas Athene and the Muses are attacked indirectly by an assault on a certain Roman youth of great potential, named Paolo. The exchange opens abruptly with the chance encounter by the Muse Calliope upon Venus and Cupid. Venus is encouraging her son to entrap Paolo in the snares of love (the scene contains deliberate verbal echoes of Venus's assault upon Dido from *Aeneid* book 1). Horrified that such a promising scholar would be distracted by love, Calliope seeks the aid of Pallas Athene to defend the young man. Although reluctant, Cupid agrees to his mother's commands, but is thwarted by the arrival of Pallas Athene who forces the god of love to withdraw and recant. The drama breaks off midway through Cupid's oath of recantation.

### Lucian at the Roman Academy

From the moment that Manuel Chrysoloras transferred the Byzantine education system to Florence in the early fifteenth century, the *Deorum Dialogi* became a popular school text and Lucian was the probably "first real Greek a pupil would read".<sup>13</sup> Although the *Venus et Cupido* dialogue was not translated into Latin until the early sixteenth century, a number of Latin versions of single dialogues circulated in manuscript, and several had appeared in print before the *editio princeps* (1496) proving that there was demand for such light literature in the second half of the fifteenth century. Indeed, the popularity of the dialogues inspired various close imitations, such as Alberti's *Intercoenalis* entitled *Virtus Dea* and Vegio's *Palinurus*, both of which were printed as Lucianic works throughout the sixteenth century. Moreover, E. P. Goldschmidt has shown that there was a demonstrable link between Leto's Roman Academy and an early Roman edition (1470) of six Lucianic dialogues, and comments that

[a] society like the Academy of Pomponius, a group of preponderantly young enthusiasts for pagan antiquity, a kind of advanced "highbrow" clique in a Rome mainly dominated by canon lawyers and purposeful careerists, was a circle in which Lucian's ironical and disrespectful satires would find their readers and admirers, where every newly translated piece from his pen would be circulated and enjoyed.<sup>14</sup>

Circulating in manuscript and popular in schools for primary exercises in translation, Lucian's dialogues were certainly well-known in late fifteenth-century Rome. Indeed, well-known enough for a particular dialogue to be

---

<sup>13</sup> This "can be seen from BAV, Urb. gr. 121, an apograph from Chrysoloras's own Greek manuscript of Lucian, with Latin glosses," Keith Sidwell, private correspondence.

<sup>14</sup> Goldschmidt 1951, 19.

adapted to specific, local circumstances (perhaps also with the intention of providing gentle satiric comment upon them). Yet, as we have noted above, Raffaele Maffei claimed that Leto was not a Greek scholar. This then begs the question who translated Lucian's text as no translation of this dialogue is known until the early sixteenth century.

### **The identity of Paolo**

At this distance in time it is almost impossible to identify with certainty the scholar named Paolo who is the object of Calliope's concern. However, the text does reveal some clues towards his identity. For example, the youth is physically attractive. With his golden curls flowing over his shoulders and glowing complexion Paolo rivals both Cupid and Ganymede. The association with the Idalian youth is further emphasized by a marginal note: *iliada* (son of Ilus). This is important as it suggests that the prospective affair for which Cupid's victim is intended may be homosexual. In the Renaissance Ganymede became the symbol for a beautiful young male who attracted homosexual desire and love.<sup>15</sup> Here we should recall the charges levelled against the First Roman Academy; and that Leto was under detention in Venice on charges of sodomy when the first arrests were made in Rome.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the description of idealized beauty, we learn that the young man is of noble stock whose family held magistracies. Although referred to as *puer* (a youth), Paolo is a Greek scholar (therefore of a certain age), a performer (or writer) of comedies and a translator of the Attic comic poet and playwright Menander (c.342–c.290 BC).<sup>17</sup> Possible candidates among the known associates of the Academy suggest themselves. These are: Paolo Branca,

---

<sup>15</sup> In general see Saslow 1986. In view of the Lucianic borrowing note also *Deorum Dialogi* 79.8 (Macleod's numbering = 8.5 in the traditional order from the *editio princeps*, always used from 1496 onwards), where Hera complains that Zeus has ignored her since he brought the Phrygian lad up to Olympus. An imitation of *Deorum Dialogi* 79.10 (=8.4 old style) is preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Misc. II.I.98, fols 79r–80r which turns Ganymede's protestations against physical contact and abashed innocence into a positive desire for homoerotic fulfilment. See Panizza 2007, 97. I owe these references to Keith Sidwell.

<sup>16</sup> "There undeniably was a tendency to flirt with paganism among the less restrained members of this Academy, and there was, it would seem, ample ground for the accusation that their morals were suspect", Goldschmidt 1951, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Although Menander was one of the most popular writers in antiquity, much of his work had been lost and only survived in fragmentary quotations. Burckhardt claimed that there was a complete works in the library of Federico da Montefeltro at Urbino, Burckhardt 1960, 158. If so, all traces of this volume disappeared after the city was captured by Cesare Borgia and the library was transferred to the Vatican; see also D'Aiuto 2003. However, there was enough in Terence about Menander to talk about the revival of Latin comedy as a return to Menander. We now have one complete play; one nearly complete and substantial fragments of others.

lecturer at the *Studium Urbis* (dates unknown); Paolo Cortesi (1465–1510);<sup>18</sup> Paolo Margani, son of Stefano Margani (birthdate unknown, *ob.* 1501); Paolo Marsi (1440–1484);<sup>19</sup> and Paolo Pompilio (1455–1491).<sup>20</sup> Some of these may be excluded on account of their age. If, as I suggest below, the script conforms to the second – third period in the development of Leto’s hand, then the bifolio must date to the 1480s; Paolo is clearly a handsome young man.<sup>21</sup> By process of elimination, the only possible (but unlikely?) candidate (from the list above) would be Paolo Cortesi, later author of *De cardinalatu*, who was seventeen years old when he was nominated *scriptor apostolicus* in October 1481 to replace Bartolomeo Platina (1421–1481). Yet, Cortesi is not known as a Greek scholar (nor indeed is any of the others listed above); so the matter must remain open for the moment.

### Script

The bi-folio is written in a single, distinctive hand noticeable for particular elements. These are: uncial d; uncial g with a tall ascender “looming over the juxtaposed lowercase letters” and a descender that curves back upon itself below the line (for example, *gravis*; see plate 1, line 2); and similar to minuscule h (for example, *hic*; plate 1, line 1); use of ampersand for *et*, which is also used midword (for example, *phar&ra*; plate 1, line 2) and at word-endings (for example, *fatig&*; plate 2, line 12); use of minuscule e alternating with maiusculum uncial E midword (for example, *stelligEros*, plate 1, line 4); the abbreviation q: for *que*; θ for th (for example, *caθenis*; plate 4, line 62).<sup>22</sup> These hallmark letter forms can be compared with the autograph manuscript of Ovid’s *Fasti* (BAV, Vat. lat. 3263; for example compare *gorgoneo* plate 3, line 50 with *gorgonei*, Ov. F. 3.450 [BAV, Vat. lat. 3263, fol. 57r]). These traits are characteristic of what Giovanni Muzzioli has labelled the third style in the development of Leto’s script and thus date the bi-folio to 1480s.<sup>23</sup> All annotations are in red ink (with the exception of *iliada*; plate 1) and are in the same hand. The rubrication supplies dramatic pauses (marked by ¶); stage directions (for example, “Discedit Venus. Sedit Calliope cum Pallade”, Venus leaves. Calliope sits with Pallas) and indications of the thematic content (for example, “De luxu Urbis”, On the decadence of Rome).

---

<sup>18</sup> See Ricciardi 1983.

<sup>19</sup> See Fritsen 1999.

<sup>20</sup> See Bracke 2015.

<sup>21</sup> This would exclude Pompilio, described as “di salute cagionevole, magro e di colorito livido” (of delicate health, thin and of sallow complexion), Bracke 2015.

<sup>22</sup> For a comparative description of Leto’s distinctive letter forms see Dixon 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Muzzioli 1959.



**A note on the transcription**

The text has simply been transcribed with minimal editorial intervention. Leto's idiosyncratic orthography has been maintained, including his clumsy attempts at archaism (for example, at line 9: *rhosea* [...] *frunte* where the correction *frunte* from *fronte* confuses the archaic *fruns*, *frundis* (leaf) with *frons*, *frontis* (brow)). The standard palaeographical abbreviations, suspensions (e.g., the horizontal stroke for *m* and *n*) and contractions have been written in full. All proper names have been capitalised. The diphthong *æ*, ampersand &, and the abbreviation *-q:* for the conjunction *-q(ue)*, have been silently expanded. Pace Fred Nichols, the punctuation has been slightly amended, following the principles laid down by Josef IJsewijn and Dirk Sacré.<sup>24</sup>

\*\*

**Text****Videt Calliope Venerem et Cupidinem. Invocat Palladem contra Venerem.**

Calliope      Unde odor hic strepitusque leves? Heu, fera paventum      297r  
                  Consilia! Ecce gravis pharetra, cum matre Cupido  
                  Quantus adest! ω sancta precor, tu prima Tonantis  
                  Pallas, stelligeros quondam defensa penatis,  
                  Diva veni, contraque tuos fer concita gressus.      5

**Discedit Calliope.****Venus ad Cupidinem; contra Paullum.**

Venus      Si mea praeteritos numerat nunc ulla triumphos  
                  Te duce, myrtoo<sup>25</sup> celebris victoria serto  
                  Si nostri tibi cura fuit; stant omnia matri  
                  Hac pendenda die, facinusque tuebitur unum.  
 Iliada      Est puer, Idaeo similis, cui flava decoros      10  
                  Caesaries humeros umbrat: geminae micanti  
**De Paullo**      Orbe faces, rhosea propellunt frunte tenebras,  
                  Ora vago tegit igne color: quid plura? virenti  
                  Nec facie te, nate, minor. Celeberrima Paulli  
                  Nomina dant animos, repetitae clara parentum      15  
                  Nobilitas, Latias totiens iterata curules  
                  Isque meo irrepsit gremio. Nunc casta rebelli  
                  Sola animo Phoebea cohors. Mens omnis in una  
                  Virgine Cecropia, florentis proditor aevi      297v  
                  Indocilisque mei. Veneris certissima proles,      20  
                  I, precor, et volucres iam iam maculate sagittas

<sup>24</sup> Nichols 1979; IJsewijn & Sacré 1998, 460–478.<sup>25</sup> Corrected from *Myrt#oo*.



---

	Aestifero de fonte move; tenerumque refringe Pectus, et Idalio totum confunde veneno.	
<b>Redit Calliope cum Pallade.</b>		
	Aspera corda doma, penitusque iterata profundo Vulnere, tela manu nunquam reditura reconde. Adcelera, nam Pallas adest.	25
<b>Discedit Venus.</b>		
Pallas	Properare timentem Excitat Aonidum quid te regina sororum, Dic, mea Calliope.	
Calliope	ω, tandem miserata precantem! Et quando dubia trepidos e mente timores Pellere erit? Quonam usque furens inimica fatiget Corda Venus, Latium debellatura <sup>26</sup> pudorem?	30
<b>De luxu urbis.</b>	Cernis ut indomitum populum face pervigil usque Noctivaga stimulet? <sup>27</sup> Mediaque sub urbe locantes Castra, Dionaeae peragunt nunc Marte cohurtes	
<b>De templis Romae prophanatis.</b>	Proelia barbarico. Tacitis quibus oro peremni Igne focus tibi templa calent? Ubi poena nocentum Prisca prophanatae violent si sacra ministrae? Quid non ausa Venus?	35 298r
<b>Dat operam Grecis litteris Paullus et opt(im)e comedias agit</b>	Nostris spes unica plectris Paullus, ab Attaeo revocat dum fonte Minervam, Et Latia Danaum circumfert urbe Menandrum. <sup>28</sup> Dumque puer suspirat avos, quibus ecce parantis Saeva dei, iacet ille minis! Succurre cadenti.	40
<b>Cupido secum loquitur et desperat opus.</b>		
Cupido	Durum opus adgredior. (Quid contra adamanta reluctet?) Durum, mater, <sup>29</sup> opus superest. Si saeva profundum Corda Iovis, rursusque forent violanda Tonantis Pectora, et Hemonio gravius fodienda Gradivo Vicissem tua vota parens. Nunc dextera torpet Irrita curvato diffundere spicula cornu Ignavaeque faces resident.	45
<b>Aspicit Cupido Gorgona.</b>		
	Hinc territat angue Pallas Gorgoneo, pudor hinc mea coepta retardat, Mnemonidum veneranda cohors. Pueroque negata	50

---

<sup>26</sup> ~~iam~~ bellatura.<sup>27</sup> *stimulat* corrected to *stimulet*.<sup>28</sup> Corrected from “Et Graium latia sociat nunc urbe Menandrum”.<sup>29</sup> *matris*; corrected to *mater* with a superscript *o* to indicate the vocative.

Ocia?

Intendit arcum Cupido.

Sed misere (certa est sententia) matri  
Indulgere meae,<sup>30</sup> penitusque<sup>31</sup> abolere nocentis  
Nomen, et hoc valido defendere cuncta sub ictu.

Calliope ad Palladem ne ulterius operam det. 298v

Calliope In quem alium, Regina, deum, in quae tempora Paulli 55  
Fata trahis? Iacet ecce gravi sub vulnere corpus.  
I dea, rumpe moras.

Discedit Calliope.

Pallas Defensa quid, improbe, tentas  
Pectora palladio confundere numine, matris  
Victae dolis, nostrumque tuus quid provocat ignis?

Capitur Cupido

I modo, digna tuum facinus ferat ultima tandem 60  
Supplicia, et vinctus quae vincla paraveris, autor  
Ipse geras, solusque tuas nunc pende<sup>32</sup> catenas.

Quid Cupidinem impulerit. Aetas scilicet et mater et utrumque excusandum.

Cupido ad Palladem.

Cupid Parce precor, nocui puer. Aetas ipsa nocentem  
Imbecilla deum fieri male sana, coegit.  
Cessimus imperio matris (scelus omne parentis<sup>33</sup> 65  
Excusat pietas).

Utram modo respice caussam  
Ignoscendus ero; (summa est haec<sup>34</sup>) Diva precandi.

Iuramentum Cupidinis

Per Iovis imperium et per<sup>35</sup> quot mea dextra<sup>36</sup> refixit  
Ante<sup>37</sup> deos; tacitumque tuo sub pectore numen  
Adque per has pharetras, et tanta pericula, iuro 70  
Si veniam merear, me nulla in tempora, sanctos [...]

### Translation

Calliope sees Venus and Cupid. She summons Pallas Athene against Venus.

<sup>30</sup> Corrected to *sed nostre (certa est sententia) matri | perdere opem misere*.

<sup>31</sup> “~~Quicquid in matrem Venerem antea dolique quam toties vehi Amoris iugum~~  
~~[prohibere]~~ hodierno facinore excusabo.”

<sup>32</sup> Corrected from *expende*.

<sup>33</sup> Corrected from *fatenti*.

<sup>34</sup> Corrected from *mea*.

<sup>35</sup> Corrected from *vel*.

<sup>36</sup> Corrected from *sola*.

<sup>37</sup> Corrected from *Dextra*.

Calliope        Whence this perfume and idle chatter here?<sup>38</sup> Alas, cruel plans of the panic-stricken! See, Cupid is at hand with his mother; weighed down by his quiver how great he is! O hallowed goddess Pallas, the Thunderer's first daughter, some time guardian of the starry abode; come, I pray, head here fired up against them.

Calliope leaves.

Venus to Cupid; against Paolo.

Venus        If any of my victories, celebrated in myrtle garland, now match previous triumphs under your command, if you had a care for us, everything for your mother stands in the balance this very day, one deed will sort it.

The Idaean    There is a lad, resembling Idaean Ganymede, whose golden locks shade his lovely shoulders; twin flames from a flashing eye dispel the shadows from his rosy brow, colour shields his complexion with a wandering fire. What more need I say? His radiant looks are not inferior to yours, son. Paolo's most celebrated titles give him courage, also his ancestors' renowned and sought out nobility, often repeated in Latin magistracies; this lad has wormed his way into my affections. Now, only Apollo's chaste crew are resistant to me. All their thoughts are centred upon the Athenian maid, a traitor to my flourishing youth and uncontrollable by me. Most sure child of Venus, now go, I beg, and taint your winged arrows and remove them from the boiling brook; pierce the young breast, and fill it all with Idalian venom. Conquer his savage heart, completely and with a repeated deep wound.

Calliope returns with Pallas Athene.

Sink those arrows with your hand, never to return. Hurry, for Pallas is here.

Venus leaves.

---

<sup>38</sup> Perfumed breezes are associated with the arrival and presence of Venus. The opening (and setting) recalls the pentameter *incipit* of Sannazaro, *Epigrams* 1, 41,2 (*In tumultum Neaerae*); see Sannazaro 2009, 284; also Tournoy-Thoen 1977, 79.

- Pallas            Tell me, dear Calliope, what has stirred you, queen of the  
                         Muses, to hurry here in fright?
- Calliope          Pitying my prayers at last! when will I expel these trembling  
                         fears from my troubled mind? For what purpose does Venus,  
                         in a constant rage, tire her hostile heart? Is she going to  
                         assault Latin modesty?

[On the luxury of the city. On the profaned temples at Rome.]

Do you see how, ever vigilant, she enflames this invincible race with her night-wandering flame? Pitching camp in the midst of the city,<sup>39</sup> these venereal gangs now wage battle in barbarous warfare. Pray tell, what silent hearths warm your temples with an undying flame? Where are the punishments for the guilty, if profaned priestesses violate the ancient sacred rites? What outrage does not bold Venus attempt?

[Paolo attends to Greek studies and performs comedies very well.]

Paolo, is the singular hope<sup>40</sup> for our songs, while he recalls Minerva from the Attic fount and promotes Greek Menander in Rome. While the boy sighs for his ancestors, see what threats prepared by the savagery of the god; that boy lies in ruins! Help him as he falls.<sup>41</sup>

Cupid speaks to himself and despairs of his task.

- Cupid            I am undertaking a difficult task. (How can I struggle against  
                         tough adamant?) Oh mother, the difficult task remains to be  
                         performed. If the savage heart of Pluto, ruler of the abyss,  
                         and the Thunderer's emotions were to be violated again, and  
                         stabbed more seriously than Thessalian Mars, I had surpassed  
                         your prayers, mother. Now my right hand is stayed from

---

<sup>39</sup> Perhaps here standing for the Subura, the valley between the Esquiline and Viminal hills of Rome which was renowned, both in the ancient world and the fifteenth century, as a centre of night-life.

<sup>40</sup> *spes unica*: used of the cross in the early Christian hymn *Vexilla regis*.

<sup>41</sup> *Succurre cadenti*: cf. Verg. *Aen.* 9.290, 404. The famous phrase is also found in the medieval Marian hymn *Alma redemptoris mater*, sung, according to the Roman Breviary, after Compline during Advent and Christmastide. If the echo of this prayer to the Virgin was recognised by the audience (and in all likelihood it would have been), it is easy to understand the charges of heresy levelled against the Academicians.

scattering ineffectual darts from the curved bow and my  
firebrands sit idle.

Cupid sees the Gorgon.

Pallas scares me with her snakey Gorgon, and shame delays  
my undertakings. The band of Muses should be respected.  
Should the boy be denied his ease? Yet (the plan is fixed)  
reluctantly to accede to mother and completely<sup>1</sup> destroy the  
criminal boy's reputation, and protect everything with this  
powerful hit.

<sup>1</sup>I will excuse every previous trick against my mother by today's crime.

Cupid bends his bow.

Calliope to Pallas, lest she give the matter further thought.

Calliope        O Queen, against what other god, until what time do you  
prolong Paolo's fate? See, his body lies with a serious  
wound. Come, goddess, brook no delay.

Calliope leaves.

Pallas        Why, you villain, are you trying to confound hearts secured  
under Pallas's protection; overcome by your mother's tricks,  
why does your fire challenge us?

Cupid is taken prisoner. Pallas's charges against Cupid.

Go now, let let your crime finally receive due punishment,  
and shackled, you their very author will carry those fetters  
you prepared, and you alone now be weighed down by your  
chains.

Cupid to Pallas Athene (namely, both his youth and his mother are offered  
as an excuse).

Cupid        Spare me, I beg. A mere boy, I have caused hurt. My age,  
weak, insane, compels a god to become a criminal. We gave  
in to our mother's command. (Piety absolves the one  
confessing his mother's every crime).

Only take into consideration either of my excuses and I must be pardoned. Goddess, this is the sum total of my petition.

Cupid's oath.

By the authority of Jupiter, and by as many times my right hand let loose before the gods, and the quiet godhead under your breast and by these quivers and such dangers, if I merit forgiveness, I swear that at no time, will I...

## Bibliography

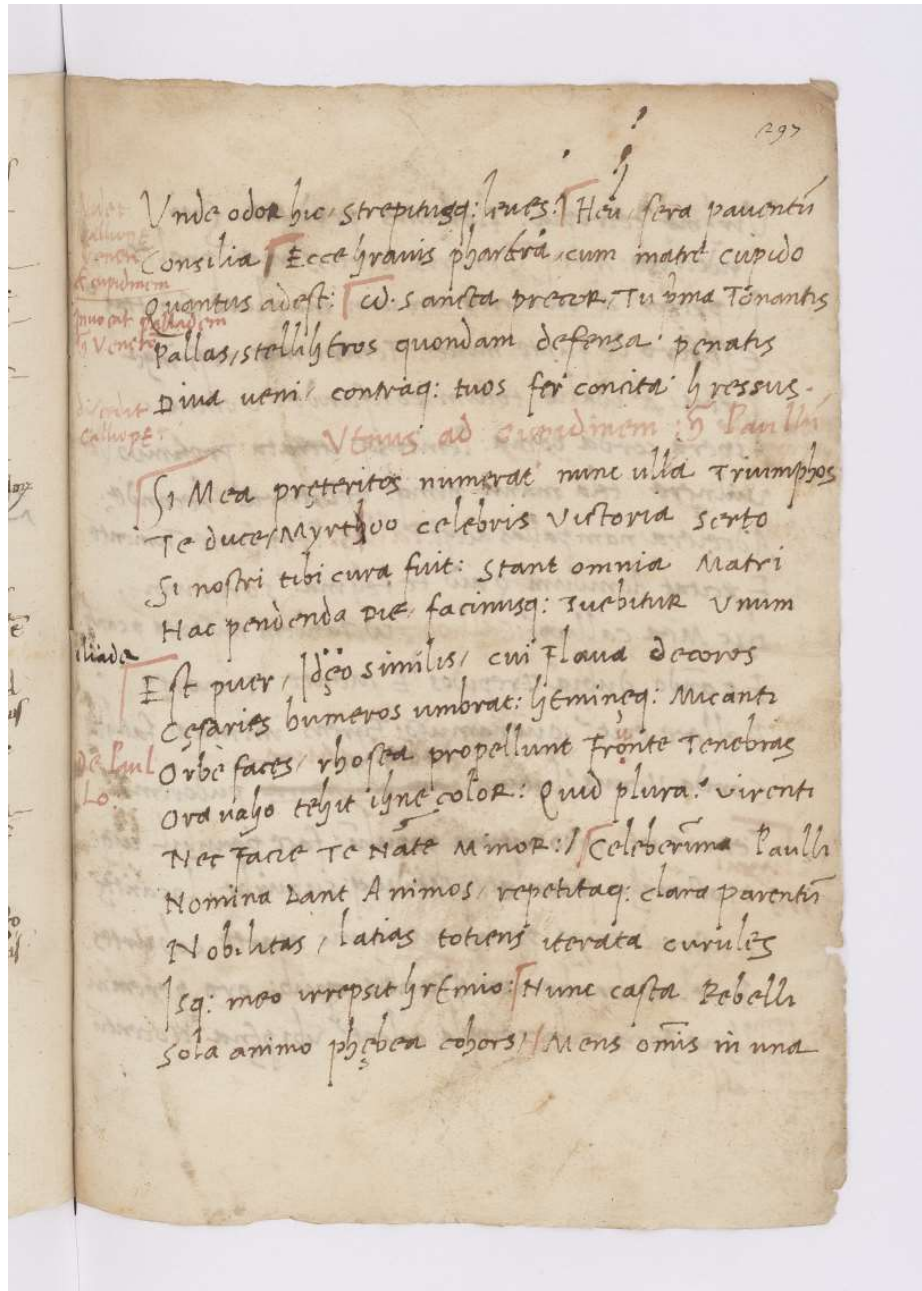
- Accame, Maria 2008, *Pomponius Laetus: Vita e insegnamento*, Tivoli.
- Bober, Phyllis Pray 1977, “The Coryciana and the Nymph Corycia”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40, 223–239.
- Bracke, Wouter 2015, “Pompilio, Pietro Paolo”, *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 84, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-paolo-pompilio\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-paolo-pompilio_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/), 10 January 2022.
- Burckhardt, Jacob 1960, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr.: Samuel G.C. Middlemore & rev. & ed.: Irene Gordon, New York.
- Calmata, Vincenzo 1959, *Prose e lettere edite e inedite (con due appendice di altri inediti)*, ed.: Cecil Grayson, Bologna (Coll. di opere inedite o rare 121).
- Coffin, David 1979, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, Princeton.
- Cruciani, Fabrizio 1983, *Teatro nel Rinascimento: Roma 1450–1550*, Roma.
- D’Aiuto, Francesco 2003, “Graeca in codici orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana (con i resti di un manoscritto tardoantico delle commedie di Menandro)”, *Tra Oriente e Occidente Scritture e libri greci fra le regioni orientali di Bisanzio e l’Italia*, ed.: Lidia Perria, Roma (Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici 14), 227–296.
- D’Elia, Anthony F. 2009, *A Sudden Terror: The Plot to Murder the Pope in Renaissance Rome*, Cambridge, Mass.
- Dixon, Helen 2011, “Pomponio Leto’s notes on Lucretius (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek X fol. 82 Rariora)”, *Aevum* 85, 191–216.
- Dunston, Arthur John 1973, “Pope Paul II and the Humanists”, *Journal of Religious History* 7, 287–306.
- Fanelli, Vittorio 1979, *Ricerche su Angelo Colocci e sulla Roma Cinquecentesca*, Città del Vaticano.
- Fritsen, Angela M. V. 1999, “Testing Auctoritas: The Travels of Paolo Marsi 1468–69”, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 6, 356–382.
- Gherardi, Jacopo 1904, *Il Diario Romano di Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra dal VII settembre MCCCCLXXIX al XII agosto MCCCCLXXXIV*, ed.: Enrico Carusi, Città di Castello (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*: Nuova edizione 23, 3).
- Goldschmidt, Ernst Philip 1951, “The First Edition of Lucian of Samosata”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, 7–20.
- IJsewijn, Jozef & Dirk Sacré 1998, *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies 2: Literary Linguistic Philological and Editorial Questions<sup>2</sup>*, Leuven (Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia 14).
- Krautheimer, Richard 1948, “The Tragic and Comic Scenes of the Renaissance: The Baltimore and Urbino Panels”, *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 33, 327–346.



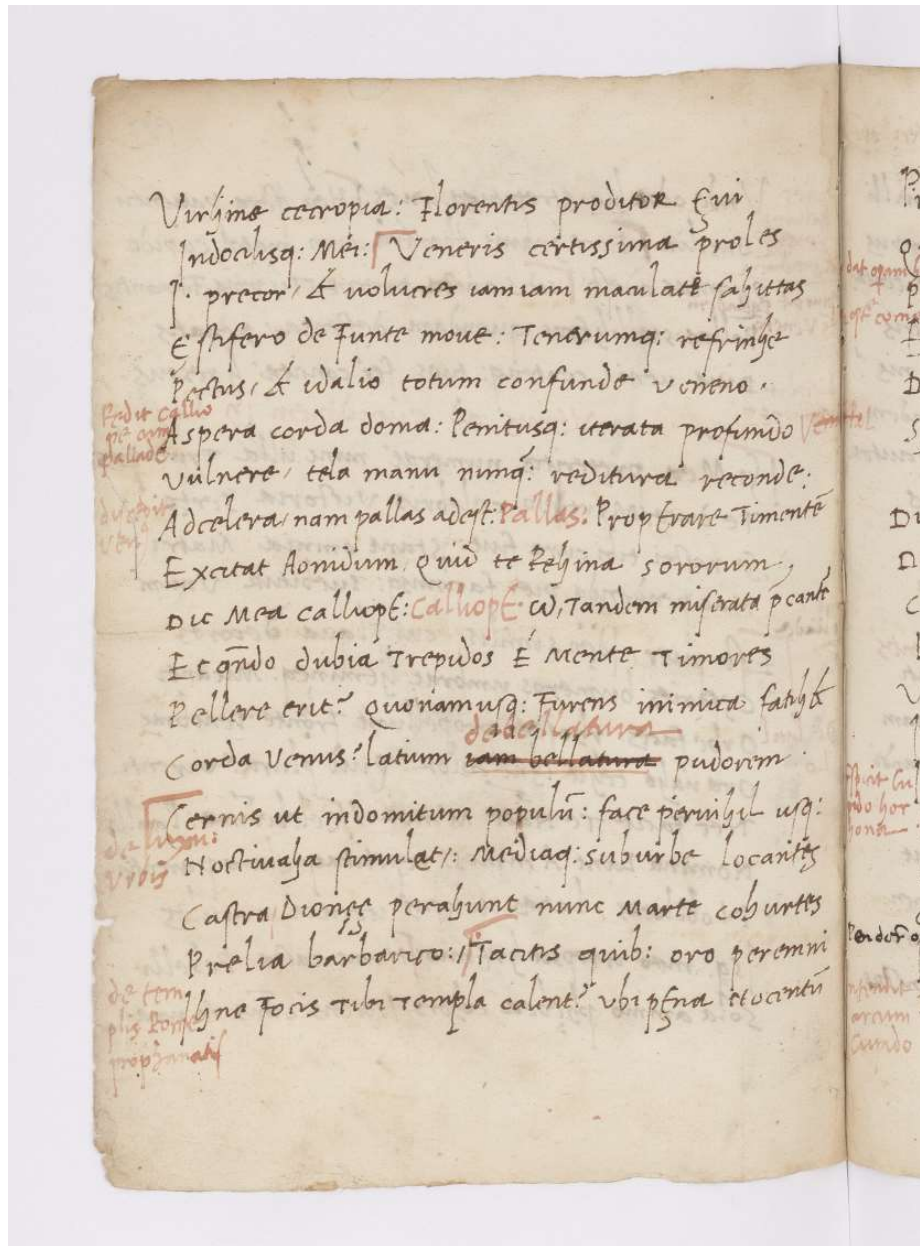
- Licht, Meg 1996, “Elysium: A Prelude to Renaissance Theater”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 49, 1–29.
- Maffei, Raffaele 1544, *Commentariorum Urbanorum [...] octo (et) triginta libri*, Basileae.
- Muecke, Frances 2005, “Pomponio Leto’s later work on Silius Italicus: The evidence of BAV, Vat. Inc. I.4.”, *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 47, 139–156.
- Muzzioli, Giovanni 1959, “Due nuovi codici autografi di Pomponio Leto (contributo allo studio della scrittura umanistica)”, *Italia medioevale ed umanistica* 2, 337–351.
- Nichols, Fred J. 1979, “Conventions of Punctuation in Renaissance Latin Poetry”, *Acta conventus Neo-latini Amstelodamensis: Proceedings of the second International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Amsterdam, 19-24 August 1973*, eds.: Pierre Tuynman et al., München (Humanistische Bibliothek I, 26), 835–850.
- Pade, Marianne, Giancarlo Abbamonte, Concetta Bianca, Julia H. Gaisser, Anna Modigliani, Patricia Osmond & Johann Ramminger (eds.) 2007, *Repertorium Pomponianum*, [www.repertoriumpomponianum.it](http://www.repertoriumpomponianum.it), 10 January 2022.
- Palermino, Richard J. 1980, “The Roman Academy, the Catacombs, and the Conspiracy of 1468”, *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 18, 117–155.
- Panizza, Letizia 2007, “Vernacular Lucian in Renaissance Italy”, *Lucian of Samosata: Vivus et Redivivus*, eds.: Christopher Ligota & Letizia Panizza, London, 71–114.
- [Petrucci, Francesca] 1982, “Colocci, Angelo”, *DBI* 27, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-colocci\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-colocci_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/), 10 January 2022.
- Ricciardi, Roberto 1983, “Cortesi, Paolo”, *DBI* 29, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-cortesi\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-cortesi_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/), 10 January 2022.
- Sabellico, Marcantonio 2008, “The Life of Pomponio Leto”, ed.: Johann Ramminger, Pade, Abbamonte, Bianca, Gaisser, Modigliani, Osmond & Ramminger 2007, [https://www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/textus/sabellicus\\_vita\\_pomponii.htm](https://www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/textus/sabellicus_vita_pomponii.htm), 10 January 2022.
- Sannazaro, Jacopo 2009, *Latin Poetry*, tr.: Michael C.J. Putnam, Cambridge, Mass.
- Saslow, James M. 1986, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society*, New Haven, Conn.

- Tournoy-Thoen, Godelieve 1977, “Le manuscrit 1010 de la Biblioteca de Catalunya et l’humanisme italien à la cour de France vers 1500 : II.”, *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 26, 1–81.
- Ubaladini, Federico 1969, *Vita di Mons. Angelo Colocci*, ed.: Vittorio Fanelli, Città del Vaticano (Studi e Testi 256).
- Vitruvius Pollio, Marcus [1486–16 Aug. 1487], *De architectura*, ed.: Giovanni Antonio Sulpizio, [Romae], GW M51000 & ISTC iv00306000.
- Zabughin, Vladimiro 1910, *Giulio Pomponio Leto: Saggio critico* 1–2, Grottaferrata.

## Plates

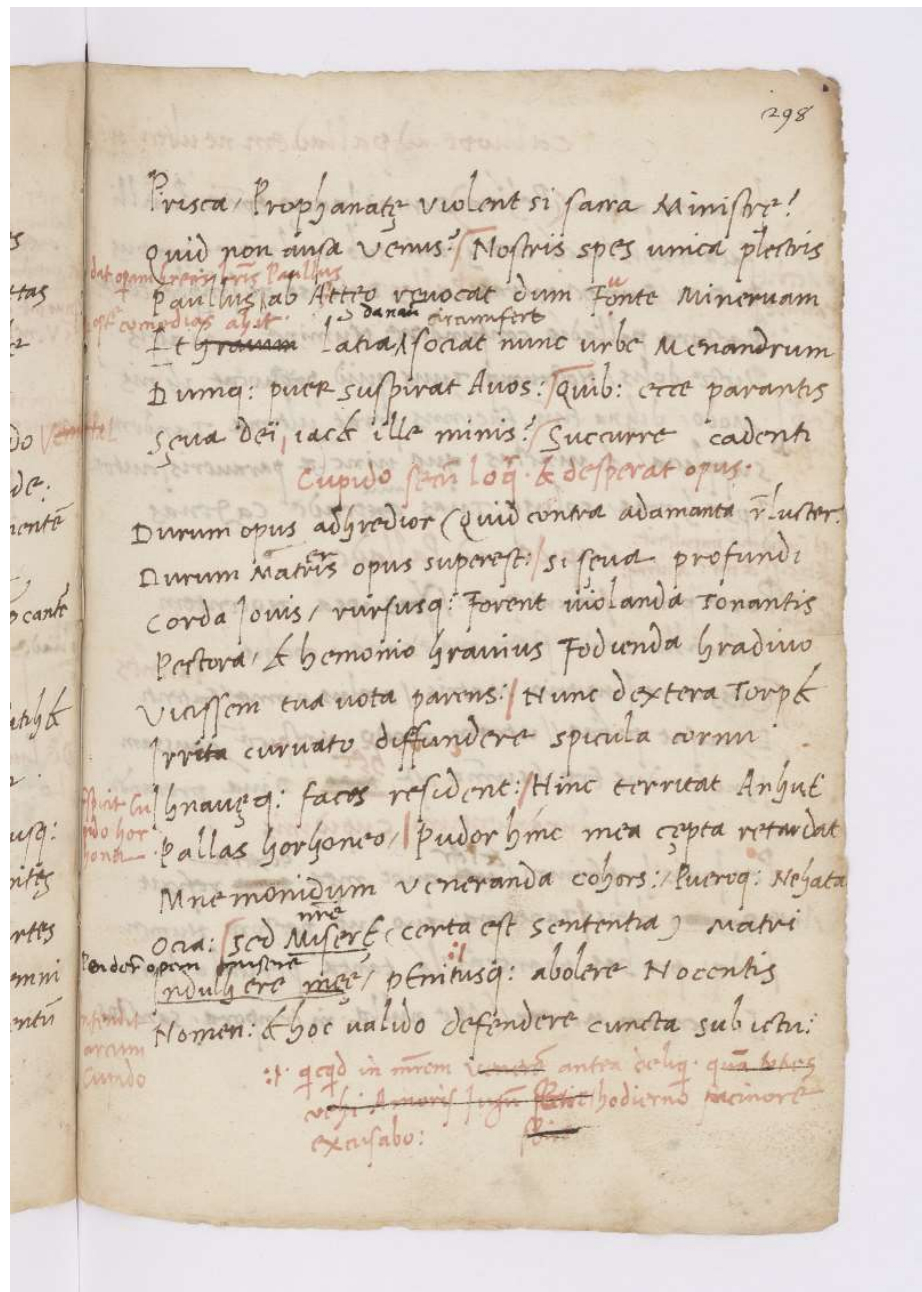


Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 7192, fol. 297r



Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 7192, fol. 297v





Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 7192, fol. 298r



