

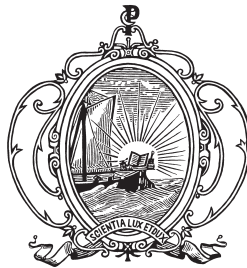
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Table of Contents

ASCETICA

Kate WILKINSON, Baltimore, USA Gender Roles and Mental Reproduction among Virgins	3
David WOODS, Cork, Ireland Rome, Gregoria, and Madaba: A Warning against Sexual Temptation	9
Alexis C. TORRANCE, Princeton, USA The Angel and the Spirit of Repentance: Hermas and the Early Monastic Concept of <i>Metanoia</i>	15
Lois FARAG, St Paul, MN, USA Heroines not Penitents: Saints of Sex Slavery in the <i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> in Roman Law Context	21
Nienke VOS, Amsterdam, The Netherlands Seeing <i>Hesychia</i> : Appeals to the Imagination in the <i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i>	33
Peter TÓTH, London, UK 'In volumine Longobardo': New Light on the Date and Origin of the Latin Translation of St Anthony's Seven Letters.....	47
Kathryn HAGER, Oxford, UK John Cassian: The Devil in the Details.....	59
Liviu BARBU, Cambridge, UK Spiritual Fatherhood in and outside the Desert: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective	65

LITURGICA

T.D. BARNES, Edinburgh, UK The First Christmas in Rome, Antioch and Constantinople	77
Gerard ROUWHORST, University of Tilburg, The Netherlands Eucharistic Meals East of Antioch	85

Anthony GELSTON, Durham, UK A Fragmentary Sixth-Century East Syrian Anaphora	105
Richard BARRETT, Bloomington, Indiana, USA 'Let Us Put Away All Earthly Care': Mysticism and the <i>Cherubikon</i> of the Byzantine Rite	111

ORIENTALIA

B.N. WOLFE, Oxford, UK The Skeireins: A Neglected Text	127
Alberto RIGOLIO, Oxford, UK From 'Sacrifice to the Gods' to the 'Fear of God': Omissions, Additions and Changes in the Syriac Translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius	133
Richard VAGGIONE, OHC, Toronto, Canada Who were Mani's 'Greeks'? 'Greek Bread' in the <i>Cologne Mani Codex</i>	145
Flavia RUANI, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France Between Myth and Exegesis: Ephrem the Syrian on the Manichaean <i>Book of Giants</i>	155
Hannah HUNT, Leeds, UK 'Clothed in the Body': The Garment of Flesh and the Garment of Glory in Syrian Religious Anthropology.....	167
Joby PATERUPARAMPIL, Leuven, Belgium <i>Regula Fidei</i> in Ephrem's <i>Hymni de Fide LXVII</i> and in the <i>Sermones</i> <i>de Fide IV</i>	177
Jeanne-Nicole SAINT-LAURENT, Colchester, VT, USA Humour in Syriac Hagiography	199
Erik W. KOLB, Washington, D.C., USA 'It Is With God's Words That Burn Like a Fire': Monastic Discipline in Shenoute's Monastery	207
Hugo LUNDHAUG, Oslo, Norway Origenism in Fifth-Century Upper Egypt: Shenoute of Atripe and the Nag Hammadi Codices	217

Aho SHEMUNKASHO, Salzburg, Austria Preliminaries to an Edition of the Hagiography of St Aho the Stranger (ܐܚܘ ܫܡܘܢܟܐܫܘ)	229
Peter BRUNS, Bamberg, Germany Von Magiern und Mönchen – Zoroastrische Polemik gegen das Christentum in der armenischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung.....	237
Grigory KESSEL, Marburg, Germany New Manuscript Witnesses to the ‘Second Part’ of Isaac of Nineveh	245

CRITICA ET PHILOLOGICA

Michael PENN, Mount Holyoke College, USA Using Computers to Identify Ancient Scribal Hands: A Preliminary Report	261
Felix ALBRECHT, Göttingen, Germany A Hitherto Unknown Witness to the Apostolic Constitutions in Uncial Script.....	267
Nikolai LIPATOV-CHICHERIN, Nottingham, UK, and St Petersburg, Russia Preaching as the Audience Heard it: Unedited Transcripts of Patristic Homilies	277
Pierre AUGUSTIN, Paris, France Entre codicologie, philologie et histoire: La description de manuscrits parisiens (<i>Codices Chrysostomici Graeci VII</i>)	299
Octavian GORDON, București, Romania Denominational Translation of Patristic Texts into Romanian: Elements for a Patristic Translation Theory	309

‘In volumine Longobardo’ New Light on the Date and Origin of the Latin Translation of St Anthony’s Seven Letters

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ABSTRACT

The seven letters of St Antony of Egypt, after the ground-breaking study of Samuel Rubenson, have been revealed to be one of our earliest sources for Egyptian monastic and ascetic theology of the fourth century. However, the letters, except for some fragments, are not extant in their original Coptic version and the most reliable source we have is a Georgian version and a complete Latin translation of the seven letters. This Latin version, which was first published, in 1516 is usually considered by scholarship as a humanist translation made on the basis of a lost Greek original. This view has remained ever since accepted in later scholarship. A deeper examination of the Latin text and its transmission, however, has revealed a completely different story and the Latin translation turned out to be much earlier than it was previously assumed. It should therefore be regarded as an early composition, made sometimes between the fifth and seventh centuries which, beside the fifth century Syriac translation of Anthony’s first letter, makes it one of the earliest extant witnesses to Antony’s letters.

An early sixteenth century Latin manuscript which once belonged to János Thurzó († 1520), the Hungarian bishop of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), now at the Vatican Library, is a strange collection of patristic epistles.¹ The volume written by three scribes at the beginning of the sixteenth century (around 1514-1516),² after two series of letters, those of Paulinus of Nola (ff. 2r-154v)³ and the

¹ Roma: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Vat. Lat. 524, for a description of the manuscript, see: Marco Vattaso and Pio Franchi de’ Cavalieri, *Codices Vaticani Latini I* (Roma, 1902), 397-9.

² The manuscript was written by three German scribes, two of whom have even left their names in the volume. The first part of the codex (the letters of Paulinus on ff. 2r-154v) was written by Johann Hess in 1515, while the second with the epistles of Ignatius on ff. 155r-160v by his friend Valentin Crautwald. Both were students supported by bishop Thurzó at different Italian universities. See José Ruyschaert, ‘Johann Hess et Valentin Crautwald rédacteurs en 1514-1515 du manuscrit Vat. lat. 524 pour l’évêque de Breslau Johann Turzo’, *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 64 (1984), 397-401.

³ This part of the manuscript consists of a collection of Paulinus’ letters together with those of his correspondents and also some historical excerpts about Paulinus, as Uranius’ epistle on his death and several passages dedicated to him from other works such as Isidore, Gennadius, Augustine, Vincent of Beauvais or the early fifteenth century Marco di Michele.

so-called ‘spurious epistles’ of Ignatius of Antioch (ff. 155r-160v),⁴ contains the seven letters of St Anthony the Great (ff. 161r-170v).⁵

The presence of these letters in an early sixteenth century Central European humanist manuscript seemed a bit surprising in the light of what Samuel Rubenson has written about the Latin version of Anthony’s letters in his extensive survey of their witnesses. In his view the seven letters of Anthony were composed originally in Coptic but the Coptic version, except for some fragments, is not extant any more, but – as early as the early fifth century – the letters were translated into Greek but this translation, except for a short fragment in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, although it was still known to Jerome, has also not come down to us.⁶ However, – according to Rubenson – it was still available in fifteenth century Italy, since a certain Valerio de Sarasio has translated the letters from Greek into Latin in 1475 and this translation was printed in 1516 in Paris.⁷ Therefore it is this edition of the Latin that, together with a sixth-eighth century Georgian translation of the Greek version, remains the only witness of Anthony’s seven letters. For, as Rubenson remarks in a footnote, except for a late and „confused” copy of the printed text of Letter VII, no Latin manuscripts have been found to-date.⁸

The existence of bishop Thurzó’s manuscript, then, obviously challenges this view,⁹ as it closely corresponds to the printed edition of 1516 but it may be

⁴ The collection contains the letters of Ignatius to John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary which are thought to be composed in the medieval West (CPG 1029) and another letter of his to a certain Mary (PG 5, 882-7) which is excerpted from the interpolated collection called *recensio longior* (CPG 1026). This set is followed by a collection of historical excerpts about Ignatius (ff. 157v-160v) consisting of passages borrowed from Jerome, Bernard, a certain Hiero, alleged successor of Ignatius in the see of Antioch (CPG 1035), and another again from the work of Marco di Michele.

⁵ The seven letters of Anthony, copied by the third, anonymous scribe, is followed in the manuscript by Anthony’s short biography borrowed from the *De viris inlustribus* of Jerome on f. 171r.

⁶ Jerome in his *De viris inlustribus* §88 already mentions the seven letters and their Greek translation (*misit ... epistulas septem, quae in Graecam linguam translatae sunt, quarum praecipua est ad Arsenoitas*).

⁷ The first edition: Symphorianus Champerius, *Epistolae Sanctissimorum* (Paris, 1516), ff. 8r-42v which was quite frequently reprinted, for example by Migne (PG 40, 977-1000) and most recently by Anton Erdinger, *Epistolae septem quae sub nomine Antonii abbatis circumferuntur* (Oeniponti, 1871).

⁸ Samuel Rubenson, *The Letters of St Anthony: Monasticism and the Making of a Saint* (Minneapolis, 1995), 19⁴: ‘The only Latin manuscript I have been able to find is a copy of Letter VII in a 16th century ms.: Vat. Lat. 3848, ff. 40v-55r. In spite of its confused text, I have relied on the edition of 1516’.

⁹ See e.g. the studies of Dimitrij Bumazhnov, ‘The Evil Angels in the Vita and the Letters of St. Antony the Great’, *ZAC* 11 (2007), 500-16: 501: ‘The lost Greek text was still available in 1475 and was used by Valerio de Sarasio, who prepared a Latin translation of the corpus’ and Dimitrij Bumazhnov, *Visio mystica im Spannungsfeld frühchristlicher Überlieferungen: die Lehre der sogenannten Antoniusbriefe von der Gottes- und Engelschau und das Problem unterschiedlicher*

earlier than that. Moreover, since Thurzó’s manuscript does not appear to be the autograph of the translator, but rather a copy made from an earlier model, it implies that there should exist one or even more other manuscripts for the Latin text of the letters which could have served as a Vorlage for Thurzó’s codex.

Further Manuscripts of the Latin Translation

Indeed, a systematic survey of humanist manuscripts brought to light a very close parallel for the Hungarian manuscript. This piece, a fine humanist copy made for the Medici library in Florence in the late fifteenth century could possibly be the source of Thurzó’s manuscript.¹⁰ This Florentine volume contains almost the same texts in a very similar sequence as found in Thurzó’s book. Both manuscripts commence with the letters of Paulinus which in the Florentine manuscript are followed by the ‘long recension’ of the epistles of Ignatius (CPG 1028) and the medieval addition to them (CPG 1029) of which only the latter piece was copied by Thurzó’s scribes. These two texts are preceded by the same collection of historical notes on Ignatius in the Florentine copy as in Thurzó’s book.¹¹ The only difference between the two is the presence of Polycarp’s letter to the Philippians (CPG 1040) in the Florentine manuscript. Then come – in the Florentine just like in Thurzó’s volume – the seven letters of Anthony, together with the passage on him from Jerome, and finally a long set of historical excerpts on Paulinus which clerally resemble the notes in Thurzó’s manuscript.¹²

The exact date of this Florentine manuscript cannot be satisfactorily determined, but it is obviously earlier than Thurzó’s copy, as it is already listed in the 1499/1500 catalogue of the library of San Marco in Florence¹³ and its title

spiritueller Traditionen im frühen ägyptischen Mönchtum (Tübingen, 2009), 2: ‘Die aus dem Griechischen (die Vorlage ist verschollen) 1475 angefertigte Übersetzung von Valerio de *Sarasio* wurde von S. Champerius ... gedruckt’ and many others.

¹⁰ Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana: Plut. 23. 20. See its description by Angelo Maria Bandini, *Catalogus codicum Latinorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae* I (Florentiae, 1777), 727-32 and a more recent description by Sebastiano Gentile in *Umanesimo e Padri della Chiesa: manoscritti e incunaboli di testi patristici da Francesco Petrarca al primo Cinquecento* (Roma, [1997]), 216-7.

¹¹ This section of the Florentine manuscript (ff. 190v-192r), similarly to the one in Thurzó’s book, contains excerpts from Jerome, Marco di Michele and Bernard while the passage from Hiero, Ignatius’ successor was transferred to the end of the corpus of the Ignatian letters (ff. 226r-v).

¹² This collection (ff. 253v-260r) contains also Uranius’ letter on the death of Paulinus together with a passages from Gregory’s Dialogues, Gennadius, Isidore, Augustine, Vincent of Beauvais and again Marco di Michele. See n. 3 above.

¹³ Berthold L. Ullmann and Philip A. Stadter, *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence* (Padova, 1972), 145¹⁷⁸.

page bears a type of the Medici arms which suggests that it was executed for Lorenzo Medici between 1470's and 1499.¹⁴

During my search after the possible models of Thurzó's book, however, I managed to find another group of manuscripts which preserve the Latin text of Anthony's seven letters. One of this group is a slightly earlier, finely decorated volume copied between 1475-1480 by a scribe from Vespasiano da Bisticci's workshop¹⁵ for the famous library of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino.¹⁶ This manuscript contains Anthony's letters in a slightly different context. Although, similarly to the manuscripts mentioned above, they follow the same 'longer' corpus of Ignatian letters (CPG 1028 and 1029) accompanied by the same set of historical excerpts (ff. 1r-43v), in the Urbino manuscript the letters of Anthony are followed (on ff. 69v-130r) by the unique text of the so-called 'Palatina' version of the Latin translation of Hermas' *Pastor* (CPG 1052b)¹⁷ and the Sentences of Sixtus (CPG 1115) which are again accompanied by historical excerpts (ff. 130v-140r).

A third copy of the Latin version of Anthony's letters is another Vatican manuscript (Vat. Pal. Lat. 150) which contains the same works in the same order as the Urbino manuscript which actually seems to have been copied from it.¹⁸ For the Vatican manuscript, which came to the pontifical library from the Bibliotheca Palatina in Heidelberg which acquired it from Giannozzo Manetti

¹⁴ See Angela Dillon-Bussi, 'La Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana negli ultimi anni del Quattrocento', in *All'ombra del Lauro: Documenti librari della cultura in eta Laurenziana* (Firenze, 1992), 135-49, 141-2.

¹⁵ For the identification of the scribe as the copyist of Vespasiano's *Vite di Uomini Illustri* and his other products, see Albinia C. de la Mare, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci as producer of classical manuscripts in fifteenth-century Florence', in Claudine A. Chavannes-Mazel and Margaret M. Smith (eds), *Medieval manuscripts of the Latin Classics: Production and Use* (Los Altos Hills, CA, and London, 1996), 166-207, 199.

¹⁶ Roma: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Urb. Lat. 486, the manuscript was described in the catalogue of the collection by Cosimo Stornajolo, *Codices Urbinates Latini I* (Romae, 1902), 495. The volume is already listed in the earliest inventory of Federico's library (Urb. Lat. 1761, ff. 101r-107v) drawn up around 1487 as entry 121 where the whole content of the manuscript, including also the letters of Anthony, is listed, see Cosimo Stornajolo, *Codices Urbinates Graeci I* (Romae, 1895), lxxix.

¹⁷ The *Pastor* was translated into Latin already in the second century and this translation (the so-called 'vulgate') is quite well recorded in the manuscripts up until the late fifteenth century, but there was a much rarer translation of the work, the so-called *Palatina* (first discovered in and named after Vat. Pal. 150) made in the fifth century which is preserved only in this manuscript and the Urbino copy. See Anna Vezzoni, 'Un testimone testuale inedito della versione Palatina del Pastore di Erma', *Studi classici e orientali* 37 (1987), 241-65.

¹⁸ Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: Pal. Lat. 150, for a description see the catalogue by Henry Stevenson and Giovanni Battista Rossi, *Codices Palatini Latini I* (Romae, 1886), 24. The content is – as it was in the Urbino manuscript – the 'longer recension' of the Ignatian letters together with the historical extracts (ff. 1r-60r), Polycarp's letter to the Philadelphians (ff. 60v-65v); the seven letters of Anthony together with the note from Jerome (ff. 66r-93r); the special Latin version of the *Pastor*, called 'Palatina' just because of its attestation in this very manuscript

through the collection of Ulrich Fugger, is apparently much earlier than the Urbino copy.¹⁹ In 1989 Antonio Manfredi detected traces of the erased arms of Cardinal Giordano Orsini († 1438) on the title page of the Vatican manuscript which implies that the volume, before it came into Manetti’s possession, was in the collection of the famous cardinal as early as in the first half of the fifteenth century.²⁰ Fortunately, the will of the cardinal which lists the books he bequeathes to his heirs, drawn up presumably in 1434 and copied again in 1438, mentions this manuscript at the end of the inventory as *Epistole beati Ignatii ad diversos et epistole beati Antonii*.²¹ So it must be dated before 1438 the year of Orsini’s death or even before 1434, the alleged date of his will.²²

The existence of these four manuscripts, especially the Vatican copy mentioned before, which is almost a century older than the first printed edition of Anthony’s letters, obviously implies that the Latin text of the letters is at least a hundred years older than its first publication of 1516. Another, even more significant information we obtain from these manuscripts is that none of them mentions either the date of the translation or Valerio de Sarasio, the alleged translator of the letters. But where could these informations held and repeated by all scholars working on the letters of Anthony derive from if they are not supported by any of the earliest witnesses of the text?

The Date of the Latin Translation

Samuel Rubenson in his 1986 article on the Arabic translation of Anthony’s letters wrote that the Latin translation was made in 1515 just before its first edition in 1516.²³ But in his 1990 book he changed this view and – without any reference to his sources – gave 1475 as the date of the Latin translation which has later been accepted by all subsequent scholarship.²⁴ However, neither in the

(ff. 94r-180r) and the Sentences of Sextus accompanied by the historical extracts on Sextus (ff. 181r-193v).

¹⁹ For the history of the Palatine collection, see Giuseppe Maria Cagni, ‘Codici Vaticani Palatino-Latini appartenuti alla biblioteca di Giannozzo Manetti’, *La Bibliofilia* 62 (1960), 1-43.

²⁰ Antonio Manfredi, ‘Primo umanesimo e teologi antichi’, *Italia medioeva e umanistica* 23 (1989), 155-203, 182-3.

²¹ See the edition of the inventory Francesco Cancellieri, *De Secretariis Basilicae Vaticanae Veteris Ac Novae Libri II* (Romae, 1786), 914.

²² On dating the inventory and the will, see Giuseppe Lombardi and Flavia Onofri, ‘La biblioteca di Giordano Orsini’, in: *Scrittura Biblioteche e Stampa a Roma nel Quattrocento: Aspetti e Problemi* (Città del Vaticano, 1980), 371-82 and Sebastiano Gentile, ‘Traversari e Niccoli, Pico e Ficino: note in margine ad alcuni manoscritti dei Padri’, in Mariarosa Cortesi and Claudio Leonardi (eds), *Tradizione patristica nell’Umanesimo* (Firenze, 2000), 81-118, 91⁴¹.

²³ Samuel Rubenson, ‘The Arabic version of the letters of St. Antony’, in Khalil Samir (ed.), *Actes du deuxième Congrès international d’études arabes chrétiennes* (Rome, 1986), 19-29, 21: ‘The translation was made by Valerio de Sarasio in 1515, and first published in 1516’.

²⁴ S. Rubenson, *The Letters*, 19 for its later reception see n. 9 above.

manuscripts, nor in the edition of Symphorianus and its later sixteenth and seventeenth century reprints, could I find any trace of or reference to either 1475 or 1515 as the date of Sarasio's translation. So the year 1515 as the date of the translation rather seems to be a conjecture based on the year of the first printed edition, while the reference to 1475 appears to be much older. Its first occurrence I could find is from the 1920's²⁵ whence it was taken up by quite a few scholars, including Gérard Garitte²⁶ and Rubenson himself, but its ultimate source has never been mentioned. So I was unable to find the origin of this information, but it obviously doesn't derive from the manuscripts or the early printed editions.

The Translator

The name of the translator, Valerio de Sarasio, is even more puzzling. The only source I could find mentioning Valerio de Sarasio as the translator of the seven letters is the 1516 edition of Symphorianus. Except for this edition, however, the name does not appear in any repertory of humanist translators of Greek texts which – in the light of Symphorianus' praise calling Sarasio 'the best among the well-educated'²⁷ – seems rather surprising. But if we take a closer look at the letters and dedicatories preceeding the text of Anthony's letters in the 1516 edition we may gain information on the origin of Symphorianus' text and on the identity of Valerio de Sarasio, too.

Sarasio's name turns up quite a few times in the numerous prologues and prefaces to the 1516 edition of Anthony's letters. In the long dedication of Symphorianus, and also in the other shorter notices written by his friends, he is generally mentioned as the one who 'translated Anthony's letters from Greek into Latin'.²⁸ Unfortunately, Symphorianus does not say too much about Sarasio and his background. The only information he provides is that Sarasio's translation was brought to him by a certain Hector D'Ailly, canon of St Julien de Brioude, who obtained it from Théodore de Saint-Chamond, abbot of the famous monastery of Saint Antoine-en-Viennois in Southern France,²⁹ to whom

²⁵ It turns up in the prestigious *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et Géographie Ecclésiastiques* 3 (1924), 732.

²⁶ Gérard Garitte, 'À propos des lettres de S. Antoine l'Érmite', *Le Muséon* 52 (1939), 11-31, 17. He repeats it in his edition of Anthony's letters, see Gérard Garitte, *Lettres de saint Antoine. Version géorgienne et fragments coptes* (Louvain, 1955), vi and vii.

²⁷ Symphorianus, *Epistolae* (1516), f. 3r: 'Valerium de Sarasio intra suos lares plurimum educatum.'

²⁸ For example, Symphorianus, *Epistolae* (1516), f. aiv: 'Antonij septem epistolas ... a Valerio Sesario(!) in Latinum e Graeco traductas eloquio.'

²⁹ Théodore was an influential character in the clerical affairs of sixteenth century France and the publication of Anthony's letters initiated by him is even mentioned in his life printed in *Antoniana Historiae Compendium* (Lugduni, 1534), f. cv.

it was sent from the library of Federico da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino where the translation was allegedly made.³⁰ At the very end of the edition, however, there stands another short message written by Symphorianus to Hector D’Ailly acknowledging the acceptance of the manuscript of Anthony’s letters. In this text which, on the basis of its mention of Symphorianus’ sudden joy over obtaining Anthony’s much expected letters,³¹ is presumably the earliest document relating to Symphorianus’ edition there is a reference to Sarasio which is made in a different context – as here Symphorianus mentions him as the one who ‘wrote the letters in Latin’.³² So in the light of this earliest reference to Sarasio and of the fact that Symphorianus’ manuscript came from Urbino where – as observed above – there did exist a copy of Anthony’s letters, the text sent by Théodore to Symphorianus from Urbino via Hector D’Ailly seems to be a simple transcript of the Urbino manuscript which might have been written by the mysterious Valerio de Sarasio. So he probably did not translate the letters into Latin, but only copied them in Latin and it was probably in the hands of Symphorianus who got his informations indirectly, through several intermediaries, that Sarasio was elevated from being a simple scribe to the higher status of a well-educated translator. This would easily explain the absence of his name in the extant manuscripts and also from the otherwise quite well-documented group of Renaissance translators.

The Origin of the Translation

So the Latin translation of the letters of St Anthony is most probably not a Renaissance translation made on the basis of a still extant Greek manuscript by a humanist translator at the end of the fifteenth century but an earlier composition which, for some reason, suddenly surfaced only in the middle of the fifteenth century. The explanation of this curious re-emergence of the Latin text of Anthony’s letters lies in their particular context in the edition and especially in the manuscripts. For in the printed edition as well as in the manuscripts the letters are always accompanied by the so-called longer recension of the Latin translation of the *Corpus Ignatianum* (CPG 1026) possibly made in the eighth century.³³ But an even more characteristic feature of their context is that in the

³⁰ Symphorianus, *Epistolae* (1516), f. 3r: ‘... princeps Federicus Urbinas Italiae decus ... Valerium de Sarasio tanto operi destinavit.’

³¹ Symphorianus, *Epistolae* (1516), f. 46v: ‘Accepi tandem quas diu desideravi litteras, quas sacer Theodorus communicaverat et ... ego avidius expectabam.’

³² Symphorianus, *Epistolae* (1516), f. 46v: ‘Antonii epistolas quae et Aegyptiace scriptas et Graece interpretatas, nuper vero a Valerio Sarasio Latine scriptas.’

³³ In Symphorianus’ edition this is the second set of letters (ff. 52r-89r), while all the manuscripts commence with the Ignatian epistles, see above the descriptions of their contents. For the date of the Latin version of the letters, see Paul Delagarde, *Die lateinischen Übersetzungen des*

two earliest manuscripts the letters of Anthony are preserved between the Ignatian letters and a non-epistolary text, the early fifth-century Latin version of the *Pastor* of Hermas, called *versio Palatina*.³⁴ The common presence of these two texts with the Latin translation of Anthony's letters in the earliest manuscripts seems very important, because both of these surrounding texts were discoveries made by two humanist scholars, Ambrogio Traversari and Niccolò Niccoli, at the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The Latin translation of the Ignatian letters, together with Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians, was found in the library of the Grande Chartreuse in Grenoble by a young friend of Traversari, Tommaso Parentucelli (later Pope Nicholas V) in 1424.³⁵ But it was only four years later that Parentucelli could obtain the manuscript from France and he sent it immediately to Florence where it was copied and Ignatius' letters quickly became very popular and wide-spread throughout Europe.³⁶ The Grenoble manuscript itself, however, which originally preserved the Ignatian corpus and Polycarp's letter has since been irretrievably lost.³⁷

The same is true for the *versio Palatina* of Hermas's *Pastor* as well. This special Latin version of the work was discovered in 1431 by Niccolò Niccoli, together with a treatise by a certain Asterius (CPL 642a), in Verona and it was immediately transcribed and sent to Traversari.³⁸ Curiously, the original manuscript, which must still have been available in the sixteenth century,³⁹ has also disappeared, so the *Palatina*-version of the *Pastor* has come down to us only in the humanist transcriptions preserved in the two manuscripts (Vat. Lat. 150 and its copy Urb. Lat. 486) containing also the letters of Anthony.

This special context of the letters of Anthony in the earlier manuscripts consisting almost exclusively of Latin patristic texts re-discovered by the

Ignatius (Göttingen, 1882), i-viii and F.X. Funk and Franz Diekamp, *Patres Apostolici* II (Tübingen, 1913), xvi-lx.

³⁴ In Vat. Lat. 150 and its possible copy Vat. Urb. Lat. 486. Descriptions of these two manuscripts see above.

³⁵ Pietro Canneti, *Ambrosii Traversarii Latinae Epistulae* (Florentiae, 1759), 372: '... ut episcopi Bononiensis imploraret auxilium ad eruendas ex principali monasterio Ignatii epistolas.'

³⁶ See Parentucelli's letter to Traversari informing him that 'Ex coenobio Carthusiae Gallicanae his diebus accepi unum ex duobus illis voluminibus, quae tamdiu expectabamus, in quo ... sunt et XII epistolae Ignatii, quarum in historia ecclesiastica meminit Caesariensis Eusebius. Est et una Polycarpi ad ecclesiam Philippensem' (Pietro Canneti [1759], 1046).

³⁷ For the history of the discovery of the Ignatian letters, see A. Manfredi, 'Primo umanesimo' (1989), 158-63.

³⁸ See the enthusiastic letter of Traversari congratulating Niccoli for his discovery saying 'Exilivi laetitia quum legerem Pastoris librum abs te repertum et transcriptum, cuius nullam superesse mentionem arbitrabar ... Asterii item episcopi ad Renatum monachum libellum perlubenter legam, quia laudatur abs te.' (P. Canneti, *Traversarii Epistolae* [1759], 352).

³⁹ Asterius' work was preserved in another manuscript also from Verona which was copied by Pellegrino Pellegrini at around 1511 presumably from the same copy which Niccoli has found in 1432, see Silvia Rizzo, 'Nota sulla scoperta del *Liber ad Renatum monachum* di Asterio', *Rivista di filologia classica* 102 (1974), 439-41.

humanists of the early fifteenth century suggests that the Latin translation of Anthony’s letters might also belong to this group of recent discoveries. This would give the reason why they were inserted between two important discoveries of the early fifteenth century and would also explain the sudden appearance of the letters in humanist manuscripts from the mid-fifteenth century onward.

Indeed, in the vast corpus of Traversari’s correspondence we find a letter from Traversari to Niccoli, written in July 1433, in which he describes his visit to a monastery in Padua and mentions the letters of Anthony, too.

I went to Padua and wanted to visit all the important libraries of the town, including that of the Dominicans and also the one of the Franciscans. And I found a Longobard volume which was in the possession of Marianus, a man of considerable secular and theological education. The book contained seven letters of Anthony, those mentioned by Jerome in his *De viris illustribus*, and there was another piece together with them which I have never seen before. The letters are beautiful, full of salutary doctrine, especially the one which is entitled *Letter to those in Arsinoe*. So I immediately asked Marinus, for the sake of our old friendship, to arrange that it be transcribed for me and he has generously promised to do so.⁴⁰

Some weeks later in another letter Traversari expresses his deep indignation over the long delay of the promised copy,⁴¹ while in another message, written six months later, he informs us that the copy has been executed but, instead of being sent directly to him, it was taken to Florence by the Abbot of the Paduan monastery who went there to take part at the preparations of the Council of Florence.⁴² So, although after a long delay, the much expected copy of Anthony’s seven letters must have reached Traversari and Niccoli in Florence.

The Latin translation of the seven letters of Anthony, then – similarly to the Ignatian corpus and the *Pastor* of Hermas – is also a humanist discovery which was made by Traversari in a manuscript found in the private collection of the abbot of the Camaldulian monastery of Santa Maria di Carceri in Padova. The manuscript of Anthony’s letters, so far as its rough description in Traversari’s letter is reliable, must have been an early copy written in a script which

⁴⁰ P. Canneti, *Traversarii Epistolae* (1759), 417: ‘Veni Patavium, ... et placuit visere Bibliothecas celebriores, Praedicatorum, et minorum Fratrum. Offendi in volumine Longobardo, quod erat penes Marinum et bene studiosum et sacrarum litterarum peritum vii Antonii Epistolas, de quibus Hieronymus mentionem in libello de Viris illustribus facit et aliud quoddam opusculum antea nunquam a me inspectum. Epistolae pulchrae sunt, sanaeque doctrinae et illa maxime quae ad Arseniotas inscribitur. Exegi amicitiae iure ut et has et opusculum illud Marinus ipse mihi transcribendum curaret, quod se facturum manu propria gratissime pollicitus est.’

⁴¹ See P. Canneti, *Traversarii Epistolae* (1759), 418: ‘Epistolas Antonii Magni, de quibus scripsi ad te, necdum accepi ex Patavio. Eas mecum feram...’

⁴² P. Canneti, *Traversarii Epistolae* (1759), 422: ‘Epistolas Antonii Magni maxima negligentia Abbatis nostri de Carceribus fecit, ut hactenus desideremus, ex litteris enim mihi nuperrime redditis sum factus certior, simplicem fratrem eas illi dedisse ad me mittendas, illumque profectum esse ad Concilium, nullam fidei, ac pollicitationis suae rationem habentem.’

Traversari defined as ‘Longobard’. Although this is certainly not the most precise palaeographic description, in the light of Silvia Rizzo’s extensive work on the philological vocabulary of the humanists, it can be more or less securely identified as a term usually referring to such early, pre-Carolingian scripts as the Beneventan and Insular minuscules or the cursive of the sixth century.⁴³ So the Latin text of the letters of Anthony seems to have been preserved in a unique, quite early Latin manuscript preserved in the fifteenth century at the Abbazia di Carceri in Padua.

The manuscript, however, – similarly to the original copy of the Ignatian letters and of the *Palatina*-version of the *Pastor* – seems to have been lost or destroyed as I have not been able to find any trace of it so far. Unfortunately, not much is known about the later history of the library of the Paduan Abbazia di Carceri, which after the suppression of the order in 1690 was completely dispersed⁴⁴ but if the manuscript was a part of the Abbot’s private collection, there seems even less hope of finding it again. However, it would perhaps be worth double-checking the monastic libraries of the town, for it might still turn up in some minor not very well investigated Italian monastic collections.

The Date of the Latin Translation

Although in the absence of the early manuscript itself it is very hard to formulate any judgement on the approximate date of the Latin text of the letters of Anthony, on the basis of what we know about the manuscript, it might probably be much earlier than it has been assumed hitherto. The terminus ante quem seems to be the eleventh or tenth century when the alleged ‘Longobard script’ of the Vorlage was still in use. But a more exact dating would only be possible after a systematic collation of the extant manuscripts and a critical edition of the text accompanied by a detailed stylistic and linguistic analysis.

Curiously the Latin translation which is usually described as ‘barbarian’,⁴⁵ ‘ill-made’⁴⁶ or ‘very poor’⁴⁷ seems to exhibit several archaic features which

⁴³ See Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Roma, 1973), 122-6 where she lists four manuscripts mentioned by Traversari as being written in ‘Longobard script’ but only one of the four can be identified as an eleventh century copy of Origen in Florence: Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, S. Marco 610.

⁴⁴ See Giuseppe Zattin, *Il Monastero di S. Maria delle Carceri* (Padua, 1973), 122-5 and Giannino Carraro, ‘I monasteri benedettini della diocesi di Padova’, *Benedictina* 35 (1988), 87-152, 102-3 and 124.

⁴⁵ Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* III (Freiburg, 1923), 80, who speaks about ‘barbarische[s] Latein’.

⁴⁶ Franz Klejna, ‘Antonius und Ammonas. Eine Untersuchung über Herkunft und Eigenart der ältesten Mönchsbriefe’, *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 62 (1938), 309-48, 309, where he calls the Latin translation ‘missglückt’.

⁴⁷ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* III (Utrecht, 1960), 150 describes it as ‘very poor’.

have never been recognized as such by previous scholars. In the first letter, for example, one can identify several instances for the use of earlier biblical versions which occur in Tertullian or Cyprian⁴⁸ or some phrases peculiar to early Christian Latin such as the designation of the Holy Spirit as *deductor*, especially frequent by Tertullian.⁴⁹ The presence of such features goes not only against the idea that the Latin of the letters would derive from a Renaissance translator – as such intentional archaism would be alien from fifteenth century humanist translation practice – but it also suggests an even earlier date for the translation. A period such as the late fifth or seventh century when these biblical and linguistic forms were still being used in Latin Christian literature, but for a more comprehensive and reliable view a detailed textual analysis would be indispensable.

However, even on the basis of the observations outlined above, it seems necessary to dismiss the earlier assumption that the Latin version of the letters of Anthony was a humanist translation by Valerio Sarasio made from a Greek manuscript still available in fifteenth century Italy. The Latin translation of the letters, instead, should be regarded as an early composition, made sometime between the fifth and seventh centuries which, beside the fifth century Syriac translation of Anthony's first letter and the slightly later Georgian version, makes it one of the earliest extant witnesses to Antony's letters.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ As for example the quotation of *Gen.* 12:1 which in the first letter reads as '*Exi de terra tua et de cognatione tua et de domo patris tui et vade in illam terram quam tibi ostendero.*' The quotation in this particular form can only be found in Cyprian's *Ad Quintum* (I 21), in Rufinus' version of Origen's *Commentary on Romans* (Caroline P. Hammond-Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins* [Freiburg im Breisgau, 1997], 291) and by Augustine (*Liber de divinis scripturis*). Or the quotation of *Luke* 21:34 which is given as '*videte ne quando graventur corda vestra*' which seems to be very rare as it turns up only by Tertullian (*Adversus Marcionem* IV 39), the Latin translation of Irenaeus' *Adversus haereses* (IV 36.3) and Cassian (*Collationes* IX 4).

⁴⁹ See the long passage in the first letter about the Holy Spirit where it is explicitly called '*poenitentiae deductor*' and '*ille deductor spiritus*' who '*deducit nos*'. For the Spirit as *deductor*, see: ThLL V/1 (1934), 272, 260-79 and 283, 280-2.

⁵⁰ The paper was written with the support of the Hungarian National Research Fund (OTKA K75693).