

WHO TRANSLATED LUCIAN FOR ERCOLE D'ESTE (VATICAN, CHIGI L.VI.215)?



By Keith Sidwell*

The anonymous Lucian translations in Vatican MS Chigi L.VI.215 have recently been attributed to Nicolaus Leonicensus. But their sixteenth century publisher (a Ferrarese) attributed Lucius siue Asinus to Boiardo, and the rest to Leonicensus, though several texts have no Greek original. Reexamination of the evidence for attribution and the methodology used to argue the pieces were made directly from Greek into Italian suggests rather that Leonicensus' contributions were the selection of texts and Latin versions of them. Boiardo did translate the Asinus, from Leonicensus' Latin, but the rest (which used his versions and Latin texts of apocrypha) must remain anonymous.

The manuscript which is now Vatican Fondo Chigi L.VI.215, but was written in Ferrara, probably between 1477 and 1479, and belonged in the library of Ercole d'Este, contains a series of 37 works by or attributed to Lucian, translated into *volgare* (Italian). The presence of the d'Este arms guarantees its original ownership, but there is no dedicatory material to identify the translator. This MS was in turn clearly the main source also for a series of sixteenth century editions of most of these works (the exceptions being "Lucius, siue Asinus" [Lucius or the Ass] and "Dialogi Meretricii" [Dialogues of the Courtesans] 1 and 11), the first of which was produced in Venice by Niccolò di Aristotile da Ferrara, detto lo Zoppino, in 1525, without the ascription of the versions to anyone. Lo Zoppino had, however, separated off the first piece in the Chigi MS, "Lucius, siue Asinus" (Lucius or the Ass), and printed it in 1523, with an ascription to Matteo Maria Boiardo (emending the text from Poggio's Latin version).

When he came to reprint the selection in 1529, Lo Zoppino added to the title-page the following information: "di greco in uolgare tradotte per M. Nicolo da Lonigo" (translated into Italian from Greek by Niccolò da Lonigo). Nicolaus Leonicensus or Niccolò da Lonigo, the famous professor of Greek and Medicine, had taught in Ferrara from 1464 and died in 1524. Lo Zoppino, however, added no explanation in the 1529 edition to his 1525 prefatory letter

to tell his public how he had obtained this information. The only confirmation of the attribution comes from Paolo Giovio. In his “Elogia virorum litteris illustrium” (Eulogies of famous literary men) Giovio says of Leonicensis: “Dionis ... Historia, et Luciani Dialogi, vernacula loquentes lingua, Herculi latinarum litterarum imperito mire placuerunt” (Dio’s History and the Dialogues of Lucian, speaking in the vernacular, gave amazing pleasure to Ercole, who was ignorant of Latin).¹ But Giovio’s *Elogia* (Eulogies) were first published only in 1546 and Lo Zoppino’s evidence is earlier and different.

The problem, then, is that we know that the “Lucius, siue Asinus” (Lucius or the Ass) version was the same as that in the Chigi manuscript, as were the “Dilettevoli Dialogi” (Delightful Dialogues), but the same printer (a man from Ferrara) attributed one to Boiardo and the others to Leonicensis. Who translated the Lucian into Italian? The puzzle has generally been resolved in favour of Leonicensis, most recently and most rigorously in the monograph of Mariantonietta Acocella. But there are problems (which she acknowledges) and I think a review of the evidence and the methods used to assess it leads to a different answer, one which will better explain the curious doubleness of Lo Zoppino’s ascriptions.

It needs to be said at once that neither of the attributions canvassed by Lo Zoppino is inherently absurd. Matteo Maria Boiardo and Nicolaus Leonicensis were both important figures at Duke Ercole’s court. Boiardo was a translator (from the Latin) of Herodotus (Venice 1533, Giovanni Antonio di Niccolini di Sabbio) and of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* (Education of Cyrus) (B. Estense, G.5.1 – Ital. 416)² and appears (though the version was, according to Decembrio, actually done by his uncle Feltrino) as the translator of Apuleius in a 1518 imprint of Lo Zoppino in which the ending substitutes the close of Lucian’s *Asinus* (Ass) for the Apuleian original.³ And Leonicensis

* It is an enormous pleasure to present Marianne with a paper to celebrate this highly significant birthday. Since we met at an Italian conference, some 30 years ago, we have each grown older always attempting to learn many things (as Solon put it), Marianne about Plutarch’s reception, myself about that of Lucian. I trust this dish of Italian *risotto* will tickle her intellectual taste-buds and remind her of the days of Dolcetto and grappa: χρόνια πολλά!

¹ Giovio 1546, f. 44^r.

² See Gritti 2014.

³ Rossi 1937, 360, with nn. 1 and 6. In Angelo Decembrio’s *Politia litteraria*, Feltrino says: *Quid autem de Apuleio et Asino nostro aureo ... eum ego ipse in vernaculum sermonem transtuli*. The edition (Rossi 1937 360, n. 1) is: *Apulegio volgare, tradotto per el Conte Matteo Maria Boiardo. Stampato in la inclita citta de Venetia adi X de Septembrio MDXVIII. Per io Nicolo daristotile da Ferrara, et Vincenzo de Polo da Venetia mio compagno regnante lo inclito Principe Leonardo Lauredano*. Another edition appeared from their press in 1519. It is possible, of course, that Lo Zoppino had gained access to Boiardo’s papers and found

had indeed been a pioneer in the translation of Greek writings into the vernacular, having produced for Duke Ercole versions of Galen, Procopius and Dio Cassius, as well as now lost translations of Didorus Siculus (once in the Ducal library), Arrian and Appian.⁴

As regards Leonicensis, however, there are two serious objections to his direct involvement in the surviving compilation. First, the MS contains two works which were recent compositions by Italian humanists and had no Greek original. One is commonly ascribed to Lucian in this period, L.B. Alberti's *Intercoenalis* (Dinner Piece), "Virtus dea" (The Goddess Virtue) (Chigi L VI 215, ff. 27^r–28^v; Zoppino 1525, ff. XV^v–XXIII^r); the other is Maffeo Vegio's *Philalethes* (The Lover of Truth: Chigi L VI 215, ff. 285^r–294^v; Zoppino 1525, ff. XXIII^r–XXV^r).⁵ Secondly, the version of "Mortuorum Dialogi" (Dialogues of the Dead) 10.12 (77.25) contained in the Chigi MS (ff. 172^r–175^r) features the alterations made by Giovanni Aurispa in his so-called translation, though the first part of the dialogue appears to have been translated directly from the Greek and is not dependent on him.⁶

Many of the genuine works included in the selection were not available, as far as we know, in Latin versions at this point (e.g. *Amores* [Acts of Love] and "Dialogi meretricii" [Dialogues of the Courtesans]), so the selection and the translation had to have been done in the first instance by a Greek scholar.⁷ I find it very difficult to believe that so distinguished a Hellenist as Leonicensis could have thought the two pseudonymous Latin works were from Lucian's pen: if he were translating from the Greek, as he certainly did with Galen, Procopius and Dio Cassius, he could obviously not have found them in his Greek MS source (and we know he did own a Lucian, now Parisinus Graecus 2957, which incidentally contains all of the works translated in the Chigi MS, but just as obviously has no Greek text of the Latin *apocrypha*).⁸ It is even

both the Apuleius translation and the *Lucius, siue Asinus* version there as well (the latter, then, the draft for the Chigi MS).

⁴ Dapelo & Zoppelli 1998, 108; Fumagalli 1985, 166; Mugnai-Carrara 1979, 177–179; Monfasani 2016, 128.

⁵ The ascription to Lucian is slightly mysterious, because the work appears in many MSS and printed editions correctly attributed. But sixteenth-century vernacular versions followed the lead of the Chigi MS in ignoring Vegio and assigning it to Lucian. See Sidwell 1975, 218 with n. 8 and for details of the vernacular versions, Sidwell forthcoming.

⁶ Dapelo & Zoppelli 1998, 110 with n. 63.

⁷ For details of Latin versions of these pieces, see Sidwell forthcoming.

⁸ Dapelo & Zoppelli 1998, 109 citing Mugnai-Carrara 1991, 113. Dapelo & Zoppelli also doubt that this MS was the one used for the versions, as it belongs to the β tradition, while it looks as though a MS of the γ tradition was used. This does not necessarily rule out Leonicensis, however, since there were other MSS of Lucian in Ferrara (not least one owned by Guarino: Sidwell 1986, 242).

harder to see why, knowing they were fakes, he would present them as though they were not. And in any case, such anti-scholarly behaviour does not appear to be instanced from his extant work, where he was prepared, for example, to criticize Pliny's ignorance directly and against the views of his peers, such as Collenuccio ("De Plinii et aliorum in medicina erroribus" [On the errors of Pliny and others]). We must, therefore, lower unacceptably our evaluation of his honesty and his Greek scholarship if we are to ascribe the Chigi MS directly to his pen. Besides, recent study of Lucianic translation in this period shows that the ascription of these *apocrypha* to Lucian belongs to the compilers of Latin selections in MSS and to the printers of Latin and vernacular collections, but that Greek scholars (with the exception of Aurispa, who was responsible for the most successful of them all) were scrupulous in calling them out as fakes (as Micyllus did in his 1538 Latin *Opera* [Works]).⁹

And yet Acocella defends the attribution to Leoniceno of all the contents of the MS on the basis of the (presumed) dedicatee and the differing ideological atmosphere of the Duke's court. She concludes: "one can therefore presume that, given the non-academic purpose of the vernacular version of Lucian, Leoniceno sometimes favoured criteria other than the strictly philological, satisfying for example requests from Duke Ercole, who, it has been said, loved have a say in the matter of translations."¹⁰ There are two problems here. First, one must dismiss Lo Zoppino's attribution of one of these pieces to Boiardo (which may have come from a source other than the Chigi MS).¹¹ Secondly, one must accept the assumption that the intended audience for the translations had not originally been academic. In fact, however, at this period (and for centuries to come) this was almost always the primary context in which Lucian was encountered, specifically in Greek classes, where the language of discourse was always Latin, while vernacular translation was very rare and confined to individual pieces, usually made from preexisting Latin versions.¹²

⁹ See further Sidwell forthcoming (the *CTC* article on Lucian's translations up to 1600). See Micyllus' 1538 edition of the Latin Lucian (Frankfurt, Egenolphus), f. 40^v for *Mortuorum Dialogi* 10.12 (77.25): *Haec omnia, quae signavi, in Graecis exemplis non habentur*. F. 339^v introducing *Palinurus* (Maffeo Vegio) and *Virtus Dea* (Leon Battista Alberti): *Dialogi sequentes, Luciani non sunt, nec graecè scripti etiam*.

¹⁰ Acocella 2016, 359: "Si può quindi presumere che, data la destinazione non accademica del volgarizzamento di Luciano, il Leoniceno abbia privilegiato a volte criteri diversi da quelli più strettamente filologici, assecondando per esempio eventuali richieste del duca Ercole, che, si è detto, amava aver voce in capitolo nelle traduzioni."

¹¹ See above n. 5.

¹² This applies to most vernacular versions of *Mortuorum Dialogi* 10.12 (77.25), which are clearly based on Aurispa's 'enhanced' version and also to *De non temere credendo calumniae*. Though it is possible that della Fonte's version of the latter piece, dedicated to

I will return to the first point later. On the second, there is in fact evidence in the manuscript of a more academic origin for these versions. It seems reasonable to deduce, at any rate, from the way in which the Chigi MS introduces the “Dialogi Meretricii” (Dialogues of the Courtesans), that the translator connected them with Menander’s comedy (f. 179^r: “Questi sono dialogi amatorii di Luciano, la materia et soggetto di quali e tirata de le Comedie di Menandro” [These are amatory dialogues of Lucian, the material and subject for which have been drawn from the Comedies of Menander]). Menander’s might be a name known to those who could read Plautus and Terence in Latin (not Ercole, then), but this note then rather suggests that the pieces will have been provided originally in the context of classes or lecture courses and were not designed primarily for the pleasure of the court. Just before the translation of *Toxaris*, too, is a note outlining the story of Orestes and Pylades (f. 233) which also smacks of the lecture-hall. The choice of *Amores* (Acts of Love), a dialogue on the subject of homosexual versus heterosexual love, is also, one must say, egregious, but would have suited the interest of a Greek scholar who was also a doctor and the author of “De morbo Gallico” (On the French Disease), to whom a work entitled “Questions problématiques d’amours” (Problematic questions about love affairs) was ascribed (published in French several times in the sixteenth century, e.g. USTC 80207, [Rouen], Nicholas de Bruges, no date). If Leoniceno had a hand in translating these pieces, then, it seems much likelier that he would have made his versions in Latin, for his Greek and medical classes, than worked directly into Italian. Taken along with the appearance of works which had no Greek text attached, this consideration amplifies the argument for suggesting that Chigi is a *secondary* text, compiled by a scholar who knew Latin, but no Greek, and as Dapelo and Zoppelli shrewdly suggest ‘seems to bring us back to the “collecta hinc et illinc” (gathered from here and there) of Bordon [editor of a 1494 collection of Lucian works in Latin] rather than to the work of a unitary author’.¹³

Acocella’s move to excuse Leoniceno’s *cortegiano*-like behaviour in infiltrating into the collection two texts he knew could not possibly be by Lucian (and one, the Aurispa version of “Mortuorum Dialogi” (Dialogues of the Dead) 10.12 [77.25], for which he had a Greek text which did not include those additions) does not, of course, rest on nothing. She sees the evidence of Lo Zoppino’s 1529 edition, and finds it confirmed by Giovio, but she has

Ercole (see below), was made from the Greek, one must suspect that Guarino’s Latin version was the text actually used as its basis. For details, see Sidwell forthcoming (the *CTC* article on Lucian).

¹³ Dapelo & Zoppelli 1998, 107–108.

already been convinced by her and others' analyses of the texts offered by the Chigi MS that the versions were made directly from the Greek: Boiardo did not know Greek, *ergo* Leonicensis did the versions. Strinati, for example, looking only at the *Historia Vera* translation, established by careful collation that the version of the "De Veris Narrationibus" (On the True Narrations [also known as *Historia Vera/True History*]) in Chigi was not based on the standard Latin of Lilio Tifernate (Lilius Castellanus), but stays closer to the Greek, especially in the treatment of names.¹⁴ Acocella's own analysis has confirmed Strinati's judgement, and hence she concludes: "The *True History* in Chigi was translated from the Greek."¹⁵ In his 2006 edition of the two earliest Latin Lucian translations, Berti had already challenged the notion that the Chigi *Timon* was translated from Bertholdus' version, citing a number of passages which appear strongly to suggest that it was based directly on the Greek text.¹⁶ Acocella has now substantiated Berti's conclusions in detail.¹⁷ In her earlier work on Apuleius (2001) she had also used the same method to show that the Chigi *Asinus* was made directly from the Greek (and not from Poggio's existing version).¹⁸ For the other pieces for which Latin translations were available by the date of the Chigi versions, as far as I know, no detailed analysis of this kind has been done. But the sample suggests strongly that if it is now clear that works which did have existing Latin versions were *not* the sources employed by the Chigi translator and that they appear rather to reflect direct knowledge of the Greek text, then *a fortiori* we are likely to find that the same is true also in the case of works for which we know of no earlier versions ("Dialogi Meretricii" [Dialogues of the Courtesans] and *Amores* [Acts of Love], for egregious examples). On the basis of Acocella's findings, then, we might expect to have concluded perfectly reasonably (a) that the pieces in Chigi were translated from Greek and therefore (b) they were done by Leonicensis, the only Greek scholar for whom we have evidence of involvement in the project.

In fact, instead, we need to interrogate further the methodology used by Acocella and others to show that the versions of Chigi were made directly from the Greek. This is, invariably, comparison between existing Latin versions, the Greek text and the Chigi *volgare*. But this procedure does not exclude the possibility that there was an intermediate Latin version, now lost, which more accurately reflected the Greek than those now available. The

¹⁴ Strinati 1994–1995, 14–17.

¹⁵ Acocella, 2016, 214: "*La vera historia* di Chig è tradotta dal greco".

¹⁶ Luciano di Samosata 2006, XXXV–XXXVI.

¹⁷ Acocella, 2016, 363–373.

¹⁸ Acocella, 2001. See also Acocella, 2016, 360–361.

work of Strinati and Acocella on the *Historia Vera*, for instance, might merely demonstrate that *if* the Chigi MS translator was using a Latin text, it was one entirely different from Tifernate’s both in its Greek text and its style. To turn to Acocella’s treatment of *Timon*, it is true enough, that, for example, Bertholdus’ version of *Timon* 52: “τυραννίδι Τιμων ἐπιχειρεῖς *Tyrannus es Timon*” (You are aiming at tyranny, Timon – You are a tyrant Timon) could not have generated in the Chigi MS “Tu vòì, Timon, diventar tyranno” (You wish, Timon, to become a tyrant).¹⁹ But a different Latin version (‘Vis tu, Timon, tyrannus fieri’ You wish, Timon, to become a tyrant) could easily have done so, though we do not now have it for comparison. How, in such a case, would we be able to prove that an unknown Latin version was definitively *not* behind the vernacular? The answer is that we could not and therefore must accept that, given the problem of the inclusion of the *apocrypha*, if Leonicensus were somehow involved, it would have been at a distance: someone else borrowed his preexisting Latin versions, made for academic use, and added the *apocrypha* because he knew no better (or in the case of the Aurispa version, like many others, thought it superior because of its praise of Scipio). It is an uncomfortable thought, of course, that we may have lost a treasure-trove of Latin versions by Leonicensus, but we must in any case accept the fact that on the hypothesis that he translated directly from Greek into *volgare*, we must have lost his original MS, since, unless he behaved more like a courtier than a scholar he cannot have been the compiler of the Chigi MS.

At this point we must return to the issue of Lo Zoppino’s ascriptions. It is important to remember that he was native of Ferrara, even though he worked in Venice. It was his connections there, presumably, which allowed him to find out about the existence of the (now) Chigi MS and have it made available for his own use in the editions, and provided the information on which he based his ascriptions. The ascription of the *Asinus* (Ass) to Boiardo in the 1523 edition might be an error based on confusion between the Apuleius and the Lucianic “Lucius siue Asinus” (Lucius or the Ass). But the version printed is, nonetheless, in major part that of the Chigi MS (corrected from Poggio’s Latin version) and given the almost certain reuse of the Chigi version of *Timon* in Boiardo’s own dramatic adaptation,²⁰ it seems proven that Boiardo had first-hand acquaintance with this volume.²¹ The objection of Acocella

¹⁹ Acocella 2016, 370–371.

²⁰ Rossi 1937, 365–369 sets passages from the Greek text beside their equivalent in the versions of Bertholdus, the Chigi ms., and Boiardo’s *Timone*. See further Fumagalli 1985.

²¹ An expert must still have been around in Ferrara who helped Boiardo when he produced his *Timone* to correct the errors in the Chigi version (ultimately due to the Latin translator’s earlier misunderstandings), and on the view canvassed here that would have been Leonicensus

that the translation into *volgare* (Italian) cannot be Boiardo's because "he was not capable of translating directly from the Greek" is not relevant, if the translator was using a Latin version made by an expert (who was not Poggio).²² When the "Dilettevoli Dialogi" (Delightful Dialogues) were produced, however, from the very same MS in 1525, Lo Zoppino did not offer an ascription. Given that he *did* do so in the 1529 edition, we should infer (a) that he did not ascribe them to Boiardo, because he had been given no evidence of the Scandian's involvement (unlike in the case of "Lucius, siue Asinus' [Lucius or the Ass]) and (b) that one of his informants in Ferrara gave him information between 1525 and 1529 which prompted him to assign them to Leonicensino. This attribution is confirmed by Giovio (the source of whose evidence I discuss below). If both of Lo Zoppino's attributions are accurate, then, his first informant only knew (or Lo Zoppino's researches in Boiardo's papers only proved) that Boiardo had done the version of *Lucius*, but not how, and his second only that Leonicensino was somehow behind the versions. Since, however, Boiardo must have been working from a Latin translation (he did not know Greek) and one different from Poggio's, if Leonicensino was somehow behind all the versions in "Dilettevoli Dialogi" (Delightful Dialogues) (except the *apocrypha*), then he must also have been responsible for the Latin version of "Lucius, siue Asinus' (Lucius or the Ass) used by Boiardo. And if that is true, then *a fortiori* he did not translate the other texts into vernacular, but into Latin. This leaves a large gap, though it shows that, if Boiardo only did one of the Chigi versions, a third party must have been responsible for the project of collecting together the material and allocating it to more than one translator to put the pieces into *volgare* (Italian).

As for Giovio's evidence, he could not have derived his information from Lo Zoppino's edition or one of its later reprints, since those contain no allusion to the original context of the collection. He was, however, familiar with the Este court and did meet Leonicensino in person in 1522 and so could also have obtained this information directly.²³ But it is hard to see why the outsider (Giovio) would have this information to hand in 1546, but the man from Ferrara (Lo Zoppino) with access to the Ducal library could not discover it during Leonicensino's lifetime. The appeal of Lucian to Ercole might have been general knowledge in Ferrara or inferred from Collenuccio's "Specchio d'Esopo" (Aesop's mirror: see further below).²⁴ More likely, then, is that

(though this might in turn suggest that the translation of *Timon* used had not been done by him). Cf. Acocella 2016, 373.

²² Acocella 2016, 373: "non era in grado di tradurre direttamente dal greco".

²³ Acocella 2016, 391–394.

²⁴ On Collenuccio and Lucian, see Sidwell 1975, 254–264.

Giovio was given (like Lo Zoppino) inaccurate information about the provenance of the translations by a Ferrarese who had only vague knowledge of the translation process: he had heard somewhere of the connection between Leonicensis and the versions, but did not know the details. This story, then, was also in outline the one which induced Lo Zoppino to ascribe the versions directly to Leonicensis.

As things stand, we have no evidence on which to determine to whom we owe the compilation. But we might conceive of the process which ends with the Chigi MS as the result of a deliberate plan by a courtier to please the non-Latinate Ercole. There is a strong case to be made for the notion that Duke Ercole had a taste for comic writing. In Pandolfo Collenuccio's "Specchio d'Esopo" (Aesop's Mirror), mentioned above, a dialogue probably written for the Ferrarese court in the early 1490s, Lucian is an interlocutor and his speeches contain allusions to several of the works contained in the Chigi collection.²⁵ Boiardo's *Timone* (Timon), written for Ercole, confirms the reality of this proclivity, though we cannot say for certain precisely when it was composed.²⁶ A courtier who knew the Duke's taste for comic writing, then, as well as his lack of proficiency in Latin, could certainly have conceived the idea of supplying a vernacular Lucian. This compiler, acting on his own initiative, would then have had to gather sufficient material. This would naturally have meant Latin versions, since as yet there were hardly any in the vernacular. It is worth conjecturing that he had been able to make his plan because he knew that there already existed in Ferrara Latin versions of many other attractive works in the Lucianic corpus already produced for his lectures by some Greek teacher in Ferrara (most plausibly Leonicensis). On the scenario envisaged here, then, this compiler borrowed Leonicensis's Latin texts, then set up a group of translators. This included Boiardo.²⁷ For whatever reason, the Leonicensis MS containing the otherwise unrecorded Latin versions which was used for the work later vanished without trace (apparently it is not recorded in the inventory of his library curated after his death by his nephew).²⁸

²⁵ Sidwell, 1975, 82 and 254–264.

²⁶ If it was not staged, it could even be earlier than 1486, the date of the first recorded stage revival of an ancient play – Plautus' *Menaechmi*: Fumagalli 1985, 176–177.

²⁷ The delegation of work of this kind to secretaries is evidenced for Boiardo. See Tissoni Benvenuti 1972, 52. But Boiardo does not fall easily into this category.

²⁸ Now Vicenza, Biblioteca Civica ms. Gonzati 24.10.46. This is not surprising, as the survival of unique copies of such texts is entirely a matter of chance – witness the single copy of *Mortuorum Dialogi* 10.12 (77.25) by Bartolommeo Landi (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Lat. XIV, 214 [4674]ff. 8^r–11^v), which owes its survival to the diligence of a collector of local Veronese memorabilia.

But there is an alternative – and a more likely one – to the hypothesis of an independent compiler, working on his own initiative to anticipate the Duke's tastes. The Duke himself, if he was reading the vernacular works dedicated to him, would have known of Lucian, since Bartolommeo della Fonte had only recently dedicated to him his Italian version of “De non temere credendo calumniae” (On not rashly believing slander). There seems no reason not to believe that he might have suggested the plan for a wider selection himself.²⁹

Indeed, there is one final consideration which tends to support this conjecture, namely the fact that the Chigi MS has no dedication letter. This would not be normal procedure, especially when one considers the high quality of the book itself. In the cases of both Leonicensino and Boiardo, it also cuts across their normal practice, giving another reason to think neither was responsible for the collection. Leonicensino's “De Plinii et aliorum in medicina erroribus” (On the errors in medicine of Pliny and others) was dedicated to Angelus Politianus, his “De morbo Gallico” (On the French Disease) to Ioannes Franciscus Mirandulensis (Giovanfrancesco Pico II, Count of Mirandula [1469–1533]) and his *volgare* (Italian) version of Procopius, “De bello Gothico” (On the Gothic War), to Ercole d'Este (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana ms. A 272 inf., f. 1^r). Boiardo also dedicated his translation of Poggio's adaptation of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (The education of Cyrus) to Ercole d'Este himself, which makes it doubly strange that there should be no preface in the Chigi MS, given that Giovio's evidence suggests the works delighted the Duke.³⁰ For some reason, then, this beautifully presented MS, the payment for which is possibly recorded in the Duke's accounts, and which is stamped with the d'Este insignia, did not advertise its origins or its dedicatee.³¹

Perhaps the most plausible explanation, then, for the production of the collection and the acephalous nature of the manuscript is that Duke himself had asked for the work. No one could then claim the credit because the initiative had come directly from the palace: a commission would usually be accompanied by effusive praise of the patron. Besides this, however, the big translation projects at Ercole's court were designed to serve a wider political

²⁹ Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett der Staatlichen Museen, codex 78.C.26, ff. 1–24^r. See further Trinkaus 1960.

³⁰ This information, might, just possibly, have been derived by conjecture from the manuscript itself, as an inference from the book's presence in the Ducal library and the appearance of the Este arms at its beginning. But I have suggested above that a more likely explanation is that the same misinformation about the origin of the translations was given both to Lo Zoppino and to Giovio by someone in Ferrara.

³¹ Acocella 2016, 38–45.

goal, that of enhancing the prestige of the city outside its boundaries.³² But what wider cultural or political purpose might be served by a public proclamation of Ercole's interest in an author who came from Byzantium burdened with a reputation for atheism and attacks on Christianity, and, more specifically, by this particular collection, which included the lubricious "Dialogi Meretricii" (Dialogues of the Courtesans) and *Amores* (Acts of Love)? It is hard to conceive of a good way to sell the court's interest in *those* works as anything but private indulgence in sexual titillation. The collection was, therefore, I believe, made on the Duke's request, for his private entertainment, and for this reason was deliberately left unequipped with the normal apparatus of courtly eulogy.

Given the various pieces of evidence which must be accommodated, then, the following is the account of the genesis of the Chigi MS that in my view best suits them. (1) The original group of versions were made in Latin by Leoniceno for various of his classes, including a beginners' Greek course (where Lucian's wit and the appeal of his material helped lighten the tedious learning process) and one, perhaps, on the pathology of sexuality. (2) The Duke knew of Lucian at least from Bartolommeo della Fonte's version of "De non temere credendo calumniae" (On not rashly believing slander) (1472), and perhaps also from conversation with others of his learned courtiers, was intrigued, and wanted to have more of his writings in a form accessible to him. (3) The Duke asked a courtier who was either a seasoned translator from Latin into *volgare* himself, or could be trusted to know whom to ask, and who also knew that Leoniceno had made Latin versions for his classes, to get those texts from Leoniceno and translate them – or have them translated, into Italian. (4) During the work the compiler also collected the pseudo-Lucanic modern works with no Greek text because they were accessible – or even because the Duke had been told about and wanted them. (5) The compiler parcelled the work of translation out to an unknown number of individuals, who included Boiardo. (6) The completed collection was handed over to a Ducal scribe to make a presentation copy (now Chigi L.VI.215), without a dedication letter because it was a copy made on the request of the Duke himself for the Duke's personal use and contained questionable material. (7) Lo Zoppino produced in 1523 an edition of the Lucianic *Asinus* (Ass) on its own, claiming it for Boiardo, speaking with inside knowledge. (8) When he came to use the rest of the MS, in his 1525 "Dilettevoli Dialoghi" (Delightful Dialogues), he made no claims about the authorship of the works, but in the 1529 edition attributed them to Leoniceno, because in the meantime someone had given him this information, though the informant clearly did not know or

³² Gritti 2014, 18–19 on Boiardo's Xenophon.

did not make it clear that it was the original Latin versions he had done. (9) This attribution was later taken up and confirmed by Giovio, though not directly from the Zoppino edition (nor from the MS itself). On this hypothesis, we must assume that Giovio's (Ferrarese?) informant had no idea of the double translation process involved and so in giving Giovio the information about Ercole's enjoyment of the collection ascribed the vernacular versions directly to Leoniceno. The bulk of these vernacular versions, then, must continue to be anonymous, though one should accept Boiardo as the translator (from a lost Latin text) of "Lucius, siue Asinus" (Lucius or the Ass) and Leoniceno as the author of the (at least the majority of) intermediary Latin translations of 35 of the 37 items in the Chigi MS.³³

³³ The analysis of Dapelo & Zoppelli 1998, 110–111 suggests that the translator of *Mortuorum Dialogi* 10.12 (77.25) used Leoniceno for the first part and Aurispa for the second.

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