

PREFACE

This volume collects Greek and Latin literary papyri, all of them previously unpublished except for 3 and 16. They are housed in several collections. By far the largest group belongs to the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The Library's acquisitions of papyri began in 1810, when four carbonized rolls from Herculaneum were presented by the Prince of Wales (later to become King George IV), and lasted until 1935, when Lucy E. Hunt, the widow of Arthur S. Hunt, donated her husband's collection to the Library. The history of the Bodleian Library papyrus collection was briefly described by R.W. Hunt in a short essay written for the catalogue of an exhibition organized for the XIV International Congress of Papyrologists (Oxford, 24–31 July 1974),¹ and also by R.P. Salomons in *P.Bodl. I* (1996), pp. VII–IX. A clear picture of the Library's acquisitions can be gleaned from the monumental volumes of the *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, which were compiled by F. Madan and H.H.E. Craster from the end of the nineteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth.

Three of the artifacts are kept in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence. They are part of a group of papyri which Girolamo Vitelli purchased in Cairo since his first visit to Egypt in 1903; they represent the core material of the 'Papiri Laurenziani' on which Professor Rosario Pintaudi has for several decades worked. On the origin of the Florentine collection the reader may consult the documentation published by Pintaudi, *I Papiri Laurenziani*.

This volume also includes fragments housed in the Bibliothèque de Genève, in Columbia University, New York, and in the Institut français d'archéologie orientale, Cairo.

The variety of the institutions holding the papyri is matched by the rich diversity of contents, book formats, and scripts.

The first section of the volume focuses on Homer and *Homerica*. It comprises fragmentary texts illustrating some aspects of the reception of the *Ilias* and the *Odyssey* in Egypt over the centuries. There are fragments of the poems: 1 comes from *Il.* 4, 2 and 3 from *Od.* 17, a book relatively underrepresented among the published papyri from Egypt. There are also examples of the 'textual tools' used in antiquity to

¹ R.W. Hunt, *Note on the History of the Collection of Papyri*, in *Papyri. An Exhibition held at the Bodleian Library and the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford 1974, pp. 7–8.

learn and elucidate the Homeric poems: a commentary (4), some glossaries (5-7), and a writing exercise (8). They once more underscore the pervasive presence of Homer in ancient education.

The second section collects fragments of verse texts. It includes hexameters, both early and late (9-10), composed in different centuries and on different subjects, although they might be fragments of poems dealing with the Theban saga, or with Theban characters. There is a lyric fragment in which episodes of the Odyssean *nekyia* are set in a different metre and language (11); it is an additional fragment of a roll to which previously published fragments in London and Heidelberg belong. There is also a fragmentary anthology containing iambic trimeters from a lost tragedy as well as a number of passages from Philemon (12). Finally, we publish some fragmentary verses, possibly from an Attic (old) comedy (13).

The third section contains prose. It opens with a parchment leaf carrying the remains of a lost historical work on the second Athenian expedition to Sicily (14); the text has much in common with what is known of Philistus' *Sikelika*. Then our attention turns to philosophy and erudition. There is an early Ptolemaic papyrus containing a set of explanatory notes on Plato's *Phaedo* (15), joining previously published fragments in Heidelberg and Munich. Then we publish a short fragment of a Latin grammatical treatise in which rhetorical figures are explained (16). Finally, the volume offers editions of texts relating to yet another aspect of Graeco-Roman culture in Egypt, viz. fascination for oracular practices and astrology. One of the texts is a parchment bifolium with parts of an elaborate work used for lot divination, an early version of the Byzantine *Rhiktologion* (17). Another text contains an astro-nomic table related to the idea of the anthropomorphic quality of zodiacal constellations (18). Two more fragments come from treatises on medical astrology (19-20), in which the study of astral movements was used for understanding illnesses, or for predicting the outcomes of clinical disorders.

The manuscripts carrying these multifarious texts come from a wide geographical area in the Egyptian *chora*, including the Fayum, Al-Hibah, Hermopolis, Deir el-Bahari, and the monastery of Bala'izah, not far from Asyut. They range in date from the early Ptolemaic period to Late Antiquity – a large part of the 'papyrological millennium'.

This collection of texts therefore represents a good example of the 'textual treasure' still awaiting publication, and of the contribution which the study of papyri offers to the reconstruction of our literary heritage.

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Some of the texts published in this volume were studied over several years, but their final editions were prepared within the framework of the Italian PRIN Project "Greek and Latin Literary Papyri from Graeco-Roman and Late Antique Fayum: Texts, Contexts, Readers", directed by Lucio Del Corso. Other texts, namely 1, 4,

6, 10, and 18–20, were edited by Professors A. Benaissa, N. Gonis, R. Hatzilambrou, and Dr M. Zellmann-Rohrer; we thank them all most warmly for contributing to this book.

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And, last but not least, we wish to remember the late Professor John Lundon, a good friend, a kind person, and a learned colleague who long ago spent time and effort studying the Bodleian papyri. This book is a tribute to his memory.

Lucio Del Corso
Raffaele Luiselli