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A new witness to Michael Psellos’ poem “On Medicine” (“De medicina”)*

Abstract: This paper deals with a new fragmentary witness, viz. Library of the Hellenic Parliament (Athens) 84, to Michael Psellos’ didactic poem “On Medicine”. It is divided into three parts: a brief codicological description of the manuscript, a detailed presentation of the various connections between the new witness and the extant manuscripts of the complete work, and a list of peculiar readings of the new witness accompanied by some suggestions for the improvement of the most recent critical edition of the work.

During a recent visit to the Library of the Hellenic Parliament in Athens I had the opportunity to consult one of the few medical manuscripts in the collection, codex no. 84. The manuscript consists of 180 folia and according to the current catalogue dates to the fourteenth century.¹ It contains various medical treatises, some excerpts from larger works such as the Hippocratic Aphorisms and various short medical opuscules and collections of recipes, intermixed with collections of letters, short lexica, and brief theological works. A group of seven folia, viz. ff. 34-40, was not originally part of the codex, but seem to have been inserted in a rebinding at a later stage. It is noteworthy that there is no direct connection between the contents of these folia and any other text in the manuscript; the sole traceable watermark is found on f. 36 and is possibly similar to Mošin & Traljic 6232 (monts), attested in the fourteenth century,² and very similar to Piccard 150005 (dreiberg), attested in 1456.³

Among the contents of the aforementioned folia is an excerpt from Michael Psellos’ long didactic poem On Medicine, which was not taken into account in the most recent edition of the poem by Leendert Westerink.⁴ The poem is written in iambic dodecasyllables and is intended to provide an elementary introduction to medicine for the non-specialist.⁵ The excerpt is acephalous, starting two lines from the bottom of f. 34⁴ and ending in the middle of f. 38⁵. The text corresponds to lines 1-2, 17-19, 21-189, and 191-242 of Westerink’s edition.⁶ It is noteworthy that line 242

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¹ For a physical description and a list of contents of the manuscript, see S. Lampros, Κατάλογος τῶν Κωδίκων τῶν ἐν Αθήναις Βιβλιοθηκών πλήν τῆς Ἐθνικῆς. Α’. Κωδίκες τῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Βουλῆς (ü. 80-85). NE 4 (1907) 225-236, 229-236.
⁴ L. Westerink, Michaelis Pselli Poemata. Leipzig 1992, xx-xxi, does not refer to this manuscript in the discussion of the textual tradition of the work. It is noteworthy that the codex is mentioned in P. Moore, Iter Psellianum. Toronto 2005, 486.
⁶ Michael Psellos, De medicina (WESTERINK, Poemata, 190-233).
coincides with the end of the first part of the work according to the extant manuscripts. There are three extant manuscripts of the complete work: Parisinus gr. 1630 (fourteenth century, ff. 32r-42v), Urbana (Illinois) X.612.36-T.34e (olim. Ricci 4) (fourteenth century, ff. 15v-37v), and Philippicus 1566 (sixteenth century, ff. 38v-52v). According to Westerink, the first two are considered ‘twin’ manuscripts (‘duobus tantum codicibus, iisque geminis, nititur’), while Philippicus 1566 is reported as a direct copy of Parisinus gr. 1630. It is worth reproducing the sigla of Westerink’s edition revised accordingly:

A = Library of the Hellenic Parliament (Athens) 84, ff. 34r-38v
Q = Parisinus gr 1630, ff. 32r-42v
u = Urbana (Illinois) X.612.36-T.34e (olim. Ricci 4), ff. 15v-37v
Boiss = ed. J. F. Boissonade
West = ed. L. Westerink.

The small number of extant manuscripts coupled with the fragmentary version of the text in our new witness make any attempt to draw up a stemma of relationships between A, Q, and u imprudent. However, we can notice the following similarities between A and the other two manuscripts:

I. A has some errors in common with Q:

38 ὑλης u: ὠλη AQ
122 ἀσπάραγος u: ἀσπάραγγος AQ
125 ἔξηραμένων u: ἔξηραμένον AQ
183 σηρικά u: σωρικά AQ

II. A has some variant readings in common with u:

68 γνωρίσειν Q: -ειαν Au
92 ταύτας Q: ταύτα Au
123 γογγύλη Q: στρογγύλη A, -λ(η) u (ante corr.)
175 γ᾽ Q: om. Au
190 lin. habet Q: om. Au
201 δείκνυται Q: δείκνυται Au
216 ἐκβολαίς Q: ἐκβολαίς A, ἐκβόλ( ) u
231 θλίβει Q: τρίβει Au
233 νόει Q: φρόνει Au

III. A has some variant readings in common with both Q and u:

46 ὑπόξανθον Boiss: ὑπόξανθος AQQu
53 πέψις Boiss: σκέψις AQQu
76 ψυχρὰ́ς scr. West: ψυχρὰ́ς AQQu
79 ξηρὰ́ς scr. West: θερμαίς AQQu | σκληραί scr. West: ξηρὰ́ς AQQu
80 ψυχρὰ́ς scr. West: ψυχρὰ́ς AQQu
226 τεψθίς scr. West: τεσθίς AQQu

1 WESTERINK, Poemata, xx-xxi.
2 Michael Psellos, De medicina (ed. J. F. BOISSONADE, Anecdota Graeca. Paris 1829, I 175-232); this edition is based on Q.
The similarities mentioned above suggest some sort of relationship between A and Qu; it should be noted that there is a much closer relationship between A and u than there is between either of them and Q. However, A has a considerable number of readings peculiar to it, which preclude a direct association with Q and u.

IVA. Peculiar readings of A:

1 ἄκουε Qu: μάνθανε A
22 λοιπάν Qu: -τρότον A
30 τὸ Qu: δὲ A
46 μέσος Qu: νέος A
50 ἔξηραμένον Qu: ἔξηραμένον A
54 ἢπτων Qu: ἢπτον A
55 ἄσθενεστέρα Qu: ἄκριβεστέρα A
56 ψόχους Qu: δίψοις A
57 φρόνει Qu: νόει A
60 εἰλικρινεῖς Qu: -ῆς A
65 γνωστικὰ Qu: γνωστικὰ A
66 σφυγὺς Qu: σφιγὺς A
69 σφυγὺς Qu: σφιγὺς A
79 σύβολο Qu: -ον A
85 τι Qu: om. A
105 σκόλυμος Boiss: κόλυμος A: -μβος Qu
107 δυστόμαχος Qu: δυστόμαχος A
116 εἰςιτὸν Qu: ἐσιτὸν A
129 δυστομαχήσεις Qu: δυστομαχήσεις A
136 δύναν Qu: ἕπνοιν A | καταψύχον Q: κατάψυχον u: ἄψυχον A | post καταψύχον
add. τὸ A
139 αὖ Qu: om. A
143 διαβρύπτει West: -βεί A: -ψεῖ u, Q scscr
151 σικώς Qu: σικώς A
155 νεφροῦς Qu: -ά A: -δν u
159 ψυχροποία Qu: ψυχροποία A
189 ὁμιον Qu: ὁμιον A
193 νέα Qu: νέοι A
199 ἐνώθης Qu: -εις A
209 ἅλον Qu: om. A
226 ἀνόστεως Qu: -στεως A
235 βλάβη Qu: -ει A

IVB. Peculiar readings of A which are in agreement with Boissonade’s and Westerink’s correction to the relevant line.

40 ἡ A, scr. West: εἷς Qu
108 κινάρα A, scr. West: κιννάρα Qu
134 σκόρδα A, scr. West: -ώδα Qu
136 ἀποιον A, Boiss: -ιον Qu: -ων u
158 ἡ στάφις τοι Qu, Q (mg.): ἡ ἁσταφίς Qu (textu)
188 δὲ A, add. Boiss: om. Qu
221 χῆµαι A, scr. West (χηµία Gal.): κίχλαι ex κῆχαι Q: ήχαι u
222 σπόνδυλος A, scr. West: -ηλος Qu

IVc. Peculiar readings of A which improve Westerink’s edition (ll. 148, 187, 228):

Ἠ κολοκύνθη καὶ λύει τὴν γαστέρα
148 κολοκύνθη A: -νθα Qu

A gives κολοκύνθη, the most common version of the word, which is also used in Galen’s De Alimentorum Facultatibus,9 Psellos’ source for this passage. It does not affect the metre, since it is the first syllable of the second metron, which is an anceps.

Τρόφιµος ἡ βάλανος εὐσάρκω φύειν,
187 ἢ A: ὁ Qu

Βάλανος is a feminine noun; cf. LSJ, s.v. βάλανος. Psellos’ source is Galen’s De Alimentis Facultatibus,10 in which the noun in question appears in the plural preceded by the feminine plural article αἱ. The use of ἢ rather than ὁ is also required for metrical reasons, as it is the last syllable of the first metron, which should be long.

ὁµοια τούτοις, λειόβατος καὶ βάτος·
228 ὁµοια τούτοις, λειόβατος καὶ βάτος A: ὁµοια τούτοις καὶ λίβατος καὶ βάτος Qu

Westerink queries at the hapax legomenon ‘λίβατος’ in his apparatus criticus with the annotation: ‘quid?’11 A provides λειόβατος, which is actually a synonym of the word βάτος, that is a kind of fish; LSJ, s.v. λειόβατος and βάτος. The new reading is also correct in metrical terms.

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10 Galen, De Alimentorum Facultatibus II 38 (ed. KÜHN, Claudii Galeni VI 621, 4 = ed. WILKINS, Facultés 143, 16).