

**Zeitschrift:** Librarium : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft = revue de la Société Suisse des Bibliophiles  
**Herausgeber:** Schweizerische Bibliophilen-Gesellschaft  
**Band:** 15 (1972)  
**Heft:** 1

**Artikel:** The Library of the Gonzaga of Mantua  
**Autor:** Clough, Cecil H.  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-388167>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.01.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

und Textfaksimile in Großfoliomappe. Zur Geschichte dieser Illustrationen berichtet der *Prestel-Verlag, München*: «In den frühen zwanziger Jahren erhielt auch Josef Hegenbarth den Auftrag zur Illustrierung des Hochwaldes, einen Auftrag, der den Künstler um so mehr gereizt haben muß, da er als einer der sensibelsten Buchillustratoren den Feinheiten Stifterscher Sprach- und Darstellungskunst wohl am besten nachzuspüren vermochte. In seinen subtilen Rötzelzeichnungen gelangen denn auch feinsinnige Landschaftsandeutung, spannungsgeladene Handlung und verklärtes Zeitkolorit zu einer

höchst kunstvollen Synthese. Aus bisher noch nicht geklärten Ursachen kam die Druckausgabe jedoch nicht zustande. Die Originale blieben lange Zeit verschollen und tauchten erst vor kurzem wieder im Kunsthandel auf, wo sie vom Adalbert Stifter-Verlag in München erworben werden konnten. Die vorliegende Publikation erweist, daß die Zeichnungen nichts von ihrer ursprünglichen Frische und unmittelbaren Aussage eingebüßt haben...» Für die vielen Freunde Stifters und Hegenbarths wird dieses bibliophile Mappenwerk sicherlich eine willkommene Bereicherung sein.

CECIL H. CLOUGH (ENGLAND)

## THE LIBRARY OF THE GONZAGA OF MANTUA

Inheritors of a state impoverished by prodigality, and with an income curtailed in consequence of the decline of the Mantuan silk industry and of the Thirty Years' War, Vincenzo II Gonzaga, and Carlo di Nevers, successive dukes of Mantua, were driven to sell between 1627–30 the fabulous Gonzaga collection of paintings. The entire gallery passed to Charles I, king of England, and was essentially a sixteenth-century creation, formed by both patronage and booty. It had been the centre of cultural interest of the Gonzaga, and is testimony of the taste current in the sixteenth century that demanded wholesale investment in a picture gallery<sup>1</sup>. In the two preceding centuries the family's cultural energies had been harnessed to the formation of a splendid library of manuscripts. This latter, though far less famous than the gallery of paintings, bears similar witness to the taste of the age of its formation, which was for literary works above all<sup>2</sup>. The shifts of interest in the literary field within these two centuries—one theme picked out in this brief study—are a fascinating reflection of that cultural movement identified so strikingly by Jacob Burckhardt as the Italian

Renaissance. While the library was largely dispersed at the same time as the gallery, the circumstances were different, and more obscure. Between 18–21 July, 1630, Mantua suffered sack at the hands of imperial troops, and the ducal palace was not spared but seemingly reserved for the pickings of the imperial commander, the Austrian General Aldringen. From a report sent to the emperor, Ferdinand of Austria, on 24 January 1631, it seems that some of the large tapestries and paintings of the palace were still in place, while the smaller and more valuable items had been looted. Much of the library was dispersed, reputedly by public auctions. Jacques Gaffarel, agent of the Cardinal Richelieu, purchased some items for his master, and one of these, a fifteenth-century volume of "Praedictiones" is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris<sup>3</sup>. A portion of the Gonzaga library appears to have been spared, perhaps because it was stored with the Gonzaga archives, possibly in a secret room, and that portion is represented today by at least twenty-five manuscripts. The documents of the archives, likewise saved from destruction and dispersal in the sack, provide reliable

evidence concerning the formation of the library and its nature. The archives contain three inventories of manuscripts and subsequently of printed books, compiled in 1407, 1541 and 1542, of three Gonzaga collectors; a fourth inventory of 1483, of another Gonzaga, Cardinal Francesco, is in the archives of the bishop's palace, Mantua. Some letters and minutes in the files of correspondence in the Gonzaga archives relate to the acquisition of items and to loans, and some of the financial documents record payments made for work on manuscripts for the library<sup>4</sup>. The library, indeed, was just as outstanding as the Gonzaga collection of paintings: a claim this essay seeks to justify in the course of highlighting its formation. The dispersal of the library, and the location of items from it, is obviously a further important adjunct. Strange to say in this context, the location of the library in the ducal palace in Mantua is so entirely forgotten that it is not hinted at in the recent luxurious volume devoted to that palace<sup>5</sup>.

The potential of libraries as a guide to the culture of the Renaissance has recently been emphasized by monographs, including that monumental and pioneer work on the library of the Aragonese kings of Naples by the late Dr. Tammamo De Marinis. This library was essentially formed in the second half of the fifteenth century, while that of Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, was created later and was short-lived. The library of the Visconti and Sforza, dukes of Milan, which included Petrarch's books, had its origins in the fourteenth century, and lasted until 1499<sup>6</sup>. This library covers a period more comparable with that of the Gonzaga, but as yet the Gonzaga library has not been the subject of an exhaustive study. An important step forward, however, was made in the early autumn of 1966, when a fine exhibition of manuscripts that had been owned by the Gonzaga family, was displayed in the Communal Library, Mantua. The exhibition catalogue listed the location for about 100 manuscripts (two in Warsaw were destroyed

in 1944), while referring to others in private but unspecified collections or lost to sight in recent years<sup>7</sup>. This catalogue is the basis of my essay, and to it I can only add a few manuscripts and six printed books of Gonzaga provenance.

The Gonzaga library is one of the most interesting of Renaissance Italy, as it was not the creation of one dedicated collector, as in the case of the more famous Urbino library, essentially formed by Federigo da Montefeltro<sup>8</sup>. Really the library was a constantly fluctuating amalgam of manuscripts and subsequently of printed books, collected by various members of the Gonzaga, that came together in that family's great ducal palace in Mantua. It was created less by wealth than by literary interest over a long period. Its origins appear to be in the late 1320's, and that part that escaped the sack was sold by the last Gonzaga duke in 1707<sup>9</sup>. Hence it remained in the family that formed it for well over three centuries; this is twice as long as the library of Urbino was in the possession of its dukes. As well as being the accumulation of material over a long period of time, and reflecting the personal predilections of individuals in a long line, the library also was linked to the fortunes of a family that obtained a *signoria*, or lordship. From being captains of the City of Mantua, and imperial vicars, in the first half of the fourteenth century, members of the Gonzaga were elevated to the rank of marquis (1433) and finally duke (1530). Family wealth came from the authority as imperial agent, while another source of income was the stipend received as a condottiere captain, which the head of the family frequently enjoyed<sup>10</sup>. From the fifteenth century there was usually one of the family numbered among the College of Cardinals, while others had ample revenues from bishoprics. The material of the library bears witness to these family ramifications. Thus the strength of the library in the fourteenth century lay in its tales of chivalry and warfare—the reading one would expect<sup>11</sup>. In the fifteenth century Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, who died in

1483, formed an extensive library, including beautifully transcribed and illuminated manuscripts of devotional and classical texts, some of which passed into the main Gonzaga library<sup>12</sup>.

On 8 March 1407, after the death of Francesco Gonzaga, an inventory of all his property was compiled, which included a list of manuscripts. There were 392 manuscripts in all, 32 in Italian, 67 in French, and the rest in Latin. The twelve classifications are worth quoting: "Libri sacre scripture" (86 manuscripts), "decretalium" (18), "iuris civilis" (12), "istoriographi" (36), "chronicarum" (21), "poetarum" (24), "philosophiae" (36), "medicine, gramatice et multarum rerum" (17), "astrologie" (28), "libri naturales" (14), "volgari" (33), "in lingua francigena" (67). While the number of manuscripts does not correspond exactly to the number of texts (there being some duplication, and in a few cases a text extending beyond one volume), broadly speaking one can take these figures for comparison. The Visconti of Milan library, which in its 1426 inventory listed 988 manuscripts, included only 64 in French, while that of the Este of Ferrara numbered 57 in French out of a total of 279 in its 1436 inventory<sup>13</sup>. It seems safe to conclude that the Gonzaga library contained the largest number of French texts in Italy until at least the 1430's. Moreover a letter refers to a translation of Livy in French that is not in the 1407 Gonzaga list, and accordingly the Gonzaga library may have lost some texts by the time the inventory was compiled, or, though less likely, the compilation may have been incomplete in terms of the entire library. Of the 67 Gonzaga manuscripts in French, 22 are known today, and these appear to have originated, broadly speaking, in Italy, and have been copied in the late thirteenth or in the fourteenth century. On the evidence of the earliest known reference which is in a letter, a few, at least, of the French manuscripts listed in the 1407 inventory were in the Gonzaga library by 1366. The French texts consisted of medieval romances such as

the *Chanson de Roland*, *Girard de Roussillon* (Fig. 1), *Tristan*, the *Roman de Troie*, and Brunetto Latini's *Trésor*: the popular reading, in fact, of the court circles of northern Italy<sup>14</sup>. It seems that Luigi Gonzaga (1328–1360), the founder of the Gonzaga fortunes, took possession in 1328 of the entire Bonacolsi library, which most likely included two examples of Latini, a *Tristan* and a History of Troy. The acquisition of this library, by the way, was in the nature of booty, and appears to represent the origins of the Gonzaga library<sup>15</sup>.

The contents of a family library in the late middle ages were not static, and manuscripts circulated not merely as victor's booty, but also as dowry portions, for those of religious nature are frequently mentioned in marriage

#### CAPTIONS FOR PAGES 53–56

1 *Girard de Roussillon*, copied in France in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. MS Canon. Misc. 63, f. 47, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Photograph by Oxford University Press; reproduced with the Library's kind permission.

2 Aristotle, "Rhetoric", copied in the first half of the fifteenth century, and formerly in Vittorino da Feltré's library. MS Suppl. grec 1285, f. 1, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. Photograph by the Library's Service photographique, and reproduced with permission.

3 Boccaccio, "Il Filocolo", c. 1463–1464, written by Matteo Contugi, probably illuminated by Pietro Guindaleri of Cremona. MS Canon. Ital. 85, f. 190<sup>v</sup>, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Photograph by Oxford University Press; reproduced with the Library's kind permission.

4 Giovanni Lucido Cataneo, "Epicedion", c. 1478–1484, written by Bartolomeo Sanvito. MS 496, f. 5, Holkham Hall, Norfolk. Photograph by the Courtauld Institute of Art; reproduced by kind permission of the owner, the Earl of Leicester.

5 Giulio Cesare (Bordone) Scaliger, "Elysium", c. 1519–1520. MS II, 154, f. 1, Biblioteca Comunale, Ferrara. Photograph by Walter Segantini, Ferrara; reproduced by kind permission of the Library.

6 Front cover of binding showing arms most likely of Ferdinando I Gonzaga. This binding, c. 1606–1608, is on P.L. Casella, "De Primis Italiae colonis de Tuscorum origine et Republica Fiorentina Elogia..." (Lyons 1606), and owned by John Sparrow, Esq., the Warden of All Souls College, Oxford. Photograph by the Oxford University Press; reproduced with the owner's kind permission.



A elor sunt liguart de rien adi  
 D of ne folchens ne folches adun sign  
 C il greent lor ensignes pbrides fraus in  
 C enen tantes brudes que uos deu  
 L es flos des fraïnes furent fer acen  
 E nsignes decendaz e daucass  
 C onfous abaufres enen por pin  
 D unt ran nobil naissans rexit gnt fi  
 D ire quen na grant aloers gr  
 P et tant est descendus de soz un pi  
 C fchat seuseguere laz un marin  
 V nperun dant rans deluel el fi  
 Q uetia castel en laige entenoh  
 L odois lifuodent punman  
 Q uant le desliert ouquel ahi  
 C rans pule el perron legnt douui  
 D es lres quil acardon maurs  
 A reis la deç nuaile cors de madi  
 e les lres que ahi pris etan  
 Ne se parti des seus ne bons nemai  
 D laz lartier garde des puchem  
 D usen passont laz el pous pteau  
 E sunt cessant mule el bons etan  
 C dans un lidenf leigne lins etan  
 E n lestor qui fu fort frs etampau  
 D elances e desuspes fant ois meriau  
 S que hie le nger pent emt lor etan  
 C an ne porre trare uns ais nouan  
 E rans vint acarte ne som gran

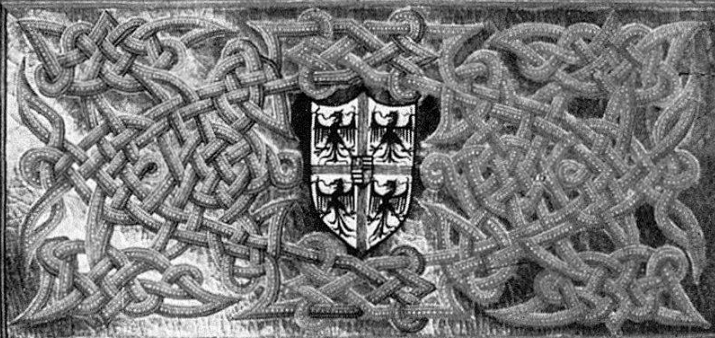
[illegible]



SPERGVIDER  
DNE RRGIE  
ANO IGELI  
SOPRAI PARENTI

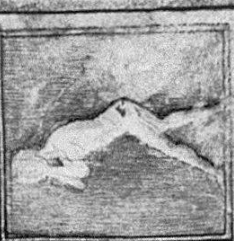
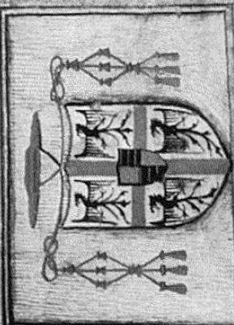
di philecolo per le  
loro operationi. Essi  
per la sua partita ri  
masi con dolore me  
timabile spendeuno  
iloro giorni in lagn  
me et in picechi. la  
superflua malincon  
ia di loro medesimi  
fa loro perdere ogni

te l'humiditade. I rechi uisti con inleuabile aspetto mostano au  
la dignita perduta i piani hanno in aspetto le grumie et





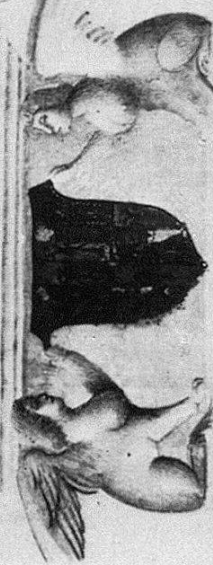
MAXIMVM  
MEDIV TENV  
IT DESIDERIV  
REVERENDISS  
PRAESVLILV  
PRINCEPS VIRI  
MAGNIFICI  
VOS O<sup>3</sup> C<sup>3</sup>TFRI



IVLII CAESARIS BORDONI  
ELYSIVM  
ATESTINVM ADDIVAM  
ISABELLAM  
ESTENSEM MANTVÆ  
MARCHIO

NIS  
S A M

*Hic precum liquidis aures vernis pulas vidis  
Quae gelidos Rhodii lucos et stagna meduse  
Cunctis dum sacra Deo blandita conenti  
Sole sub aestivo Parnassia precubant umbrā  
Hic. Pado rapido sese quae subtrahat. Esu  
Elysion. volucris. suam secat insula flatus.  
Vobis Elysium antediximus insulimus Alysion  
Alysion. Hic decoris redeuntis origo  
Nuncupat. ingreditur auspicio Regina secunda  
Callicope. et paulum postis celestibus armis  
Hunc prius o virgo mecum decurre laborum.*







contracts. The Gonzaga family was no exception, and a list of manuscripts that included legends of the saints and the miracles of Christ, with a psalter decorated with the Gonzaga arms in silver and gilt on the cover, are specified in the dowry of Elisabetta Gonzaga, who married Carlo Malatesta in 1386. The inventory of the property left by Margherita Malatesta, Francesco Gonzaga's second wife, who died in 1399, included a psalter, and several devotional works. One can speculate that a number of the 86 manuscripts listed under "libri sacre scripture" (the largest class) in the 1407 inventory, had entered the library with various brides of the family<sup>16</sup>.

It is interesting that the classification in the inventory of 1407 takes no account of classical texts, which, without regard, are listed with medieval works. Yet Guido Gonzaga (1360–1369), the second imperial vicar and Luigi's successor, had had some contact with Petrarch, and devoted energy, which some thought excessive, to collecting poetry in Italian as well as classical texts. Unfortunately, though, it is not until the time of Guido's two immediate successors that we are able to indicate precise titles of manuscripts and the date of entry of these works into the library. In 1371 under Ludovico Gonzaga (1369–1382) a *Mesue* was copied from an example in a Dominican library in Bologna for the Gonzaga library, and a *Storia dei Goti e dei Longobardi* was acquired for it<sup>17</sup>. Two years later a fine transcript in Gothic script was made of Lucan's *De Bello Pharsalico*, and this text was embellished with five full or near full-page illuminations, as well as with initial miniatures. This manuscript is now in the Trivulziana Library, Milan, and the first folio has the arms of the Gonzaga and the initials F.F., which probably denote Francesco Gonzaga. Certainly the work is listed in the 1407 inventory made at his death, and he probably added it to the library; the arms and initials are an early instance of an *ex libris*. The 1407 inventory listed another Lucan, now lost, which was

perhaps Guido's. The work was a particularly popular one, with its account of warfare of the ancient world. One of the miniatures in the Trivulziana Library's copy depicts Caesar identified by the imperial eagle and Pompey wearing a shirt embroidered with the French lily. This shows how unconscious of classical values was the miniaturist, said to be Nicolò da Bologna. A fine contrast is the Lucan made in 1456 for the Gonzaga library, the signed work of a certain Raffaele, written in fine Italic script, with the beginning of every book illuminated, and where the warriors appear in classical trappings rather than in medieval armour. Raffaele did the work while in prison in Mantua, and probably presented it to the marquis Ludovico Gonzaga in the hope of favour<sup>18</sup>.

Nonetheless humanistic influences, even if faint, are distinguishable in the Gonzaga library as it existed at Francesco's death. The 1407 inventory lists Petrarch's *Africa* which undoubtedly Francesco had purchased. This manuscript is now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Florence, and the work of Rano Ramadello, dated 1398. The *Polistorio* of Nicolò da Ferrara, now in Turin, and in poor condition as a result of the disastrous fire of 1904, was written two years before the Petrarch<sup>19</sup>. All in all it seems that Guido, Ludovico and Francesco were building their family library in much the same way Cosimo de' Medici moulded his some half a century later<sup>20</sup>. Florence undoubtedly led the Renaissance in Greek studies and in emulating classical style in building, but it seems apparent that in terms of libraries the princely collections of the Gonzaga and Visconti were foremost in Italy in the early fifteenth century.

Francesco's son and grandson, Gianfrancesco and Ludovico, ruled the Mantuan state from 1407 until 1478, and consciously moulded their library along humanistic lines. Petrarch himself, of course, in one of his last letters had stressed that a prince should give his protection and society to distinguished scholars<sup>21</sup>; accordingly patronage for the creation of a fine library could be



considered among the highest virtues of a prince. The marquis Gianfrancesco (1407–1444) was responsible for the practical application of humanistic values to his court, and thereby strengthened the hold of such values. In 1423 Vittorino da Feltre was summoned to teach the Gonzaga children. He was a scholar of distinction in Latin, and had been taught Greek soundly by Guarino. His pupils were not merely from the Mantuan court, but included Federigo da Montefeltro and Ottaviano Ubaldini, for instance, who both attended for some years from about 1434, and whose love of manuscripts illustrates convincingly Vittorino's influence. Vittorino had a working library of his own centred on humanistic texts in Latin and in Greek, which was judged a marvel by Ambrosio Traversari, when he saw it in 1433. Vittorino was given charge of the Gonzaga library, and added humanistic texts of the kind judged essential for a humanistic library. For the first time the collection was enriched with texts in Greek such as Xenophon, as well as the newly discovered Latin works, including Cicero, and reliable humanistic texts of Ovid and Vergil. This was done with the full support of the marquis, who, for example, on 21 July 1444, a few months before his death, wrote to Guarino asking him to try and find a reliable and complete text of Josephus in Greek<sup>22</sup>.

A consequence of Vittorino's teaching was that the Gonzaga children came to accept his values, and required texts for their own use. By no means all the manuscripts thus acquired came into the Gonzaga library, but some did. Vittorino came to direct copyists, who were engaged to compile school texts, and he assisted in this task as well as in the transcription of entire works for the Gonzaga library. While some of the manuscripts that entered the library when he was custodian are elegant and richly illuminated, his main concern was to form a sound working library in the humanities. To this end he lent manuscripts from the library, and borrowed; some of those he lent were not returned, and two

proclamations issued in the name of the marquis in 1434 and 1446 (this latter just after Vittorino's death) sought to recover such items<sup>23</sup>. Until 1830 Vittorino's catalogue of his own library was preserved in the Gonzaga archives, when it was sold with other archival documents as waste paper<sup>24</sup>. Though his library was left to a pupil, Jacopo Cassiano of Cremona, a portion appears to have passed into the Gonzaga library, including the Greek text of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (Fig. 2), a *Suidae lexicon* of 1422, and Plutarch's *Vitae parallelae* of 1431. Seemingly some works were carried off as mementoes of their master by some of Vittorino's former pupils<sup>25</sup>.

In this period manuscripts were also acquired for the Gonzaga library in two other ways. In 1414 the property of the Albertini, counts of Prato, and their accomplices in a revolt, was confiscated. This resulted in the Gonzaga library coming into the possession of a *Liber dictaminis*, a Breviary and various religious books, as well as a *Liber de regimine principum*, Petrarch's *Liber de otio religiosorum* and Bonamente Aliprandi's *Cronica* in Italian. The other way in which the library increased was new, and a reflection of Renaissance values. As the fifteenth century progressed there was an increasing number of scholars produced, all eager to find patronage. One way of catching the attention of a likely patron was to dedicate a work of original scholarship to him, and present a copy, in the hope that some benefit would be the reward. At an ever increasing rate scholarly treatises appeared, and the heads of signorile families in particular received dedication copies. In this way Gianfrancesco received quite a number of works including the Latin version of Alberti's *De pictura*, Ognibene da Lonigo's translation from the Greek of Aesop's Fables, and Plutarch's *Vita di Camillo*. The marquis Ludovico (1444–1478) received dedications from Merula, Decembrio and Platina among others. The presentation copy destined for the Gonzaga library of all such dedications is not now known. Many are extant and special presentation

copies of those works dedicated in this way were made almost without exception<sup>28</sup>.

Ludovico was a collector and reader like his father. In 1460, for instance, he wrote asking his wife to send him Lucan, Curtius Rufus's *De Rebus gestis Alexandri Magni*, and Augustine's *De civitate*<sup>27</sup>. But the impetus was slowing, in part because the library was becoming complete by humanistic standards. Perhaps even more important was the shift in taste to the patronage of buildings and works of art<sup>28</sup>. In 1460 Ludovico had the chance to acquire the richest private library of his generation, that of Aurispa, but declined, and this collection was dispersed<sup>29</sup>; however, he did acquire at least two Greek manuscripts from Guarino's library (1470). Ludovico was less interested in a working library than Vittorino's generation had been, and followed the trend of the times in obtaining elaborately decorated manuscripts that were themselves works of art. The Lucan of 1456 already mentioned was one such that was donated, but others, including Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in Greek, copied in 1477, cost the marquis money. The famous calligrapher Matteo Contugi da Volterra entered the service of the marquis in 1463 or a little earlier and remained until 1486, or shortly after, towards the end serving as Mantuan envoy at the court of Urbino. He transcribed a number of texts for the Gonzaga library including Pliny, Plautus and Petrarch. Miniaturists too were in the Gonzaga employ, of whom Pietro Guindaleri of Cremona was the most outstanding. He it was who illuminated the Pliny and in all likelihood the Plautus and Boccaccio's *Il Filocolo* (Fig. 3), done for Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga. He was in service from 1464 until his death in 1506, but like Contugi did not merely produce manuscripts; in 1469 he was designing patterns for brocades<sup>30</sup>. In a letter of 1461 the marquis cancelled an order to Vespasiano da Bisticci, the Florentine bookseller, saying that he had a copyist in Mantua<sup>31</sup>. Thereafter manuscripts appear not to have been purchased from Vespasiano for the Gonzaga library,

and in return Vespasiano omitted mention of the library in his famous *Vite*. The library of Federigo da Montefeltro of Urbino, though, was largely supplied by Vespasiano, and this library is implied by him to have been the finest since classical times<sup>32</sup>. The consequence of this has been that the Urbino library has been over-esteemed, that of the Gonzaga of Mantua forgotten.

Another factor that was to change the nature of libraries was the advent of the books printed by means of moveable type. The first printed in Mantua was Boccaccio's *Decameron* of 1472, apparently with the co-operation of the marquis, in that the editor, Da Micheli, borrowed from the Gonzaga library a manuscript to ensure the accuracy of the published text. Presumably the marquis obtained a copy for his library, perhaps the first printed book to enter it<sup>33</sup>. A wealthy patron like the marquis Ludovico had taken pride in collating manuscripts to produce a more perfect text for his library<sup>34</sup>. A library seems to have been esteemed in part because it enhanced its owner's reputation: the rarer and more fine the texts, the more sumptuously illuminated and bound, the better. Printing produced from 200 to 500 copies of each text at a time, each copy (essentially) reliable. Consequently the much-prized element of exclusivity was destroyed: ownership of such marks of wealth and taste was far more widely available. The possibility for the patron of having the printed text (the early printed book imitated the manuscript in appearance) decorated as he wished did not offer sufficient compensation. Thus it was that the nature of patronage changed: patrons like the Gonzaga turned almost entirely to building, collecting paintings and *objets d'art*.

The third marquis Federico (1478–1484) brought to the library dedication copies including Cataneo's *Epicedion* in Sanvito's beautiful script (Fig. 4). He purchased the library of the humanist scholar Mario Filelfo<sup>35</sup>. His successor Francesco (1484–1519) took little interest in the library, though it did grow in a new direction. There were the inevitable

dedication manuscripts, such as Avanzino's *Rime*, copied out and decorated by the author himself and presented in 1507 to the marquis Francesco<sup>36</sup>. Secondly there was the impetus given to the library by Isabella d'Este (married 1490, died 1539), wife of Francesco, who took refuge from an unhappy marriage in literary activity. She had contact with authors, sought their writings in manuscript or print, and naturally those seeking patronage turned to her with presentation copies. Among such are the *Elysium* of Giulio Cesare (Bordone) Scaliger (Fig. 5), Antonio dei Conti di S. Martino's *Triumphales Opus*, and Ludovico Andreasi's *Elegie*<sup>37</sup>. The inventory of her books compiled in 1541 lists 133 items, of which 65 (including the *Elysium* but not the other two presentation copies) are stated to be manuscripts, while probably most of the rest were printed. Her library had been more extensive, but reduced by loans and gifts, while some of her collection may have been added to the main library prior to 1541<sup>38</sup>. Her *Grotta*, seemingly, had contained two volumes of the works of St. Augustine written on leaves and claimed to be autograph, though these are not in the 1541 inventory; apparently they were elsewhere in the ducal palace and they disappeared from view after the sack of 1630<sup>39</sup>.

Isabella's collection of printed books was exceptional, as she had purchased unique, or very rare examples printed on vellum. The 1541 inventory lists at least four such, some certainly produced by Aldo Manuzio who specialized in providing for discerning and wealthy clients, and whose 1501 edition of Petrarch, for instance, had used type modelled on the characters in manuscript thought to be Petrarch's autograph<sup>40</sup>. The description of the bindings in 1541 is not full and in any case rebinding has made it difficult to establish which of those copies now extant may have belonged to Isabella. The example of Bembo's *Gli Asolani* (Venice, Aldo, 1505) on vellum in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, may well have been hers, and passed to her from her sister-in-law, Lucrezia

Borgia, who as the dedicatee received a presentation copy of the work<sup>41</sup>. Federico II (1519–1540), as one might expect of the son of Isabella, owned books, and represents the twilight of the library's growth. The inventory of his collection written two years after his death lists 179 items, seemingly mostly printed works, though he did receive some presentation works in manuscript. Of these two are known today: Bernardo Tasso's *Epitalamio* (which is found in both the inventory of Isabella and that of her son Federico), and Bonavoglio's *Gonzagium monumentum* (c. 1526) not in either inventory<sup>42</sup>. Already interest had shifted to the art gallery. One finds that in 1559 Isabella's library, kept in a walnut cupboard in the "Camarino" of the old palace, was presented for inspection by the Inquisition, who took away five works. Reading had become a dangerous thing<sup>43</sup>.

What precisely was lost in the 1630 dispersal will probably never be known in any detail. Manuscripts can be identified in terms of their provenance by the Gonzaga arms on the folios (if these have not been mutilated); some of these manuscripts by the way are still in their original binding. In the case of printed books rebinding would have destroyed the stamped coat-of-arms—the most obvious evidence—on bindings thus distinguished. One such binding only is known to me (Fig. 6). It probably belonged to Ferdinando I, duke 1613–1626. The arms are those of a Gonzaga as bishop with the cardinal's hat added later, and the book, a work by Pietro Leone Casella, printed in Lyons in 1606, is the kind that a scholar like Ferdinando would have prized<sup>44</sup>. It may well be one of the books sold at General Aldringen's orders in 1630. It is worth adding here that some printed books were added to the Gonzaga library after the sack, and a part, if not all of these, was consigned to the Accademia Virgiliana of Mantua in 1774 by Count Carlo di Firmian, and most of them are still owned by that institution<sup>45</sup>.

In 1707 the last duke, Ferdinando Carlo Gonzaga, sold in Venice some of the printed



books and the manuscripts that remained of the Gonzaga library. An inventory of the material that was sent by water from Mantua on 13 May 1707 cannot be traced, and this presents a further complication<sup>46</sup>. It is difficult to know if a manuscript, say, that is traced today and clearly of Gonzaga provenance was dispersed in the 1630 sack or in the 1707 sale. The only clue lies in tracing the provenance of the manuscript back as far as possible, and if the trail ends in the early eighteenth century, and perhaps can be tied to Venice, the implications are that it derives from the sale. One large block of Gonzaga manuscripts (17), all French texts, was purchased by the Venetian bibliophile Giambattista Recanati (1687–1734) sometime after 1707, and left by him, with the most prized part of his library to the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, where they are still<sup>47</sup>.

Bernardo Trevisan (1652–1720), another Venetian, acquired other items from the 1707 Gonzaga sale; his library passed essentially to Jacopo Soranzo (1686–1761), and his library was sold in 1780 to the abate Matteo Luigi Canonici (1727–1806), likewise Venetian bibliophiles<sup>48</sup>. In 1817 a portion of the Canonici library was purchased by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, which thus acquired 4 Gonzaga manuscripts, and the copy of another probably once in the library<sup>49</sup>. Apart from some minor sales certainly in 1821 and probably in 1825 the residue of the Canonici library was sold to the Rev. Walter Sneyd (1793–1888), who acquired thereby 3 Gonzaga manuscripts<sup>50</sup>.

The provenance of the other 75 or so manuscripts known today as having been owned by the Gonzaga is more difficult to establish, and the conclusion not always certain. Of Isabella's collection two dedication manuscripts formerly in the Capilupi library of Mantua (which passed to Dr. De Marinis) and Scaliger's *Elysium* now in Ferrara can be traced back no further than to the early eighteenth century in other than Gonzaga possession<sup>51</sup>. On the other hand the two manuscripts in Wolfenbüttel, obtained by the

marquis Ludovico about 1470 from Guarino's library, were taken there in 1654 from the library of the duke of Brunswick, who acquired them at the sack of Mantua<sup>52</sup>. The National Library of Vienna has 3 manuscripts owned by the Gonzaga—all have the *ex-libris* of J. Sambuco, and were bought by him when in Italy about 1562–1563. There is no certainty, but the duke of Mantua may have sold them because he needed money, or he may have given them, as he was anxious to cement friendship with Austria<sup>53</sup>. Finally the manuscripts in Turin were sold by Carlo di Nevers in 1627 to duke Carlo Emanuele of Savoy, who preserved them in the ducal library there. From that library, by order of Vittorio Amedeo II they were donated to the University, now National, Library. The duke of Savoy also bought at least one incunabulum: L. B. Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (Florence, 1485), with notes and designs in the hand of Giulio Romano in it, likewise now in the National Library, Turin<sup>54</sup>.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> G. Coniglio, *I Gonzaga* (Milan 1967), pages 397–430; A. Luzio, *La galleria dei Gonzaga* (Milan 1913); H. Trevor-Roper, *The plunder of the arts in the seventeenth century* (London 1970), pp. 27–36.

<sup>2</sup> Little has been written on the library, but see C. Frati, *Dizionario bio-bibliografico dei bibliotecari...*, ed. A. Sorbelli (Florence 1933), pages 265–266; Dorothy M. Robathan, "Libraries of the Italian Renaissance", *The Medieval Library*, ed. J. Westfall Thompson (New York, 2nd ed., 1957), pp. 533–536; *Mostra dei Codici Gonzagheschi: La Biblioteca dei Gonzaga da Luigi I ad Isabella* (Exhibition, 1966, Biblioteca Comunale, Milan), ed. U. Meroni (Mantua 1966), furnished also with a useful bibliography, pp. 9–14. The essay by W. Hynes, "Book collecting in Italy of the Renaissance", *Library Association Record*, series i, XVI (1914), pp. 526–536 makes no mention of any Gonzaga.

<sup>3</sup> For the sack see S. Brinton, *The Gonzaga...* (London 1927), pp. 229–234; for the library, Meroni, pp. 5, 15 n. 1, 39 n. 2; for Richelieu, *ibid.*, pp. 35 n. 67, 39 n. 2, and E. Bonaffée, *Recherches sur les collections de Richelieu* (Paris 1883).

<sup>4</sup> Meroni, p. 40, for the archives; for the 25 manuscripts not in the sack see this essay at pp. 60–61. Pia Girolla, "La Biblioteca di F. Gonzaga secondo l'inventario del 1407", *Atti e*

*Mem. della R. Accad. Virgiliana di Mantova* XIV-VII (1923), pp. 30-72; Cardinal F. Gonzaga's inventory of 1483 is in the Archivio della Curia Vescovile, Mantua, see Meroni, pp. 22, 54 n. 7, 57 n. 31; the 1541 and 1542 inventories are printed in A. Luzio and R. Renier, "La coltura ... di Isabelle d'Este Gonzaga", *GSLI* XLII (1903), pp. 75-81, 81-87. For the letters and other documents see Meroni, especially pages 15-24; see also note 44.

<sup>5</sup> G. Paccagnini, *Il Palazzo Ducale di Mantova* (Turin 1969).

<sup>6</sup> T. De Marinis, *La Biblioteca dei re d'Aragona* (Milan, 5 vols., 1947-1969); Ilona Berkovits, *Illuminated manuscripts from the library of M. Corvinus* (Budapest 1964); C. Csapodi and Klára Csapodi-Gárdonyi, *Bibliotheca Corviniana ...* (Shannon 1969); E. Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque des Visconti et des Sforza ducs de Milan...* (Paris 1955), and *La Bibliothèque...: Supplément* (Florence/Paris 1969).

<sup>7</sup> The Catalogue, printed in 500 copies only, is cited in note 2 above.

<sup>8</sup> C. H. Clough, "The library of the dukes of Urbino", *Librarium* IX (1966), pp. 101-105, 188-189. Sheila R. Herstein, "The library of Federigo da Montefeltro...", *The Private Library*, series ii, IV (1971) pp. 113-128.

<sup>9</sup> See at pp. 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> For the family see Coniglio, cited note 1, and Brinton, cited note 3. *Mostra Iconografica Gonzaghesca* (Exhibition catalogue, 1937) (Milan 1937).

<sup>11</sup> See at p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Meroni, pp. 59-60, 28 n. 4.

<sup>13</sup> The 1407 inventory is cited in note 4; for the other libraries see Meroni, p. 42 n. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Meroni, pp. 41-42, 46, 73-75.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> Meroni, pp. 43-45.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45, 42.

<sup>18</sup> Caterina Santoro, "La Biblioteca dei Gonzaga e cinque suoi codici nella Trivulziana di Milano", in *Arte, pensiero e cultura a Mantova...: Atti del VI Convegno Internazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento* (Florence 1965), pp. 93-94; Meroni, pp. 75-76, 80.

<sup>19</sup> Meroni, pp. 32, 45 (where the date errs), 76, 28, 76-77. The *Africa* was only generally available after 1396, see A. S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Scipio...* (Baltimore 1962, pp. 174-175).

<sup>20</sup> F. Pintor, "Per la storia della libreria Medicea...", *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica*, III (1960), pp. 190-210.

<sup>21</sup> F. Petrarca, *Epistolae Seniles*, lib. XIV, 1, dated 28 Nov. 1373, addressed to F. di Carrara, lord of Padua; and see E. H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's correspondence* (Padua 1960), p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> Meroni, pp. 47-48, 52; for the letter of 1444 see pp. 18, 47.

<sup>23</sup> W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre...* (Cambridge 1897), pp. 69-70; Meroni, pp. 47, 49-50.

<sup>24</sup> Woodward, p. 72.

<sup>25</sup> Meroni, p. 48 n. 4, 77-78; Woodward, p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> Meroni, pp. 48-49, 58.

<sup>27</sup> Robathan, p. 535.

<sup>28</sup> A. D. Fraser Jenkins, "Cosimo de' Medici's patronage of architecture and the theory of Magnificence", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XXXIII (1970), pp. 162-170.

<sup>29</sup> Meroni, pp. 53, 36 n. 77 and n. 78.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, 61, 80-81.

<sup>31</sup> G. M. Cagni, *Vespasiano da Bisticci...* (Rome 1969), p. 69; Robathan, p. 535.

<sup>32</sup> V. da Bisticci, *Le vite*, ed. A. Greco (Florence 1970), I, p. 386.

<sup>33</sup> Meroni, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Robathan, p. 535, for the marquis Ludovico's editing of Vergil's *Georgics*.

<sup>35</sup> Meroni, pp. 62-64; J. Wardrop, *The script of Humanism* (Oxford 1963), plate 36 illustrates the *Epiciedion*, but does not give the source as Holkham Hall.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Clough, "An autograph chronicle...", *Renaissance and Reformation: A Bulletin*, II, i (Toronto 1965), p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> J. F. C. Richards, "The Elysium of J. C. Bordonius (Scaliger)", *Studies in the Renaissance*, IX (1962), pp. 195-217; Meroni, pp. 33, 84.

<sup>38</sup> The inventory is cited in note 4; Meroni, pp. 65-66.

<sup>39</sup> Meroni, p. 39 n. 2; for other works she once owned not in the 1541 list see note 40.

<sup>40</sup> Luzio and Renier, cited in note 4, *GSLI* XXXIII (1899), pp. 16-20; for printed books on vellum in the 1541 inventory (cited note 4), see numbers 87, 90, 115 (Petrarch), 127 (Bembo's *Gli Asolani*).

<sup>41</sup> C. H. Clough, "Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani* of 1505", *MLN* LXXXIV, 1 (Italian issue) (1969), pp. 35-36. Isabella's copy of the Aldin Vergil (1501) on vellum (not in the 1541 inventory), is in the British Museum, shelf-number C.19.f.7. See D. E. Rhodes, "A book from the Gonzaga Library...", *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVII (1954), pp. 377-380.

<sup>42</sup> Meroni, pp. 36 n. 79, 69; cf. pp. 29, 85 for a *Cronaca...* (c. 1530), now in Pavia and once owned by Federico.

<sup>43</sup> Inventory of 1541, cited note 4, p. 79 under no. 1, 79 and 80.

<sup>44</sup> P. L. Casella (c. 1540-c. 1620), *De Primis Italiae colonis de Tuscorum origine et Republica Florentina Elogia...* (Lyons, H. Cardon, 1606). This is owned by John Sparrow, Esq., Warden of All Souls College, Oxford, to whom I am greatly indebted. The binding is red morocco; the Maltese Cross behind the shield is in black. Ferdinando was created cardinal on 10 December



1607; the arms are those of a bishop, and the cardinal's hat was added later. The owner of the book appears to have been a Prior of the Order of St. John, then a Gonzaga bishop, and then a cardinal. An alternative to Ferdinando is Vincenzo, created cardinal in 1615, and duke 1626–1627, but he was no scholar. There are no shelf marks or other marks of ownership. A book certainly from Cardinal Ferdinando's library (but rebound for King George III) is P. Cortese's [*De Cardinalatu*] (1510), in the British Museum, shelf-number 15.b.4, which contains a letter, dated 3 January, 1609, from Domenico Mainardi, donating the volume to the Cardinal. I am much indebted to Mr. J. Potter, who located this copy. It is worth adding that many printed books were donated to the Gonzaga Library by printers and authors throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see the documents printed from the Archivio Gonzaga by A. Bertolotti, "Varietà...", in *Il Bibliofilo*, from III (1882) to IX (1888).

<sup>45</sup> Meroni, p. 40.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27 n. 1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 30–31; for Recanati see Frati, cited in note 2, pp. 484–485.

<sup>48</sup> J. B. Mitchell, "Trevisan and Soranzo", *The Bodleian Library Record* VIII (1969), pages 125–135; C. H. Clough, "A portion of P. Bembo's *Epistolario*...", *ibid.*, VIII, pp. 26–40.

<sup>49</sup> E. Craster, *History of the Bodleian Library* (Oxford 1952), pp. 13, 20, 91–92. Meroni, p. 37

lists 3 manuscripts; see also O. Pächt and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, II, *Italian School* (Oxford 1970), pp. 40 no. 393, 103–104 no. 1049, while p. 84 no. 829 is missing from Meroni; see also A. Mortara, *Catalogo dei manoscritti italiani ... codici Canonici Italiani* (Oxford 1864), p. 6 no. 5, for the copy of a manuscript dedicated to Cecilia Gonzaga, likewise not in Meroni.

<sup>50</sup> S. de Ricci, *English collectors...* (Cambridge 1930), pp. 136–137; De Ricci does not mention 1825, but see *Catalogue of Western and Hebrew Manuscripts...* (Auction catalogue, Sotheby & Co., London, 6 December 1971), p. 6, lot 5. The 3 Gonzaga manuscripts were sold in 1903, *Catalogue of a ... portion of the library ... of ... W. Sneyd* (Auction catalogue, Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, London, 14–19 December, 1903), pp. 4, lot 20, Aldegati, 11, lot 72, Avanzino, 90, lot 615, Philostrates, cf. Meroni, p. 38, for two of these unlocated now.

<sup>51</sup> Meroni, p. 33 nn. 48, 49; Richards, cited note 37, p. 196 n. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Meroni, p. 36; Brinton, p. 234 (where Lucretius should read Lucian).

<sup>53</sup> Meroni, p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> Meroni, pp. 27–28; Luzio and Renier, cited in note 4, *GSLI XXXIII* (1899), p. 6; the incunabulum, shelf number XV.VII.22, is mentioned in *ibid.*, p. 6 n. 6. It appears unknown to F. Hartt, *Giulio Romano* (New Haven, 2 vols., 1958).

## AN DIE LENAUFREUNDE UND -SAMMLER IN DER SCHWEIZ

Anlässlich einer Tagung des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats der Internationalen Lenau-Gesellschaft, die im Herbst vorigen Jahres in Eisenstadt stattfand, wurde es als bedauerlicher Mangel empfunden, daß unter den Teilnehmern kein Vertreter der Eidgenossenschaft war.

Die Internationale Lenau-Gesellschaft, deren Zweck es ist, das Andenken des Dichters zu pflegen und die Erforschung seines Werks zu fördern, hat anlässlich der erwähnten Tagung beschlossen, Lenaus Werke in einer neuen historisch-kritischen Ausgabe herauszugeben. Dieses Vorhaben ließe es um so wünschenswerter erscheinen, daß auch ein Schweizer dem Wissenschaftlichen Beirat

angehörte, der in der Lage wäre, den Redaktionsstab der Gesamtausgabe über Lenau-Autographen in Schweizer Bibliotheken, Privatsammlungen und Archiven zu informieren. Es soll sich dabei nicht um eine formelle Mitgliedschaft handeln (da nur juristische Personen – Universitäten, Gemeinden, Länder usw. – ordentliche Mitglieder sein können), vielmehr um die persönliche Bereitschaft, den Wissenschaftlichen Beirat und den Redaktionsstab durch Rat und Information zu unterstützen.

Etwaige Meldungen sind erbeten an Herrn Prof. Dr. Nikolaus Britz, Generalsekretär der Internationalen Lenau-Gesellschaft, Lerchenfelderstraße 14, A-1080 Wien VIII.