

Lilian Armstrong, Piero Scapecchi, and Federica Toniolo. *Gli Incunaboli della Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile di Padova: Catalogo e Studi*.

Ed. Pierantonio Gios and Federica Toniolo. *Fonti e Ricerche di Storia Ecclesiastica Padovana* 33. Padua: Istituto per la storia ecclesiastica, 2008. 256 pp. €60.

This book describes the major collection of incunables housed in the seminary founded in Padua by Gregorio Barberino, Bishop of Padua, in 1670. The library also contains important holdings of books printed after 1500 and a distinguished collection of manuscripts. The latter were catalogued in 1998 by a group of scholars including the leading specialist of Venetian manuscript illumination, Giordana Mariani Canova. She also contributes an introduction to the present volume, which is written by a specialist bibliographer, Piero Scapecchi, and two art historians, Lilian Armstrong and Federica Toniolo. This unusual, perhaps even unique, collaborative effort reflects recent interdisciplinary trends in the study of the history of the book. The catalogue includes plentiful illustrations in both color and black-and-white.

Scapecchi wrote 455 short descriptive entries for a total of 483 books. (The numerical discrepancy is because there are a number of duplicates.) For about sixty of the books Lilian Armstrong contributed a paragraph on the woodcuts. Scapecchi has also written a chapter on the history of the library. This chronicles the circumstances of the foundation of the Seminario and discusses the donations to it. The largest benefaction was the bequest of Count Alfonso Alvarotti (1687–1720). Further volumes reached the library as a result of the suppression of certain religious orders at the end of the sixteenth century and in the Napoleonic period. The bibliography and the footnotes will be invaluable for anyone interested in the libraries of the numerous religious institutions in Padua. The chapter is also an important contribution to the intellectual history of Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Scapecchi shows how the contents of the library reflect contemporary political and religious developments in Italy. He also stresses how closely connected the Seminario's library was to the University of Padua. Professors and alumni of the University not only used it, they were frequently benefactors giving or bequeathing rare volumes.

Fresh light is shed by the chapters of the two art historians on another aspect of cultural history, the effects of the new technology of printing on the history of the book. Federica Toniolo discusses the incunables with illumination inserted by hand and provides sixty-three catalogue descriptions. She has published extensively on illumination in the Veneto and in the wider area and was a major contributor to two important exhibitions, *La miniatura a Ferrara* (1998) and *La miniatura a Padova* (1999). They included many hand-illuminated printed books as well as manuscripts. Among the major illuminators represented in the Seminario library is the "Maestro dei Putti" (cat. 348). His magnificent frontispiece and initials in a copy of Jenson's 1472 Pliny, *Natural History*, are in his signature style of vivid color wash drawings. Two books (cat. 448 and 451) have illumination of exceptional quality, whose attribution is disputed between the two most talented illuminators in Venice in the 1490s, Benedetto Bordone and the anonymous Second Grifo Master. Another important and prolific artist is the Maestro di Pico della Mirandola (cat. 244,

etc.). Artists from outside the Northeast are the Master of the Abbey Birago Hours (cat. 210) active in Parma and elsewhere, and Boccardino il vecchio (cat. 217), a leading Florentine illuminator, to whom illumination in a copy of the famous Greek Homer of 1487/88 is attributed. Recent research showing just how common fine-quality hand illumination of incunables was in Italy is thus confirmed by the Seminario's collection.

There has also been new work on the transition from illumination by hand to woodcut decoration and illustration. Lilian Armstrong, as her collected studies published in 2003 show, has been a major contributor to the study of Venetian illuminators in both manuscripts and printed books. In particular she has extended the pioneer work of A. M. Hind and of Victor Masséna, Prince d'Essling, on early woodcuts in Venetian incunables. Her chapter is a valuable up-to-date survey of the latest research by herself and other scholars such as Suzy Marcon of the Biblioteca Marciana and Helena Szépe of Florida State University. The process from the artist's design to the cutting of the woodblocks by specialists, who varied in their skill, complicates attribution. Armstrong has convincingly attributed designs for woodblocks with white-vine motifs and putti inserted as framing borders to the Putti Master. Frequently hand-colored, they appear in books printed by various printers so were probably retained by the designer. Examples exist from the early 1470s. Armstrong has also shown that from the 1490 onwards the Pico Master was the designer of complex woodcut architectural frontispieces (cats. 104, etc.). Direct comparison of the hand-painted and woodcut decoration and illustration by this artist is therefore possible from examples in the library. Another illuminator at work in both media, and who is well represented in the catalogue, has been named by Armstrong the Master of the Rimini Ovid. A. M. Hind, by grouping such woodcuts under the blanket term "popular designer," does not do justice to their inventiveness and skill in vigorous narrative. The library also includes examples of late fifteenth-century woodcuts by the "classical designer," as named by A. M. Hind. Professor Armstrong attributes a number of these woodcuts to Benedetto Bordon. Significantly the Seminario library contains a copy of Jerome's *Commentary on the Psalter* (cat. 208), with a woodcut in this style, but not the most famous example of all, the *Hypnerotomachia Polifili*, printed by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1499. Its text was evidently not thought suitable for the young seminarians.

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