

STRUCTURE

Material: Thin parchment, smooth (perhaps polished) on the skin-side (skin, hair-hair), 256 × 171mm. Fols: iii + 96; the opening flyleaf is paper, provided with the present binding; the following bifolium (fol. 1-2) is original parchment, with fol. 2^v rewashed, its erased text being in the volgare, written in a cancellaresca hand.

Collation: Quires of eight: i⁸ with one added before first as fol. 3 (its conjoint a thin stub before it) ii-xi⁸ xii⁸ with seventh removed before fol. 98. Simple horizontal catchwords bottom centre, 20mm below text. One set of leaf signatures at very bottom right, the first signs of then being in the third quire, continuing to the quire vi (fol. 20 = 'ajj' [sic], fol. 29 = 'bii', fol. 38 = 'cijj', fol. 47 = 'di[v]'), after which there is a hiatus with the series taken up again in the quire xi (fol. 84 = 'eii' [sic], fol. 92 = 'fi'). This allows the possibility that item [3] was an insertion into the original plan of the volume but, if so, it was introduced early in the process of production, on the same stock of parchment, ruled to the same dimensions.

Layout: Throughout = (32 + [160] + 64) × (26 + 6 + [84] + 5 + 50)mm. Double vertical bounding lines, dry-ruled on the skin-side (sometimes leaving a grayish mark), the inner ones restraining the horizontals which are drawn in pink. A few signs of prickholes in line with the verticals at the very foot of the page. 29 long lines, below top line.

Script: The text is written throughout in one small, thin upright humanist cursive bookhand, with little space between the lines; it becomes smaller as the manuscript progresses. Notable letter-forms include the **a** which is straight-backed with a prominent curve above the small bowl, the **g** with two bowls connected by a short diagonal neck, the lower bowl a little to the left of the upper, and the final **s** which is insistently short, its lower curve larger than its upper. Ascenders tend to have a short horizontal approach stroke; **st** and **ct** ligatures are used, with the latter allowing substantial space between the letters. The diphthong tends to be marked with a small loop on the line before **e**. The scribe has been identified by A. C. de la Mare as Gabriel Brepia, who signed *MILAN: BIBLIOTECA AMBROSIANA, MS. T. 7 sup. [*Colophons*, no. 4704] (a scribe to be distinguished from the Gabriele Brepia who signed *MILAN: BIBLIOTECA AMBROSIANA, MS. C. 227 inf.). To Brepia, de la Mare also attributes *OXFORD: BODLEIAN, MS. Rawl. G. 68; *NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY, BEINECKE LIBRARY, MS. Beinecke 169; *TURIN: BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE, MS. H. II. 6. The images available of MS. Rawl. G. 68 show some differences of letter-forms (the long **s** descends below the line, for example) but strong similarities of aspect which give confidence in the identification.

In addition to the scribe's work, the author of the texts included here marks his presence. Decembrio shows his editorial control by adding a range of marginalia in three different inks. It appears that he went through the manuscript correcting it in brown (fol. 5^v, 7^v, 8^v, 12^v, 13^v, 17, 17^v, 18-19, 23, 24^v, 26^v, 30, 31, 32^v, 36, 38^v, 40^v, 50^v, 52, 60, 64, 64^v, 70^v, 73^v, 86^v, 93^v). He then added the rubricated contents list opposite the first recto (at fol. 10^v) and, in the same ink, annotated item [1] densely, drawing attention to its subject matter (fol. 5^v, 7-9, 10-11, 12-15^v, 16^v, 17^v-20^v, 22) and also added two notes to item [3] in the same ink (fol. 72^v, 73). He also added some annotations in items [2] and [4] in gray ink (fol. 27^v, 40, 47, 53, 87^v, 91), which he also used for some further corrections (fol. 40, 47, 49, 50, 76^v, 77, 77^v, 85).

Illumination: The first text opens with an illumination the width of the written space and occupying its top twelve lines. Within a gold border and on a rich blue background, it depicts the d'Este arms held aloft by two angels, dressed in white and with pied green-red wings; between their heads and the arms are the initials 'B' and 'O'. Cynthia Pyle perceptively notes that this illumination has a parallel in +BAV, MS. Urb. lat. 276 (Decembrio, *De natura animalium*; p.: Ludovico Gonzago, 1460), and attributes the work to the Master of Ippolita Sforza, on whom see Zanichelli's entry in Bollati ed., *Dizionario*. Immediately below the illumination sits the three-line title (by the scribe in purple), after which the one line providing the address to Borso d'Este is written in gold, seemingly over an erasure, and possibly not in the hand of the scribe: that is to say, it probably replaces an address to the duke in a simpler colour, which was removed and replaced at the time of the illuminating.

Each item opens with a *bianchi girari* initial in Milanese style, the letter painted in gold with a yellow outline to create depth, on a background of light green, red and blue. A similar style but without the yellow and with a deeper palette appears in BAV, MS. Urb. lat. 276.

Binding: Plain cream parchment over pasteboards, sewn on three thongs (s. xviii). At top of the spine: 'P. Candidi Opuscula' (Italy, s. xviii). There is evidence of the previous binding: at both the recto of fol. 1 and the verso of fol. 98 show signs of having been previously pastedowns. Green marks at the centre of the very top and bottom of fol. 1 and fol. 98, and marks on both near the fore-edge demonstrate that the earlier binding was held closed with four clips and clasps. A note by Nicholas Pickwood (20 March 1996) describes the bindings, suggesting the earlier binding was of goat leather over beech wood boards.
2^o fo.: [fol. 5] urbe reperiri posse

CONTENTS

Fol. 1-2: originally, a pastedown and flyleaf, blank apart from a contents list provided by Decembrio at top left of fol. 1^v.

Fol. 3: blank but ruled

Fol. 3^v: contents list by Decembrio in rubricated capitals:

Opuscula P. Candidi que in hoc codice continentur et illustrissimo principi domino Borso duci Mtine inscribuntur | De laudibus urbis ... epitoma ad regem.

The list occupies eight lines at the top of the page, with the rest blank.

[1] fol. 4-22^v: Pier Candido Decembrio, *De laudibus urbis Mediolanensis*:

[in purple:] P. Candidi de laudibus Mediolanensium in comparationem florentinae urbis panegyricus incipit feliciter [in gold, perhaps not by the scribe:] Ad Illustrem Dominum Borsum Ducem Mtine | Admirabilis quaedam res est eloquentia princeps ... postquam spes defecerat reliquisse.

P. C. Decembrio, *Opuscula historica*, ed. A Butti et al., 9 vols [RIS, xx] (Bologna, 1925-58), 1014-25, without reference to this copy.

[2] fol. 22^v-55: Pier Candido Decembrio, *Vita Philippi Mariae Vicecomitis*:

Vita Philippi Mariae tertii Ligurum ducis a P. Candido edita feliciter | Vicecomitum originem antiquam sane et praeclaram ... felici omine libertatem assumpserunt.

Decembrio, *Opuscula*, 3-438.

[3] fol. 55-83: Pier Candido Decembrio, *Panegyricus in funere Nicolai Picenini*:

P. Candidi de laudibus Nicolai Picenini ad populum Mediolanensem Panegyricus | Si ullo tempore fortune insidias uereri debuimus ... famae et gloriae [sic] nostrae monumentum.

Decembrio, *Opuscula*, 991-1009.

[4] fol. 83-97^v: Pier Candido Decembrio, *Epitoma Romanae historiae*:

P. Candidi Romane historiae breue epitoma feliciter sequitur. [fol. 83^v] Regum Consulium Imperatorum Romanorumque ducum res gestas ... vnde Imperium emergerat Imposuit. | P. Candidi epitoma Romane historiae finit.

Unedited.

The text occupies only the top four lines followed by the colophon at l. 6, with the rest of the page originally blank.

fol. 98: blank, originally used as a pastedown

HISTORY

As Decembrio himself makes clear, this manuscript was made for presentation to Borso d'Este. Cynthia Pyle has proposed a date of 1460 × 1465; her own work, in showing its

connexion with BAV, MS. Urb. lat. 276, suggests that it might be placed more specifically at the beginning of that decade. The absence of a work related to these, the *Vita Francisci Sforzae*, composed in 1462, might corroborate this hypothesis. This manuscript provides interesting evidence of how Decembrio promoted himself and sought patronage, and his interventions here have some echoes of his earlier work for Humfrey, duke of Gloucester.

The manuscript's fortunes later in the century are not fully clear. There is an erasure immediately below the colophon, which is only partially recoverable under UV. The inscription, removed by scratching, occupies one line, written in a small humanist script (s. xv^{4/4}) opens 'hic liber' and sends '...yi sunt'. In other words, the salient information has not been recovered, though this note's presence may suggest that the volume soon left the ownership of the d'Este family.

The manuscript certainly remained in Italy: a large and current humanist cursive (Italy, s. xv/svi) writes at both the front and the back of the volume (fol. 3: 'Æspice in me Domine et miserere mei.'; fol. 98: 'Disperdat deus Labia dolosa: & linguam magniloquam | Æ lingua dolosa: libera me domine'). There are also some signs of readership, though they are all non-verbal, so resist dating or localising (a trefoil appears at fol. 14^v, 17, 19, 57^v; another reader writes a rapidly drawn manícula at fol. 51 and 58; a third adds no more than some squiggles at fol. 45^v, 48).

The next certain evidence for its provenance is its purchase by William King Richardson from J. Martini in 1920 (Schoenberg 1982:17), as is shown by the extracts from Martini's catalogue glued to the paper flyleaf (showing that Martini was selling the volume for \$3000, a figure Richardson crossed out). Richardson's *ex libris* appears on the inside of the upper board.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

de Ricci, p. 961 (*sub* William King Richardson); Wieck, p. 115 and fig. 56; J. Hankins in *Italian Humanists in Ten Manuscripts from the Houghton Library* (Cambridge MA, 1989), no. 3 (pp. 4-5); *Iter*, v, col. 231a; C. M. Pyle, 'Harvard MS Richardson 23: a 'pendant' to Vatican MS Urb. lat. 276 and a significant exemplar for P. C. Decembrio's *Opuscula historica*', *Scriptorium*, xlii (1988), pp. 191-98; G. Z. Zanichelli, 'Maestro di Ippolita Sforza' in M. Bollati ed., *Dizionario biografico dei miniatori italiani* (Milan, 2004), pp. 286-90; *Beyond Words*, no. 199 (p. 243); A. C. de la Mare, unpublished notes (held in the Bodleian); W. Stoneman, unpublished description (held in the Houghton).

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