

The Dante collection of the Trivulzio family

Castello Sforzesco
Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana
Sala del Tesoro
4 August ~ 18 October 2015



Guide to the exhibition

December 2015

The Dante collection of the Trivulzio family

Milano • Castello Sforzesco

Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana • Sala del Tesoro

4 August ~ 18 October 2015



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Dante in the Trivulzio library: about the exhibition

The exhibition describes the passion for collecting and philology, in 19th century Milan, devoted by the Trivulzio family to one of literature's most important authors of all time: Dante Alighieri. On the occasion of EXPO 2015 and of the celebrations for seven hundred and fifty years from the great poet's birth, the exhibition is structured to give visitors a unique opportunity to enjoy some of his most famous works, in manuscript and print form. These volumes are part of the rich Dante collection of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio and his descendants during the 19th century, now held in the Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana in Castello Sforzesco, Milan. The exhibition opens with exhibits relating to the Convivio, Vita Nuova, De vulgari eloquentia and Monarchia. Special attention is then given to manuscript and printed editions of the Commedia, documenting the development of Dante's text over time, from the famous Trivulzio codex 1080, transcribed and illuminated in Florence in 1337, just sixteen years after the author's death, right up to the editio princeps printed in Foligno.

To accompany the exhibition of Dante's manuscripts and incunabula in the Sala del Tesoro, a digital version of the exhibition is available online. This provides further opportunity for more detailed study of the originals, by reading online from a rich selection of single pages or even, for some manuscripts, from the entire work.

Of exceptional importance, within the virtual exhibition, is the section dedicated to scientific study, containing contributions from philologists and exegetes of Dante's works, as well as experts in early printed books, illumination and the history of collecting at the time of the Trivulzio Dante collection. This is not a catalogue in the traditional sense, but rather a space for reflection and communication on the theme of the exhibition. This online meeting place will remain open to contributions from scholars for the duration of the exhibition and beyond, leading up to a printed publication (a special number of Libri&Documenti), lasting result constructed over time, thanks to the support of all those who have taken and will take part in this innovative project of shared exhibition.

Exhibition contents and images of works on display are available online at:
<http://graficheincomune.comune.milano.it/GraficheInComune/bacheca/danteincasatrivulzio>



Convivio and Vita Nuova

The prolific cultural context of early 19th century Milan saw the beginning of an extraordinary period of book collecting and philological study in the Trivulzio household, centring on the most illustrious early authors of literature in the vulgar tongue, in particular, Dante Alighieri. Marquis Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (1774-1831), member of the Accademia della Crusca and friend of Vincenzo Monti, following his personal linguistic and literary interests, began adding to family collections inherited from his father, focussing on the purchase of texts, both manuscript and printed, by the Supreme Poet. The assembly in the Trivulzio home of a shelf of unique, or at the least very rare, volumes by Dante was the essential condition that enabled the group of so-called 'Milan editors' (the same Gian Giacomo, together with Vincenzo Monti and Giovanni Antonio Maggi) to measure themselves on equal terms with academics in Florence, who had access to the wealth of manuscript collections in the town's libraries.

Philological analysis of Dante's writing found its first expression, at the wish of Marquis Trivulzio, in the weighty edition of the *Convivio*, printed first in Milan at the Tipografia Pogliani in January-February 1827 (but dated 1826), then in Padua at the Tipografia della Minerva in September 1827. The intense preparatory work for Dante's *Convivio* is documented in a manuscript still surviving today, the Trivulzio 1069 (Display case I, no. 1), whose margins are filled with notes in the hand of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio (Fig. 1) and of Giovanni Antonio Maggi.

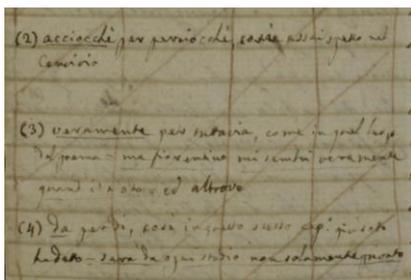


Fig. 1 - Notes in the hand of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio in the margin of the text of *Convivio* in the Trivulzio manuscript 1069.

The codex (perhaps realised between 1823 and 1825) shows an advanced, but not final stage of work on their edition of *Convivio*. It is displayed beside an example on blue paper of the Pogliani edition (Display case I, no. 2 and Fig. 2), which Marquis Trivulzio had had printed as a limited edition by the printer in Piazza Sant'Alessandro, as a model for the Padua edition.

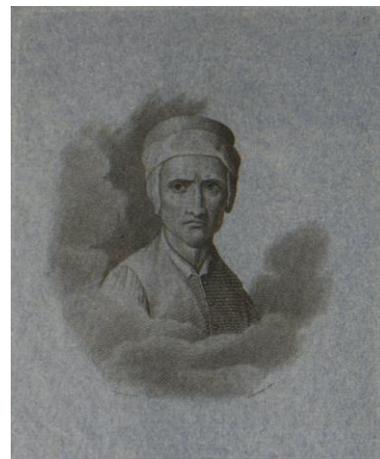


Fig. 2 - Image of Dante Alighieri at the beginning of the Pogliani edition of *Convivio*. Engraving of a drawing by Giovanni Battista Gigola.

The editorial acclaim received by the *Convivio* encouraged Gian Giacomo regarding the edition of *Vita Nuova*, on which he had already been working for years, helped always by the younger Maggi. In his philological revision of Dante's text, in addition to the more recent Trivulzio 1050, the Marquis also made use of Trivulzio codex 1058, purchased in 1817 from the heirs of the painter Giuseppe Bossi († 1815), before the bookseller Giegler put his entire library up for sale on 20th February 1818. Trivulzio 1058 (Display case I, no. 3) is a large paper volume. The transcription was completed on 25th May 1425 in Treviso by Nicolò Benzoni, heir to the powerful family that commanded the lordship of Crema until 1423 and now exiled along with his brother. Trivulzio 1058 provides variations useful in reconstructing the text of *Vita Nuova*, which occupies the initial section of the first codicological unit of the manuscript, followed by the *Rime*. Yet, despite the manuscripts available to him and the time spent

on textual criticism, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio was not entirely satisfied by the outcome of the edition of *Vita Nuova*, also published by Tipografia Pogliani in Milan in 1827. Indeed, he continued to substitute lemmas, record variants

and add explanatory notes in the margins of his own copy (Display case I, no. 4), in preparation for a subsequent edition to be printed in Padua by Minerva. But the hoped-for edition was never to appear.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Convivio*

Paper codex • 19th century before 1826

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1069, p. 1

2

Convito di Dante Alighieri, ridotto a lezione migliore

Milan, Tipografia Pogliani, 1826 [but 1827]

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Rari Triv. Dante 34/6, title page

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Vita Nuova, Rime*

Paper codex • 25th May 1425

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1058, ff. 15v-16r

4

Vita Nuova di Dante Alighieri, ridotta a lezione migliore

Milan, Tipografia Pogliani, 1827

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. E 296, pp. 66-67

De vulgari eloquentia and Monarchia

Gian Giacomo Trivulzio's interest in Dante was not limited to the *Convivio* and *Vita Nuova*, that is, to the two texts on which, over the years, the Marquis had particularly concentrated his attention, carrying out intense philological study and resulting in the challenging initiative of the 'Milan editors' between 1826 and 1827. Little by little, in fact, to the shelf devoted to Dante in the Trivulzio library were added other precious volumes, manuscript and printed, relating to all the works of the famous Florentine poet.

When Napoleon suppressed the convents and religious corporations in the Venice area, Gian Giacomo embarked on a sweeping buying campaign, which enabled him to gain possession of an extraordinarily valuable manuscript, Trivulzio 1088 (Display case II, no. 1), previously belonging to the Somascan Fathers of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. The codex contains *De vulgari eloquentia* by Dante followed by the *Ecerinis* of Albertino Mussato and is a paper volume from the end of the 14th century, of northern origin, perhaps from Padua. The Dantean part is written in *littera textualis* with *tituli* in red, introduced by plain, filigree initials in ink, including the larger initial on the first page, simply adorned by stylised floral motifs (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Start of *De vulgari eloquentia* in the Trivulzio manuscript 1088.
Textualis script.
Initial letter in ink with red filigree.

Nonetheless, the unembellished appearance of the text conceals one of the most significant codices in the manuscript tradition of *De vulgari eloquentia*, because – together with its contemporary twin in Grenoble and with the

older Berlin manuscript – Trivulzio 1088 is one of only three early manuscripts that have come down to us, from which we can reconstruct the text of Dante's treatise.

This codex, forgotten all through the 15th century, was 'rediscovered' by Gian Giorgio Trissino, probably in Padua, at the start of the 16th century. Immediately, it became the essential instrument used by the humanist to share with Italian men of letters the knowledge, but also his personal interpretation, of *De vulgari eloquentia*. He used Dante's work to give weight to the openly anti-Florentine theory of a common Italian language, deriving from a mixture of different regional characteristics. The pages of the codex abound with material traces of the 16th century humanist's long affection for the manuscript that had enabled him to see Dante's rare text with his own eyes. In Trissino's hand, for example, is the brief extract from the *Vita di Dante* by Boccaccio, copied on the back of the antique endpaper at the beginning of the volume (Fig. 2).

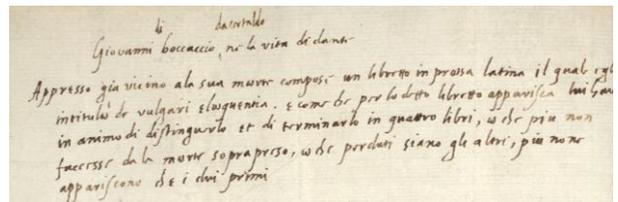


Fig. 2 - Note in the hand of Gian Giorgio Trissino on the front endpaper of the Trivulzio manuscript 1088.

Trissino's passion for Dante's treatise lasted throughout his life. In 1513 the scholar presented it in Florence to the 'academy' of the Orti Oricellari and then, during the 2nd decade of the century, had occasion to present it again in Rome, where the manuscript of which he was owner was read, studied and even sent for copying by Pietro Bembo and Angelo Colocci. Finally, in 1529 Trissino published the first version in Italian of *De vulgari eloquentia*, based on the Trivulzio codex 1088, printed in Vicenza by Tolomeo Ianiculo (Display case II, no. 2). Through quite another kind of channel, the Trivulzio family succeeded in

documenting from a manuscript source Dante's other treatise in Latin, the *Monarchia*. And it was not until 1864, following the marriage between Gian Giacomo Trivulzio jr. (1839-1902) and Giulia Amalia Barbiano di Belgioioso, that the Trivulzio codex 642 entered the family collection, together with the rest of his wife's dowry (Display case II, no. 3).

The manuscript, perhaps put together in Milan in the early 16th century for personal study, contains a miscellany of humanist writings, at the end of which appears the *Monarchia*. Dante's treatise was copied at the end and initially left without a title,

in order to avoid condemnation from the Church, which had deplored the work from the start. Transcription could only be risked for justified motives of study. So it is no chance that Trivulzio codex 642, based on a good source, transmits a particularly accurate text that, despite having been copied two centuries after the work was written, is sometimes decisive in reconstructing the author's original text. This is particularly true for the second part of the treatise, which is not supported by the other manuscript attributed to the same branch of tradition, the Ambrosiano D 119 inf.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *De vulgari eloquentia*

Paper codex • end of the 14th century

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1088, f. 1r

2

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *De la volgare eloquenzia*

Vicenza, Tolomeo Ianiculo, 1529

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. C 761/1, title page

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Monarchia*

Paper codex • early 16th century

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 642, f. 134r

Danti del Cento

As collectors, the Trivulzio family devoted the greatest attention to finding manuscript and printed examples of Dante Alighieri's key work: the *Divina Commedia*. When Gian Giacomo jr. decided to open the doors of his library to scholars and entrusted his cousin, Giulio Porro, with drawing up the first inventory of the manuscript collections (later published in 1884), the Trivulzio bookshelves contained twenty-five codices of Dante's *Commedia*, twenty-two of which contained all three canticles, all dated or datable between the 14th and 15th centuries. These manuscripts had been collected by the Trivulzios on the antiquarian market over the course of a century, in a wide variety of ways, and therefore had different dates and provenances. They are a telling example of the great variety of script and book formats used in the manual reproduction of the text of the *Commedia* during the 14th and 15th centuries, up to the printing of the Foligno *editio princeps* in 1472.

The range of manuscript editions of the *Commedia* opens with Trivulzio codex 1080 (Display case III, no. 1), one of the most valuable Dante texts, conserved today in the Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana. The manuscript, on parchment and medium-large in size, was copied in 1337 in Florence by Francesco di ser Nardo da Barberino, in his chancery-cursive variant of script, accompanied by elegant miniatures attributed to the anonymous Master of the Dominican Effigies (Fig. 1).

The volume had probably been in the Venice area for some time, when Gian Giacomo Trivulzio sr. procured it at the start of the 19th century, perhaps during the sweeping buying campaigns carried out following Napoleon's suppression of the convents in the region.

Trivulzio 1080's text is different compared with the *vulgata* normally found as textual basis of the group of manuscripts known as 'Danti del Cento'. Nonetheless, its codicological, graphic and decorative similarities fully merit its belonging to this group: parchment support, page layout in two columns, chancery-cursive calligraphy and

adoption (in part) of recurring decorative models. Indeed, it has a place at the summit of the arc of development of this type of book, totally recognisable for particularity and homogeneity in the production of the codices of Dante's *Commedia* in the so-called '*antica vulgata*' (i.e. copied before Boccaccio's *recensio* of 1355). So much so that it is considered one of the most significant examples in the attestation and replication of the canon.



Fig. 1 - Start of *Paradiso* in the Trivulzio manuscript 1080. Chancery-cursive script, in the hand of Francesco di ser Nardo da Barberino. Illuminated initial, with the coronation of the Virgin before the heavenly court, by the Master of the Dominican Effigies.

Along with Trivulzio 1080 there are another two significant examples of the same '*Danti del Cento*' group: Trivulzio 1077 (with illuminated initials attributed to Pacino di Bonaguada, Display case III, no. 2 and Fig. 2) and Trivulzio 1078 (undecorated, but with spaces left for illumination, Display case III, no. 3). Both were produced in Florence in the 1330s and 1340s, copied on parchment in chancery-cursive script with a double column layout. The two manuscripts are a clear example of the success of this book model at the origins of the diffusion of the text of the *Commedia*.

Of the public to whom these manuscripts were destined we know little, partly because notes of ownership or readership by the early owners or readers are rare. Some have suggested circulation among notaries and wealthy professionals, identified as writers and readers of this kind of book. Others believe that the choice of

calligraphy refers not so much to the cultural background of the writers and readers, but is rather homage by the copyists of the period towards a type of script that might, in all likelihood, be that of Dante. In any case, it is a fact that manuscripts of the *Commedia* in

chancery-cursive in the '*stile del Cento*' were the prevailing models for codices of the *antica vulgata*. In the second half of the 14th century this became less common, making way for new book styles of the *Commedia*.

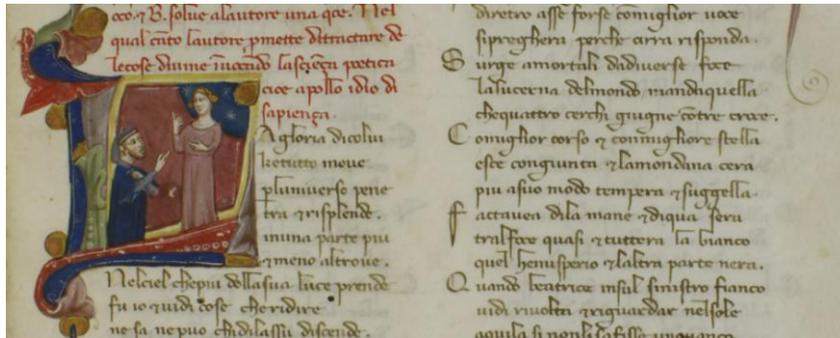


Fig. 2 - Start of *Paradiso*
in the Trivulzio manuscript 1077.
Chancery-cursive script.
Illuminated initial with Dante and Beatrice,
in the hand of Pacino di Bonaguida.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*

Parchment codex • 1337

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1080, ff. 69v-70r

2

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*

Parchment codex • 2nd quarter of the 14th century

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1077, ff. 60v-61r

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*

Parchment codex • 2nd quarter of the 14th century

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1078, ff. 58v-59r

Dante's *Commedia* after the *antica vulgata*

From the mid-14th century onwards, a great variety of codicological, graphic and decorative solutions appeared, in ever-growing numbers, in preparing new manuscript editions of the *Commedia*. This would almost appear to indicate a generation change of copyists and clients – and a rejection of models that now seemed, in the second half of the century, outdated. Yet, despite the fall in demand for copies of Dante's poem produced to the standard pattern of '*Danti del Cento*', the model maintained sufficient authority to favour its reproduction even after the mid-14th century, as in the case of Trivulzio codex 1079 (Display case IV, no. 1).

Its writing material (parchment), the general layout of its page on two columns of text, its script imitating the bastard-secretary style and its decoration commonly found in artists' workshops at the time all show its adherence to the dictates of codices produced in Florence, between the 1430s and 1440s, in the '*stile del Cento*'. Its recentness is, however, immediately betrayed by the artificial nature of the script, which clearly reveals the underlying *littera textualis*, more markedly in the opening pages of the volume due to the quill nib having been cut rather broad (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Start of *Purgatorio* in the Trivulzio manuscript 1079. Chancery-cursive script based on *littera textualis*. Illuminated initial with Dante in the symbolic little boat of his intellect.

The bastard-secretary script, more than any other style, is associated with the transcription of Dante's poem during the 14th century. During the

second half of that century it underwent ulterior development and developed a variant more Italic or simplified in its execution. This is found prevalently in paper copies with a single column layout, simply decorated and transcribed by copyists who do not seem to be professionals of the written word, but rather occasional scribes, for themselves or for others. Such is the codicological and graphic appearance of Trivulzio codex 1047 (Display case IV, no. 2) a manuscript copied in 1372 by a certain «Donatus» and owned by the Renier family of Venice, whose 15th century coat-of-arms in ink can be seen on f. 285v. Along with other volumes of Dante, the Trivulzio 1047 also came into the Trivulzio family collections, following purchase of part of the Bossi library by Gian Giacomo sr. in 1817.

Again during the second half of the 14th century, while the '*Danti del Cento*' trend was declining, production of copies of the *Commedia* in *littera textualis* became increasingly widespread. This type of script had been used in examples of *antica vulgata*, but had somehow been overshadowed until mid-century by the ever-pervasive, prevalent model. Only from the 1360s-1370s did it reach its full potential. Trivulzio codex 1076 is copied in *littera textualis*, albeit simplified (Display case IV, no. 3). In this parchment volume, Dante's text is laid out in a single column and with lines drawn in the margins for comments, never completed.

The elegant *mise en page* and decoration suggest that the volume was produced towards the north of Italy (very likely in Lombardy) at the end of the 14th century. They hint at aristocratic and refined readers, perhaps knights and ladies like those who, in 14th century dress, populate the volume's *bas-de-page*. It is no chance the manuscript's illustration has been coupled with that of contemporary chivalric romances and traced to the activity of the Master of the De natura deorum, an anonymous miniaturist influenced by the style of the workshop of Giovannino de' Grassi (Fig. 2). Trivulzio 1076, too, arrived on the shelves of the Trivulzio library with the purchase of part of the Bossi estate.



Fig. 2 - Canto V of *Inferno* in the Trivulzio manuscript 1076.
Simplified *textualis* script.
Illuminated *bas-de-page* of Dante and Virgil meeting Paolo and Francesca,
in the hand of the Master of the *De natura deorum*.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*
Parchment codex • 2nd half of the 14th century
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1079, ff. 24v-25r

2

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*
Paper codex • 13/15th September 1372
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1047, f. 3r

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*
Parchment codex • end of the 14th century
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1076, ff. 12v-13r

The exegesis of the *Commedia*

On 25th April 1405 – calculating the year Florentine-style, otherwise 1404 according to Pisa – the copyist Paolo di Duccio Tosi di Pisa appended his signature to the end of Dante’s *Commedia* with commentary by Iacomo della Lana (Trivulzio codex 2263), declaring the end of his challenging task of copying: «Scripto per mano di me Paolo di Duccio Tosi di Pisa. Negli anni Domini MCCCCV ad [sic] XXV d’aprile. Deo gratias».

Trivulzio 2263 (Display case V) is an imposing parchment volume, decidedly large in size, containing Dante’s text followed by, canto by canto, relative comments by della Lana. It covers over three hundred pages, written over two columns in elegant *littera textualis*. The adoption of a book type that for over a century had been used for transmitting texts of ‘high’ culture and the decision to inextricably link the *Commedia* to a formidable body of criticism point to the desire to recognise Dante definitively as a classic of literature. The decorative element – as well as the polychrome and gilt plant motifs, with inhabited initials – also boasts a series of historiated borders attributed to Gherardo Starnina in the *bas-de-page* of *Inferno*. The intention seems to be to explain and illustrate the contents of the poem at the same time (Fig. 1).

It is not known why the iconographic cycle was never finished. It is certain that Starnina’s illuminated scenes are limited to adorning only the first ten cantos of *Inferno*, up until f. 30v.



Fig. 1 - Canto X of *Inferno*
in the Trivulzio manuscript 2263.

Textualis script, in the hand of Paolo di Duccio Tosi di Pisa. Illuminated *bas-de-page* with Dante and Virgilio meeting Farinata degli Uberti, executed by Gherardo di Iacopo Starna, known as Starnina.

And, in eternal memory of an unfinished work, in the *bas-de-page* of the second canto of *Paradiso*, a drawing has survived, not yet coloured in (f. 207r, Fig. 2), perhaps abandoned by the artist when it became clear that the scene – which seems to show Dante with Matelda and Beatrice just before his immersion in the waters of Lethe (canto XXXI of *Purgatorio*) – had been placed out of context.



Fig. 2 - Canto II of *Paradiso*
in the Trivulzio manuscript 2263.
Bas-de-page with drawing of Dante
about to be immersed in the waters of Lethe
in the presence of Matelda and Beatrice,
executed by Gherardo Starnina.

The original client for the manuscript is likewise unknown. A Tuscan origin, suggested by the common operating area of both copyist and illuminator, in the past led to the coat-of-arms on f. 4r being erroneously identified with that of the Bencivenni family of Florence (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 - Canto I of *Inferno*
in the Trivulzio manuscript 2263.
Bas-the-page with coat-of-arms.

Further traces of the volume were then lost for no less than four centuries, until in 1816 it reappeared as number 21 of the codices «marked +» in an inventory of Trivulzio manuscripts, drawn up by Abbot Pietro Mazzucchelli on the occasion of the division of the family estate

between Gian Giacomo sr. (who inherited Trivulzio 2263) and his niece, Cristina Belgioioso. This change of ownership is still documented by

the presence, on the volume's front paste-down endpaper, of the Trivulzio bookplate, with three-faced human head.

Towards the *Commedia all'antica*

Dante's *Commedia* appears to be the only great example in the history of Italian literature where it seems the text cannot be received without a commentary being needed as explanation. It is no chance that the work of interpreting the *Commedia* began immediately after the author's death, if not indeed before. In fact, there are numerous manuscripts where the poem has been transmitted, inextricably linked to a commentary or to a series of glosses on single parts of the text. There are also codices where a space has been marked out, ready to contain such exegeses. Good examples of this are Trivulzio codices 1085 and 1083, which were certainly not luxury manuscripts meant to be conserved in a library, but paper copies to be read and studied, packed with *marginalia* by the copyists themselves, commentators and the first owners of the volumes.

Trivulzio 1085 (Display case VI, no. 1) was completed by a certain Ludovico di Giovanni di Matteo de' Franceschi in Imola on 15th March 1435, after twelve days of uninterrupted labour shut up in his house, as Ludovico himself states in the note in his own hand on f. 158v. Glosses and annotations in Latin in the copyist's hand, more in *Inferno* and *Paradiso* than in *Purgatorio*, fill the margins of the volume. The apparatus of glosses, mostly derived from the (reworked) commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, confirms the then common perception of the *Commedia* as a classic to be interpreted, using the linguistic instrument of 'high' culture: Latin.

Of extraordinary interest is also the incredible stratification of graphic and figurative details added to gloss and illustrate Dante's text in Trivulzio codex 1083 (Display case VI, no. 2), a manuscript produced perhaps in the Venice area during the 8th decade of the 15th century. This *Commedia* is surrounded by a veritable host of glosses in Latin and in the vulgar tongue, many of which derive from comments by Iacomo della Lana (sometimes marked with the letter Y) and by Benvenuto da Imola (distinguished by the

letter B, Fig. 1), as well as by the commentary – once thought to be lost, until identified in this very manuscript – of Niccolò Lelio Cosmico (abbrev. COS).



Fig. 1 - Glosses in Latin taken from the commentary of Benvenuto da Imola to canto XIX of *Inferno*, in the Trivulzio manuscript 1083.

The columns of text are written in two alternating Italic hands, while the glosses were added subsequently and with different inks (black, brown and faded reddish-brown) by at least two further scribes, different from the copyists of the *Commedia*, but contemporary or slightly later. One of the glossators even left his signature in the codex, which can be reconstructed from the notes on ff. 25r, 35r and 80r: Arnesto Pidi (Fig. 2).

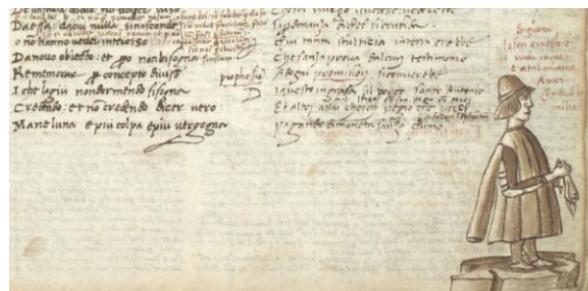


Fig. 2 - Signature of glossator Arnesto Pidi in the Trivulzio manuscript 1083.

He may also be the author of the illustrated scenes that seem almost to burst out of their narrow confines in the *bas-de-page* of *Inferno* to climb up among Dante's *terza rima* and the detailed commentary. The images, illustrating the torments described in the canticle, show extremely close adherence to the narrative weave

of the *Commedia* and represent another instrument of explanation for it.

From the 3rd quarter of the 15th century is Trivulzio codex 1048 (Display case VI, no. 3), a parchment manuscript in upright humanist minuscule, with pages illustrated by scenes from the *Commedia* at the beginning of the three canticles and with initials and frames decorated with white vine-stems, in the Florentine style of the workshop of Francesco di Antonio del Chierico. This volume reflects in an exemplary way the codicological, graphic and decorative

canons of the liveliest production phase of elegant '*Commedie all'antica*' in Tuscany: medium-sized volume, full page layout of the text, notably spacious writing area, use of *littera antiqua* and white vine-stem decoration. In other words, Trivulzio 1048 is a good summary of the radical change in appearance undergone by manuscript editions of the *Commedia*, following the humanist graphic reform. At the same time, it is a book model that would inspire Johann Numeister and Evangelista Angelini in preparing the *editio princeps* of Dante's work in 1472.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*, with glosses of Benvenuto da Imola
Paper codex • 15th March 1435
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1085, ff. 104v-105r

2

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*, with glosses of Benvenuto da Imola, Iacomo della Lana and Niccolò Lelio Cosmico
Paper codex • 8th decade of the 15th century
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1083, ff. 10v-11r

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Commedia*
Parchment codex • 3rd quarter of the 15th century
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1048, ff. 84v-85r

The first printed editions of Dante's *Commedia*

On 11th April 1472 the first printed edition of Dante's *Commedia* was published in Foligno, thanks to the work of one of the most famous *Wanderdrucker* of prototypography, Johann Numeister from Mainz, with the fundamental support of Evangelista Angelini, probably responsible for the actual preparation of the text (Display case VII, no. 1 and Fig. 1). It is difficult to establish with certainty if, for the first printed edition of *Commedia*, as previously for other publications, Numeister was still working with Emiliano degli Orfini, coin and medal maker from Foligno, and whether Dante's poem was printed in the Orfini premises. On the other hand, it would seem plausible to attribute to Emiliano the merit of carrying out the punchcutting for printing the Foligno type of letters (the print version of *littera antiqua* as first used in Florence), as well as of drawing and engraving the epigraphic capitals, now entirely Renaissance in style, which accompanied the Foligno typeface.

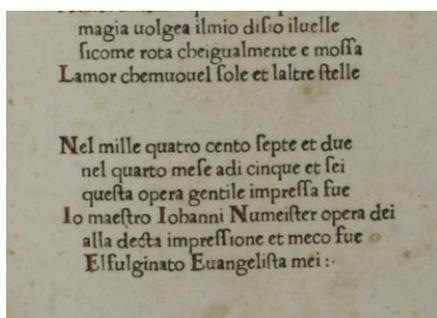


Fig. 1 - Colophon of the *editio princeps* of the *Commedia* printed in Foligno in 1472 by Johann Numeister and Evangelista Angelini.

As far as the text is concerned, the *editio princeps* of the *Commedia* is plainly close to the group of so-called 'Danti del Cento', particularly to the numerous manuscripts similar to codex 35 of the Biblioteca Lolliniana in Belluno, although with input from other branches of tradition. However, the Foligno text model was not successful in imposing absolute authority, indeed it was used in only four subsequent editions of the *Commedia*, starting with that of a printer from Verona, Federico de' Conti (the place is disputed between

Venice and Iesi) on 18th July 1472 (Display case VII, no. 2), just three months after the *editio princeps*. And, even here, to the Foligno model are added a series of secondary influences, mainly derived from Boccaccio line, thus making Federico de' Conti's edition the most modified and complex of the group.

A different, traditional branch was the source of the third and last edition of the *Commedia* published in 1472: the Mantua edition edited by the humanist Colombino Veronese and printed by German printers Georg de Augusta and Paul Butzbach (Display case VII, no. 3). The Mantua volume, indeed, was based on an example of the Boccaccio line, but free from most of the original errors, contaminated by numerous variants from a variety of sources that are not easily identifiable, cleverly selected by Colombino. The variation between the Mantua edition, and the Foligno *editio princeps* and Federico de' Conti's volume is also indicated in the difference of format and *mise en page*, where a single-column layout is abandoned in favour of two columns.

Of the first three printed editions of Dante's poem, which appeared almost simultaneously during 1472, few examples survive. Today there are just over thirty copies of the *editio princeps*, only seven of the Venice/Iesi edition and sixteen of the Mantua edition (data taken from *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke* and *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*). Thanks to the Trivulzio passion for collecting throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the Biblioteca Trivulziana at Castello Sforzesco is proud to own a complete copy of each of the three editions. Moreover, in the Trivulzio Mantua edition, the opening page of *Inferno* has a phytomorphic decoration, illuminated by hand (Fig. 2). In addition to the three incunabula of 1472, the Biblioteca Trivulziana also conserves an example of each of the further twelve editions of the *Commedia* printed before 1500, enabling the initial phase of diffusion of Dante's poem in print to be completely documented.



Fig. 2 - Phytomorphic miniature
in the Trivulzio copy of the edition of the *Commedia*
printed in Mantua in 1472 by Georg de Augusta and Paul Butzbach.

1

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Commedia*
[Foligno], Johann Numeister and Evangelista [Angelini], 11th April 1472
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. Dante 7, f. [2r]

2

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Commedia*
[Venice or Iesi?], Federico de' Conti, 18th July 1472
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. Dante 9, f. [1r]

3

DANTE ALIGHIERI, *La Commedia*
Mantua, Georg de Augusta and Paul Butzbach, 1472
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. Dante 8, f. [2r]

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