

The Visconti-Sforza manuscripts collected by Don Carlo Trivulzio

Castello Sforzesco
Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana
Sala del Tesoro
20 March ~ 3 May 2015



Guide to the exhibition

I manoscritti visconteo sforzeschi di don Carlo Trivulzio

Una pagina illustre di collezionismo librario nella Milano del Settecento

Milano · Castello Sforzesco

Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana · Sala del Tesoro

20 marzo ~ 3 maggio 2015



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I

In Sforza Castle, in the *Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana* are preserved nine parchment manuscripts of Visconti-Sforza provenance, collected on the antiquarian market in the second half of the 18th century by Don Carlo Trivulzio, member of one of Milan's most important noble families of the time. The codices collected by Don Carlo and inherited by his nephew, Gian Giacomo, remained in the Trivulzio family until 1935, when Luigi Alberico sold most of the family library and art collections to the Municipality of Milan.

The Visconti-Sforza manuscripts today conserved in the Trivulziana, though few in number, are of unique importance for reconstructing the cultural context of Renaissance Milan between the end of the 15th and the start of the 16th centuries. They enable us to discern the artistic trends of the time in the field of illuminated manuscripts. In these books, made to be shown and leafed through rather than read and studied, the images were used to convey information in a more direct way than did the written word. The handwriting, limpid and delicate, reached in this period heights of extraordinary elegance. Indeed for graphics, too, there tended to be an emphasis on appearance, often at the expense of accuracy in the text itself.

The exhibition, organised by Biblioteca Trivulziana in concomitance with the exhibition

Arte lombarda dai Visconti agli Sforza (Palazzo Reale, 12th March – 28th June 2015) offers visitors a chance to relive the cultural atmosphere of the Visconti-Sforza court, through one of the most illustrious moments of antiquarianism in Milan in the second half of the 18th century. The exhibition layout in the *Sala del Tesoro* enables visitors to enjoy the original Visconti-Sforza manuscripts collected in the 18th century by Don Carlo Trivulzio on the antiquarian market and subsequently prevented from further dispersion. The nine codices are listed by Don Carlo Trivulzio himself, as far as possible in chronological order, and registered on the first page of a fascicle in his own hand, written on the occasion of his purchase of the so-called *Grammatica del Donato* (Codex Triv. 2167), a famous illuminated volume made for Massimiliano Sforza, son of Ludovico il Moro. The first manuscript mentioned by Don Carlo (now Codex Triv. 786) can be seen in the display case at the start of the exhibition, next to the fascicle written by Don Carlo himself. It is a Latin grammar for the use of Ippolita Maria Sforza, daughter of Francesco I and Bianca Maria Visconti, composed for her by the preceptor Baldo Martorello between 1454 and 1460, before the young girl was married to Alfonso II of Aragon, heir to the throne of Naples.

Carlo Trivulzio, Autograph manuscript

Paper codex, 1775-1789

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2167, allegato, f. 1r



Baldo Martorello, *Grammatica latina*

Parchment codex, 1454-1460

Illumination of the Lombard School

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 786, f. 1r

II

After the Latin grammar composed by Baldo Martorello for Ippolita Maria Sforza, Don Carlo Trivulzio mentions, in his handwritten fascicle in the first display case, a horoscope for Galeazzo Maria Sforza, brother of Ippolita and heir to the Duchy of Milan, being the first son of Francesco I and Bianca Maria Visconti. This is the *Liber iudiciorum* by Raffaele Vimercati (now Codex Triv. 1329) in the second display case.

The text of the horoscope is preceded, on f. 1v, by a dedication in rhyme to the young Galeazzo Maria Sforza. The manuscript is indeed the version commissioned in 1461 by Raffaele Vimercati himself for the heir to the Duchy of Milan. In the bas-de-page of f. 2r on display can be seen the Visconti-Sforza arms supported by two cherubs, between the gilt letters G and Z, referring to the name of Galeazzo. Above the coat of arms, in the illustration, the miniature artists from the Lombard school (perhaps the

Master of Ippolita Sforza or the anonymous master who decorates the Treatise on falconry of Chantilly) shows the author of the text kneeling, offering his work to a elderly man, who is being crowned by God the Father from on high. This figure must be identified with Francesco I, not with his son Galeazzo Maria, who was only sixteen in 1461.

In the second half of the 18th century, Don Carlo Trivulzio also succeeded in acquiring a portrait of Francesco I, which he put with the Latin grammar of Ippolita Maria Sforza (Codex Triv. 786), where it is still found today. This loose sheet of parchment is also by the Lombard school and is likely to date from the same period as the 'twin' manuscripts dedicated to the children of Francesco I. It is on display beside the horoscope of Galeazzo Maria Sforza (Codex Triv. 1329).

Portrait of Francesco Sforza I

Parchment cutting, 3rd quarter of the 15th century

Illumination of the Lombard School

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 786, allegato



Raffaele Vimercati, *Liber iudiciorum*

Parchment codex, 2 June 1461

Illumination of the Lombard School

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 1329, ff. 1v-2r

III

The third manuscript on Don Carlo Trivulzio's handwritten list is the Greek grammar of Constantine Lascaris (today, Codex Triv. 2147). Constantine Lascaris settled in Milan in 1458 and remained there until 1465 under the protection of Duke Francesco Sforza, who appointed him as Greek tutor to his daughter Ippolita in 1463. In 1465 the famous Byzantine humanist moved to Naples, perhaps following his pupil who was married there to Alfonso of Aragon, and was appointed Professor of the Chair of Rhetoric by King Ferdinand I. During his years at the Sforza court in Milan, Lascaris began his major work, a basic grammar for teaching Greek. For this, he gathered together and rewrote numerous grammatical treatises from the past, with the aim of offering a more accessible text to the many students, mostly Italian, to whom the Byzantine scholar taught Greek.

Codex Triv. 2147 is a version dedicated to, or in any case belonging to Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza, son of Galeazzo Maria and nephew of Ippolita. In f. 1r, in fact, the Sforza arms are surrounded by the initials of his name and the title of sixth Duke of Milan, a title Gian Galeazzo succeeded to in 1476, following the death of his father. The codex is illuminated with sober decorative motifs, typical of humanist manuscripts produced for the Sforza

court before books became luxury objects towards the end of the 15th century.

Within the frames decorated with filigree and plant motifs in the style of Ferrara, there are numerous medallions with a rich selection of Sforza *imprese* (personal heraldic devices) and arms. In f. 51v displayed here can be seen the device of a burning brand with water pails, an allegory of ardour tempered by prudence, one of the favourite devices of the father of Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza.

Various manuscript editions of Lascaris' Greek grammar were made during the years, until the work was printed in Milan in 1476, by Dionigi Parravicino. The Parravicino edition, shown here in the third display case beside Codex Triv. 2147, is the first book published in Italy entirely in Greek, apart from the Latin foreword. This printed edition, however, has obvious textual differences compared with the Trivulzio manuscript, despite being contemporary or slightly earlier. After the edition by Dionigi Parravicino, Lascaris' Greek grammar achieved success with its printed editions, too, as testified by the Venetian edition by Aldus Manutius, bearing the date «anno ab incarnatione Domini nostri Iesu Christi M.CCCC.LXXXVIII ultimo Februarii». This can be seen in the third display case of the exhibition.



Costantino Lascaris, *Erotemata*

Parchment codex, 4th quarter of the 15th century

Illumination of the Lombard School

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2147, ff. 51v-52r

Constantinus Lascaris, *Erotemata*

Milan, Dionysius Paravisinus, 30 January 1476

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. C 43, ff. [2]v-[3]r

Constantinus Lascaris, *Erotemata*

Venice, Aldus Manutius, 28 February 1494/95

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. C 216, ff. a2v-a3r

IV

After the Greek grammar by Constantine Lascaris, Don Carlo Trivulzio's list in the first display case mentions a «Trattato latino del Prete Florenzo intorno la Musica dedicato al card. Ascanio Maria Sforza». This was purchased by Don Carlo – as he himself notes – in March 1775 from Count Paolo Monti.

The manuscript (now Codex Triv. 2146) is an elegant parchment volume produced in Florence between the second half of the eighties and the early nineties of the 15th century. The hand of the copyist has been identified as that of one of the most famous calligraphers active in Florence at the end of the 15th century, Alessandro da Verrazzano. Also Florentine in origin would appear the decoration of the codex, attributed to Attavante degli Attavanti, with whom Verrazzano collaborated on several occasions. The figurative models for the faces of the people in the four medallions of the pages in the fourth display case reveal characteristic features of the standard production of Attavante's workshop.

Codex Triv. 2146 contains a treatise in Latin on musical theory, written at the special request of Cardinal Ascanio Maria Sforza, son of Francesco I. He had a passion for polyphonic music and wanted to procure an encyclopaedic compendium of *ars musica* for his own use. The *Liber musices*, indeed, does not contain a full,

detailed treatise on musical theory. It is rather a summary, or manual, suitable for the limited technical knowledge of Sforza on the subject. The Trivulzio exemplar is the copy destined for the owner of the work, as proven by the cardinal's coat-of-arms, surrounded by his favourite *imprese* (personal heraldic devices) of *capitulum episcopale* and of the three mountains with the motto *Idem*, in the bas-de-pages on display.

Quite unknown, instead, is the identity of the author, named «Florentius» who, in the first pages of the manuscript defines himself as «musicus et sacerdos». In the past it was suggested that the work might be by Fiorenzo de' Fasoli, canon of Fiorenzuola, then chaplain of Santa Maria della Stella in Milan, who died in 1496. The documentation, however, does not appear to provide certain proof of this hypothesis.

Moreover, examination of the contents of *Liber musices* reveals a strong Neapolitan influence, different from the theoretical works produced in the Sforza court of late 15th century Milan. Here, the speculative thinking of Franchinus Gaffurius held sway. In that period Gaffurius dedicated to Ludovico il Moro his works *Theorica* and *Practica musicae*, which can be seen here in the editions printed in Milan for Giovan Pietro Lomazzo in the 1490s.



Florentius «musicus et sacerdos», *Liber musices*

Parchment codex, 1484-1492

Illumination of the Florentine School, attributed to Attavante degli Attavanti
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2146, ff. Iv-1r

Franchinus Gaffurius, *Theorica musicae*

Milan, Philippus de Mantegatiis for Johannes Petrus de Lomatio, 15 December 1492

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. B 22/1, f. π1r

Franchinus Gaffurius, *Practica musicae*

Milan, Guillermus Le Signerre for Johannes Petrus de Lomatio, 30 September 1496

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Triv. Inc. B 22/2, f. Γ1r

V

At the bottom of the fascicle written by Don Carlo Trivulzio, perhaps as later addition, is mentioned a manuscript containing the *Rime* of Gasparo Visconti for Beatrice d'Este, wife of Ludovico il Moro. This volume (now Codex Triv. 2157) was previously in the archive of the College of San Barnaba, where it was still to be found in the 1740s.

The Trivulzio exemplar is the rhymer's copy dedicated by him to the young Duchess of Milan, shortly before her premature death in 1497. The codex contains one hundred and fifty-seven sonnets, of which one hundred and forty-one are by Visconti and sixteen by his contemporaries. With the exception of one sonnet, all the others also appear in the big 'private' book of rhymes of Gasparo Visconti, a paper manuscript written in several different cursive hands, with annotations in the poet's writing, today still conserved in the Biblioteca Trivulziana (Codex Triv. 1093). The dedicated copy of Visconti's *Rime* prepared for Beatrice d'Este is a sumptuous object. The poems are written in silver letters, with decorated

initials and rubrication in gold, on purple parchment. In f. IIIv, in the fifth display case, is the dedication to the Duchess of Milan in gold capitals, surmounted by a mascarón of the Lombard school and surrounded by gold and silver intertwining branches. The next page is an end-paper added later, on which at the beginning of the 19th century Giovanni Battista Gigola made a copy of the supposed portrait of Beatrice d'Este, now attributed to Giovanni Ambrogio de' Predis, but then thought to be by his master Leonardo, conserved today in the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana.

The volume's binding is also of extraordinary artistic merit, in gilded metal and enamel. In the centre of the front cover is an enamel painting of a flower meadow with a tied white ribbon, surrounded by red flames. On the back cover a silver plaque bears an inscription dated «Integumentum elaboratum a(nno) MCCCCLXXXVI, III fere post saeculo instauratum».



Gasparo Visconti, *Rime*

Purple parchment codex, 1495-1496

Illumination of the Lombard School

19th century miniature by Giovanni Battista Gigola, f. IVr

Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2157, ff. IIIv-IVr

VI

The sixth exhibition case contains two 16th century devotional codices, listed as numbers VII and VIII in the fascicle written by Don Carlo Trivulzio. The first is a prayer book in Latin and in the vulgar tongue for the use of Isabella of Aragon, widow of Gian Galeazzo Maria Sforza (Codex Triv. 2144). The manuscript was most likely prepared between 1511 and 1518, because it does not contain the names of her husband, first child and daughter Ippolita, already dead, while her daughter Bona is not yet given the title of Queen of Poland, which she acquired on her marriage in 1518. The decoration of the codex is of the Neapolitan School. In particular, the series of miniatures of ff. 8v-9r shown here, almost arranged as a portable altar, have been likened to the great Neapolitan painting and miniature art of the Master of Bolea. In f. 8v are scenes from the life of Mary and of Christ, including the *Meeting of Mary with her cousin Elizabeth*, the *Trinity*, the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity*, the *Adoration of the Wise Men*, the *Resurrection* and the *Ascension of Christ*, the *Pentecost* and the *Assumption of the Virgin*. In f. 9r the largest painting represents the *Virgin and Child with Souls in Purgatory*. All around are images of saints, while the bas-de-page contains the divided arms of Aragon and Sforza, surmounted by the ducal crown.

The second devotional codex in the display case is an evangelistary, that is, an anthology of evangelical pericopes read during Mass, prepared for the personal use of Francesco II, second son of Ludovico il Moro and last Duke of the Sforza dynasty (Codex Triv. 2148). The manuscript was copied in Gothic script by Don Benedetto of Cremona, who signed his work on the colophon of f. 114r. The illustrations of the whole volume, with the exception of the incipit page, suggest the hand of Giovanni Giacomo Decio, a Lombard master, who put the date 1531 on the last miniature of the codex, depicting *Death* (f. 112v). The decoration of the incipit page of the evangelistary, attributed to the Master of the Antiphonary D.R.1 of Busto Arsizio, was done not earlier than 1533, when Princess Christina of Denmark was chosen as future wife of Francesco II. Indeed, on f. 1r appear the joint arms of the couple, with their respective initials, surmounted by the ducal crown. The pictorial initial in f. 62v on display represents the *Resurrection of Christ*, by Giovanni Giacomo Decio.



Prayer book for the use of Isabella of Aragon
Parchment codex, 1511-1518
Illumination of the Neapolitan School
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2144, ff. 8v-9r



Evangelistary for the use of Francesco II Sforza
Parchment codex, 1531-1533
Illumination of the Lombard School, attributed to Giovanni Giacomo Decio
Milano, Archivio Storico Civico e Biblioteca Trivulziana, Cod. Triv. 2148, ff. 62v-63r

VII

Two of the Visconti-Sforza manuscripts listed by Don Carlo Trivulzio in his hand are not on display on this occasion in the *Sala del Tesoro*, as they are on loan to the exhibition *Arte lombarda dai Visconti agli Sforza* (Palazzo Reale, 12th March – 28th June 2015). In their place, in the last display case of the exhibition are shown facsimiles, published in 1980 by Giulia Bologna. This important pair of ‘education manuscripts’, made for the young Massimiliano Sforza, firstborn of Ludovico il Moro, during the last five years of the 15th century, comprise: a collection of prayers and short texts in Latin and vulgar tongue called *Liber Iesus* or *Libro dell’ABC* (Codex Triv. 2163) and a grammar text belonging to the literary genre of *Ianuae*, accompanied by *Disticha Catonis*, generally known as the *Grammatica del Donato* (Codex Triv. 2167).

The two manuscripts, both on parchment, were transcribed by the same hand, identified as that of Giovanni Battista Lorenzi, a fine copyist active at that time in the Sforza court. They were further embellished by exquisite decoration, in which we can see some of the most important miniature artists of late 15th century Lombardy at work: the Master of the Epithalamion

of Jason de Mayno and Boccaccio Boccaccino (or Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio) for the *Liber Iesus*; Giovanni Ambrogio de’ Predis, again the Master of the Epithalamion of Jason de Mayno, Giovan Pietro Birago and the Master of Anna Sforza for the so-called *Grammatica del Donato*. These two Trivulzio codices are held to be among the highest examples of manuscript books produced specifically for the education of a Renaissance prince in late 15th century Milan. But, because of their careful composition and rich iconography, they were probably not made to be used, nor were they real school books for the young Massimiliano Sforza. Rather, the two manuscripts appear to be an instrument of text and iconography for affirming a precise political programme, consolidating the role of Ludovico il Moro at the head of the Duchy by legitimising his dynastic succession. Page after page, miniature after miniature, the reader was to be led through the grandeur of the ducal court (tangible sign of effective power held firmly in the hands of Ludovico) and implicitly legitimise the father by recognising his son as only, undisputed heir to the Duchy of Milan.

Giulia Bologna, *Libri per una educazione rinascimentale*.

Grammatica del Donato. Liber Iesus

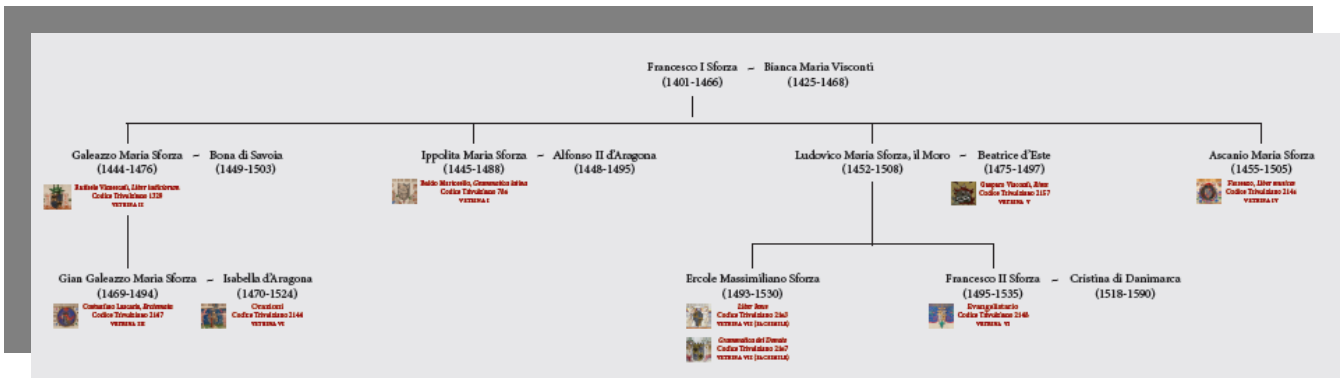
Milano, Comune di Milano, 1980

[Facsimile edition of the MSS Triv. 2163 and Triv. 2167]

VIII

This last panel in the exhibition shows a partial, specific family tree of the Dukes of Milan, beginning from when the Sforza and Visconti families were joined in the marriage of Bianca Maria Visconti and Francesco I Sforza, crowned as Duke in 1450. Here are shown the descendants of the Sforza family with respective consorts,

only if they owned manuscripts collected in the second half of the 18th century by Don Carlo Trivulzio and now on display in the *Sala del Tesoro*. The Visconti-Sforza dynasty ended with Francesco II Sforza, second son of Ludovico il Moro and Beatrice d'Este who died in 1535.



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