THE ART OF THE WOODCUT IN EARLY PRINTED BOOKS
II. The Title Page – Borders & Devices 1550 -1787
IL PETRARCHA
CON L’ESPOSITIO:
NE D’ALESSANDRO
VELLUTELLO
DI NOVO RISTAMPATO
CON PIU COSE UTILI
in varii luoghi aggiunte.

Non poner tua speranza, ma sicuro

IN VENETIA AL SEGNIO
DELLA SPERANZA.
M D L.


Large woodcut vignette to title, ornamental initials.

£1,250

The Venetian printer ‘al segno della speranza’ was active from 1544-88, based first in Santa Maria Formosa and then in San Giuliano; Censimento states that up to the 1570s this was most likely Giovanni della Speranza, perhaps to be identified with Giovanni Francesi. Books from this press are almost always in pocket format and usually bear the woodcut device depicting Hope, as here, surrounded by but turning away from the temptation of material goods; the motto surrounding the woodcut advises the reader not to put their faith in material vanities. Another, later incarnation of this device, using a different block, can be found here.
FROM THE HEYDAY OF VENETIAN WOODCUT ILLUSTRATION


First edition published posthumously to honour the death of Egnatius, Giovanni Battista Cipelli (1478-1553), bishop and philologist.

The elegant device on this title page is that of Gualtiero Scoto, who printed this work for Niccolò Bevilacqua (Nicolaum Tridentinum); this device also appears on Francesco Marcolini’s edition of Doni’s La Seconda Libraria in 1551. It depicts Hermes, the winged messenger, embracing Athena; ‘In his right hand, Hermes carries the caduceus, symbol of (among other things) peace, while his left arm is twined about Athena’s neck. Athena holds aloft a shield with her right hand and holds two spears and a flowing robe with her left. Each stands with one foot on a die, symbolizing fortune, and the other on a closed book, symbolizing knowledge’ (Lee, 75). They are surrounded by an ornate border; with winged angels, cornucopia, two cherubs carrying the armorial crests of unidentified families, and the lion of Venice at its base. Here Mercury represents trade, and Athena learning; ‘an appropriate allegory of the happy union of science and scholarship and the booktrade’ (Hoftijzer, 187). Not in Mortimer.
23. DA CASTIGLIONE (Sabba). Ricordi overo ammaestramenti. Venice: Paolo Gherardo, 1555 [1554].

Woodcut on title page depicting Sabba da Castiglione in his study, woodcut initials, some historiated. 4to. [8], 135, [1]ff. Eighteenth-century Italian vellum over pasteboard. £1,750

Third, definitive edition of this conduct manual by courtier, collector, patron of the arts and Knight Hospitaller Sabba da Castiglione (1480-1554), and the only edition with the title-page depiction of the author.

The unsigned woodcut depicts Castiglione in profile, sitting in his study, in a chair with integrated desk, surrounded by books and symbols of his membership in the Hospitallers order; from the Maltese cross hanging around his neck to the square biretta he wears, and the imagery on the shield hanging behind him. It ‘captures the essence of the man as an idealized Renaissance hospitaller knight...It provides a focused, uncluttered image of Sabba surrounded by only the most basic accoutrements representing his life’s work’ (Cavaceppi, 249), and follows a long tradition of this idea of a contemplative space in isolation, popularised by Petrarch’s De Vita Solitaria (c.1346). It is unusual in its depiction of Castiglione writing left-handed; following in the mode of depictions of medieval scribes and saints, he sits with the pen in his left hand and ink scraper in his right, writing ‘Dirige Domine sinistram meam in laudem tua[m]’ ‘Lord, direct my left hand for your praise’. Castiglione refers to writing ‘con la sinistra mano’ in his introduction as a reason, along with his old age, for why he had not expanded the number of ricordi in the first edition of his work. (See Mortimer; (II), no.110 for a reference to this portrait).
This is one of three editions of Ariosto's epic poem printed in Lyon in different formats, with the title page and canto illustrations printed from the woodblocks in Benedetto di Giunta's 1544 Florence edition, in turn close copies of the set designed by Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari for his of 1542 (Mortimer; I, 37). Giolito's designs were used in almost 30 editions that issued from his press over the next twenty years (Barker; 'Expectation') – as well as other titles – and were copied by other printers in Venice, Florence and further afield, in Lyons, as here, and Paris; they also provided the basis for a series of frescos in Piedmont (Lee, pp.39-46). 'The illustrations have a sophistication and animation which the earlier ones lacked...there is no sense of crowding, but the compositions are so skillfully arranged that often two or three episodes are included' (Hofer, 31). Where Giolito's suite of woodcuts were from 46 blocks, here there is one duplication, in cantos 41 and 42; it has been speculated that one block was lost (Mortimer; I, 37) yet, the content of these cantos is so similar that perhaps it was an economic choice on the part of the printer. Another Faure-Honorat quarto edition was printed in 1556, that one without the ornamental sidepieces that accompany each vignette here.
THE SECOND DEVICE OF THE FIRST JESUIT PRESS


Woodcut Jesuit ‘IHS’ device on title-page, initials.
Sm 8vo. 344pp. Expertly bound in recent cartonnage boards. £5,000

First edition of the first Jesuit edition of a classical author, expurgated for a juvenile audience as the title suggests, “The Epigrams, only a few of which have been rejected or changed without damage to the Latin, stripped of every sort of obscenity and raised above every distasteful form of language.”

This is the second woodcut device of the press at the Collegio Romano, set up in 1556 by Ignatius, and the first press operated by the Jesuits. The device would go through several incarnations over the course of the sixteenth century; this one elaborates on the more simplistic first, adding winged angels and the outer border to the central rotunda with the initials ‘IHS’.
WITH THE SEAL OF THE AUTHOR, RATHER THAN THE DEVICE OF THE PRINTER

26. HAILDUFF (Sebastian). Der Augspurgerischen Confession... (Munich, Adam Berg), 1573. [Bound with:] FEUCHT (Jakob). Christlicher, kurtzer und wahrhaftiger Bericht, wie ein guthertziger Christ, auff die 37. Hauptarticol des wahren Christlichen Glaubens, so ihme in Bayern... Ingolstadt, (A. Weissenhorn), 1572.

Title in red and black, pelican seal of Feucht on title with legend 'In Me Mors et Vita 1 F'. 2 works in one vol. 4to. 64 ff; [8], 200, [4]ff. Contemporary blind-pannelled pigskin over bevelled wooden boards, upper cover with central panel stamp of Justice and on lower cover of Lucretius; wide roll-tool outer border with medallions of the reformers Erasmus, Melanchthon, Luther and Hus, inner ornamental border, clasps.

£2,500

A fine copy of these two rare Counter-Reformation works bound together in a handsome blind-tooled binding, from the library of the famous Benedictine Abbey at, Göttweig, Lower Austria.

The second work in the volume is notable for having the woodcut emblematic seal of the author, Jakob Feucht, on the title-page rather than a printer's device. Feucht (1540-80) was head of Ingolstadt University from 1571 and auxiliary bishop of the prince-bishopric of Bamberg. His signet seal shows a pelican feeding its young opposite the crucified Christ with the motto 'In Me Mors et Vita' and Feucht's initials '1 F', and the words from Psalm 101:7, 'Similis factus sum Pelicano solitudinis', and was first used in this year for the present work and also Feucht's Septem et triginta catholicae assertionis.

The allegorical significance of the pelican feeding its young from its breast was well established by the Renaissance and featured in emblematic literature; see, for example George Wither's A Collection of Emblemes (London: H. Taunton, 1635) (see Edwards, pp.259-60; Cohen, p.175).
AN ICONIC DEVICE

27. VERGILIUS MARO (Publius).

P. Virgilius Maro, et in eum com-
mentationes, & paralipomena Germani Valentis Guellii, pp. Eiusdem Virgilij
appendix, cum Josephi Scaligeri commentariis & castigationibus. Antwerp: C.
Plantin (15 Calendas Iulii), 1575.

56 engraved plates, historiated woodcut initials (Q dated 1563).

£4,000

A splendid extra illustrated copy. This work bears the iconic device of
Christopher Plantin (c.1520-89), colossus of the early modern printing trade.
A hand descends from the clouds, holding a pair of compasses and with the
motto ‘labore et constantia’, hard work and constancy. ‘In the preface to the
first part of his Biblia Polyglotta [1568] [Plantin] explains that one leg of the
compasses stands for Constantia, the other leg turns around and stands for
labour’ (Meeus, p.77; see also Davies, no. 246).

‘It was Plantin’s third mark. The first showed a vine-dresser pruning vine
tendrils festooned around an elm, with the motto Exerce imperia et ramos
compesce fluentes... The second was a vine tendril with the motto Christus vera
vitis [...] Plantin - and his descendants after him - continued to use this third
printer’s mark that so admirably reflects his outlook on life, and thus for three
centuries the works that left the presses of the Officina Plantiniana bore the
emblem of the compasses and the device Labore et Constantia’ (Voet, p.31).
Both device and motto appear on Plantin’s tombstone.
INVESTING IN NEW WOODBLOCKS


Title within woodcut border, woodcut initials large and small. 4to. [16], 195, [1]p. Contemporary limp vellum. £2,500

Rare first edition with contemporary provenance.

The device on the title page is that of Florentine printer Bartolomeo Sermartelli, ‘one of the most industrious printers in sixteenth-century Florence’ (Rhodes, pp.41-8). A tortoise supports a sail on its back, upon which appears a lily device, the symbol both of the city of Florence and the ruling Medici family. The motto ‘festina lente’ recalls – surely deliberately – the Aldine device; the tortoise ‘has been variously recognised as a symbol of wisdom, prudence, vitality, longevity, even immortality’ (Scinto, pp.315-7).

The improvement, by the time this work was printed, in the quality of the woodblocks used in Sermartelli’s works has been said to have marked a shift in how seriously he took the printing side of his business, rather than the bookselling; before 1563, the few works attributed to his press ‘are comparatively inferior to those of his contemporaries. Much of his stock of type and woodcut ornaments was worn and outmoded, acquired from earlier printers’ (Scinto, 315). Not in Mortimer.
OCCUPYING THE MIDDLE GROUND


Printer’s device on each title-page, and at end of the works by Firenzuola and Pino da Cagli. 4 works in one. Sm. 8vo. 18th century calf-backed pink boards, morocco label. £1,750

Attractive collection of four notable Italian Renaissance plays, with the devices of four printers; the snake twined around the Florentine fleur-de-lis, with old skin lying discarded, of the Florentine branch of the Giunti (Pettas, device no.13; see p.116); the Roman Emperor, SPQR flag in hand, flanked by an eagle, of Francesco Imperatore (CNCE 17355); Domenico Farri’s sign of Speranza, or Hope, with hands and face raised towards the sun (CNCE 37922; the figure of Hope adopts a similar pose in the device in item 21); and Ziletti’s comet and stars, with the motto ‘inter omnes’ (CNCE 40410).

Together these four works typify the vernacular output of mid-level printing houses in Florence and Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century; even the Giunta press in Florence which, after 1530, was in gradual decline, and increasingly dependent on the success of the Venetian branch (see Pettas, p.111). Recent scholarship has focused little on the middle ground publishers like these occupied, ‘between the expensive, high quality volumes produced by the industry’s major players and the ephemeral fogli volanti that cost very little but disappeared quickly’ (Lussey, 23).
JOST AMMAN - PRACTITIONER OF A DYING ART?


An elaborate, near full-page ornamental woodcut on title-page, large woodcut arms of the dedicatee, six large ornamental woodcut printer’s devices (one signed by Jost Amman, the other by the cutter ‘MF’), numerous ornamental woodcut initials and head-pieces. 4 parts in one vol. Thick folio. Contemporary German blind-panelled pigskin, vellum ties (sides a little rubbed). £1,250

First German edition of the complete works of Natta, with several incarnations of Feyerabend’s ‘Fame’ device, and an elaborate title design, depicting the Judgement of Solomon. The title page and all but two of the devices are unsigned but are in the characteristic style of ‘one of Northern Europe’s most prolific printmakers and book illustrators’ (Long, 1), Jost Amman (1539-91). Amman’s name is frequently paired with that of Tobias Stimmer (1539-84, Strasbourg; see Item 31) as two of the last practitioners of a dying art; the woodcut fell out of favour in Northern Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century, as printers and publishers began to favour engravings and intaglio forms of illustration (Griffith, 20; see also Bartrum, 13).

Amman enjoyed a long association with the printer of the present work, Sigismund Feyerabend (1528-90), collaborating on at least fifty volumes and both designing and – early in his career – cutting his own woodblocks. His contributions ranged from elaborate illustration to more functional, though no less lavish features; ‘in addition to the illustrations, he designed other typographic elements in his books including ornamental borders, initial letters, tailpieces and printers marks’ (Long, 1). Here Amman’s monogram ‘IA’ can be seen at the foot of the printer’s device repeated in the second volume; the device on the third title page is signed ‘MF’ by the (unknown) woodcutter; presumably a variation – adapted to fit the space - of the ‘MF’ monogram which appears in several of the woodcuts in Amman’s famous Kunnst und Lehrbuchlein… (Frankfurt: Sigmund Feyerabend, 1578; see British Museum, item no. 1893,1212.3.1-174).
A later edition of Fischart’s famous interpretation of Rabelais’ *Gargantua*, first published at Strasbourg in 1575, with a title vignette printed in black with red blocks, and further woodcuts in the text attributed to renowned seventeenth-century woodcut artist and collaborator of printer Bernhard Jobin’s, Tobias Stimmer (1539-84). The woodcuts also feature in the 1575 edition, forty years before. At least one of the illustrations, depicting a seated woman with servants, spinning wool is also evident in an earlier, short work from Jobin’s press, Antonio de Guevara, *Missive oder Sendbriefe* (c.1580); in that work the colophon reads ‘Durch Bernhard Jobin formschneider’, referring to the profession, blockcutter, in which Jobin initially trained.

That portions of the red used on the device on the title page are uniformly out of alignment - the result of a lack of any mechanical means of registration (Primeau, 11; Griffiths, 113) - suggests that they were stencilled on top of the initial woodcut, printed in black. While this vignette of the lobster and serpent is found in editions from the first – 1575 – onwards, it was only with the 1590 edition that the red began to be used. It functions much like an emblematic printer’s device, as a play on Fischart’s name (‘fisch’, fish, and ‘art’, species; the device depicts species of sea creature) with the motto ‘im fischen/gilts Mischen’, giving a taste of Fischart’s lively approach to Rabelais’ text, and the experience in store for the reader (see Smith, pp.45-68).
REGOLA
DEL PADRE
S. BENEDETTO.

Tradotta in lingua italiana, per quella parte solamente, che spetta alle Monache, che vivono sotto la regola di S. Benedetto dell’Osservanza.

Con le dichiarazioni circa i dubbi, che possono accorrere dell’affermazione di essa.


IN MILANO,
Nella Stampa Archiepiscopale. M. DC. XXXX.

...TO WORMHOLED

32. [BENEDICT, Saint.] Regola del padre S. Benedetto. Tradotta in lingua italiana, per quelle parte solamente, che spetta alle monache, che vivono sotto la regola di S. Benedetto dell’osservanza, etc. Milan: nella stampa archiepiscopale, 1640.

Woodcut on title-page of S. Benedict & a nun, the small round holes set against the block habits give the impression that the block was wormed.

8vo. 135, [9]pp., last leaf a blank. Contemporary vellum over pasteboard (some wear at foot of spine).

£750

The attractive woodcut on the title page depicts St Benedict, holding a volume of his rule open from which a nun reads, kneeling alongside him. The presence of small white spots across the printed woodcut, interrupting printed lines and dense areas of black, suggests that the woodblock from which the image was printed had wormholes, a hazard with blocks that circulated between and were reused by printers, and had a long working life. It was not uncommon to fill in the holes to eke out the working life of a block; they were also a tempting feature to add to give the (false) patina of age and use (see Griffith, ‘Zanetti’s tricks’, p.63).
LATER EDITION OF THE EARLIEST BOOK ILLUSTRATED BY A WOMAN, WITH HER ORIGINAL WOODCUTS

33. AGUSTIN (Antonio). Dialoghi intorno alle medaglie inscrizioni et altre antichità tradotti di lingua Spagnuola in Italiana da Dionigi Ottaviano Sada... Rome, Filippo de' Rossi, 1650.

Fine woodcut architectural title-border, 13 large woodcut illustrations and c. 1200 woodcuts of coins and medals by Geronima Parasole.


A late printing of this Italian translation of Agustin's important medal book illustrated with c. 1200 woodcuts of coins.

The woodcuts are those found in the 1592 edition, regarded as being the earliest book to have been illustrated by a woman. The artist Geronima Parasole (d. 1622) was the wife of the painter Leonardo Norsini and although she is known to have made woodcuts from the designs of Antonio Tempesta her illustrations for the present work are considered her best. As well as the numerous numismatic cuts there are 14 large woodcuts which include a series of 6 cuts of the Roman triumphal arches. Some of the cuts have one of Parasole's two monograms, “P.M.F.” (see foot of title border, left) or “G.A.P.”, some with her ‘knife’ by the side indicating that she cut the block herself, both recorded by Nagler (see: vol. 2, no. 2715 & vol. IV, no. 3141).
‘GO INTO THE WORLD AND PREACH’

34. GARZONI (Maurizio). Grammatica e vocabolario della lingua Kurda. Roma, Stamperia della Sacra Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, 1787.

Woodcut vignette to title-page.
8vo. 288pp. Contemporary paste-paper decorated wrappers, recent green cloth spine, uncut and unopened (some staining to wrappers, extremities a little worn).

First edition of the first Kurdish grammar published in Europe. The woodcut vignette on the title page has a motto taken from Mark, ‘go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature’, fitting for the organisation by whom this was printed, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith; their polyglot printing press was founded in 1626 with the intention of printing works for dissemination across territories during missionary work. This is a slightly more sophisticated variation on a woodcut design used by the Congregation press for over one hundred years previous to its appearance here – in both a medallion and rectangular form - and on similar works for/in Arabic, Armenian, Tibetan, Sanscrit, Ethiopic, and others.


Griffiths, A., Prints and Printmaking (California, 1996).


