

ALDUS MANUTIUS AND BENEDETTO BORDON: IN SEARCH OF A LINK

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Aldus, the first of the scholar-printers, and Benedetto, the last of the great manuscript-illuminators: like symbols of the old world and the new, they stand side by side on the threshold of the typographic era. Yet their aims and outlook were very similar. Aldus, one of the founders of modern publishing, still relied on the scribes of Venice and Padua for his copy, and modelled both his types and his printed pages on the most fashionable manuscripts of the time.¹ Benedetto, though always described as an illuminator, developed an interest in printing as early as 1494, and was as careful as Aldus in seeking government protection for his editions of Lucian's *Satires*, *The Triumphs of Caesar*, and the *Islands of the World*.² Both men were dedicated, in their different fields, to the revival of classical learning and classical styles. Both have attracted scholarly attention. Aldus has attracted far more, both because of his talent for self-advertisement and his use of a mass-medium, but interest in Bordon's work dates back to the sixteenth century, and three major studies have been devoted to him in the last dozen years.³ Unfortunately, no attempt has yet

¹ On this aspect of Aldus' work see especially M. Sicherl, *Handschriftliche Vorlagen der Editio Princeps des Aristoteles*, Mainz, 1976. For more general discussion, M.J.C. Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 130-141.

² R. Fulin, "Documenti per servire alla storia della tipografia veneziana", *Archivio veneto*, xxiii (1882), Nos. 26, 141, 251.

³ For a general guide to earlier bibliography see L. Donati, "Bibliografia aldina", *La Bibliofilia*, lii, ii (1950), 189-204. The most important recent compilations of material are those of E. Pastorello, *L'epistolario manuziano: inventario cronologico-analitico, 1483-1597*, Florence, 1957; "Di Aldo Pio Manuzio: testimonianze e documenti", *La Bibliofilia*, lxxvii (1965), 163-220; G. Orlandi, *Aldo Manuzio editore*, 2 vols., Milan, 1976. On Bordon see M. Levi d'Ancona, "Benedetto Padovano e Benedetto Bordone: prime tentative per un corpus di Benedetto Padovano", *Commentari*, xviii (1967), 31-42; G. Mariani Canova, "Profilo di Benedetto Bordon miniatore padovano", *Atti dell'istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, cxxvii (1968-9), 99-121; M. Billanovich, "Benedetto Bordon e Giulio Cesare Scaligero", *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, xi (1968), 187-256.

been made to study the two men side by side. Bordon has either been examined on his own, or slipped almost coincidentally into discussions of the *Hypnerotomachia Polifili* as a possible designer of its woodcuts.⁴ This article will attempt to shift the focus of enquiry slightly, while asking the same general questions. I shall not concentrate on the vexed problems of *Polifilo*, which I think can only be solved to everyone's satisfaction by new documentary evidence. I propose to turn to men rather than styles, looking at the patrons and business-connections shared by Aldus and Bordon. But the direction of enquiry will, and must, remain constant: did these two great contemporaries simply work in the same background, or did they sometimes co-operate on the same project? If they did, how will this affect our understanding of them as individuals?

Aldine studies have their roots in the printer's own editions, dedications and letters, but, until very recently, all discussion of Bordon's life and work was bound to trail away amidst uncertainties about what could and what could not be attributed to him. Solid documentary evidence was restricted to the press-privileges of 1494 on Lucian, 1504 on *The Triumphs of Caesar*, and 1526 on *The Islands of the World*.⁵ By themselves, these did little more than locate Benedetto in Venice in Aldus' time. A presentation copy of Lucian's *Satires* was preserved in Vienna and carried illuminations that could reasonably be attributed to Bordon himself.⁶ But there was no conclusive proof, and little opportunity for comparison. No copies of *The Triumphs of Caesar* have survived, and the panoramic maps of the islands do not reveal much of the illuminator's skill. Cavaccio, the seventeenth-century historian of the Paduan monastery of San Giustina, knew that Bordon had been engaged from 1523 on a number of books "in usum sacrificii" and at the end of the following century Brandolese described a manuscript from the sacristy of San Giustina which actually carried the artist's signature.⁷ This vital work surfaced occasionally, after passing into private hands,

⁴ G. Biadego, "Intorno al Sogno di Polifilo", *Atti del istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*, lx (1900-01), 711; M. Casella and G. Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna, biografia e opere*, ii (Padua, 1959), 152-7.

⁵ Cited under n. 2 above.

⁶ National Library of Vienna, Incunabulum 4 G. 27.

⁷ Citations in Billanovich, op. cit. under n. 3 above, and in G. Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta del rinascimento* (Venice, 1969), pp. 125, 126.

during the nineteenth century, but was not generally accessible to scholars until a few years ago.⁸

The clouds began to break only in 1968, when Dottorressa Miriam Billanovich found and published the contract between Benedetto Bordon and the abbey of San Giustina. On 2 April 1523, the artist obliged himself to illuminate

one book of Gospels, and one of Epistles ... with decoration relevant to these books and appropriate to the appearance of each of them: and [he shall decorate] not only the beginning of the book of Gospels, but the beginning of each Gospel and Epistle with illustrations and other devices which are suitable for the manuscripts, [using] especially fine ultramarine blue, the best gold leaf he can find, and other materials of the variety and condition needed, all of which shall be provided at the expense and by the industry of the said Master Benedetto ...⁹

Bordon was to receive a fee of 70 ducats in gold from the abbey, and was barred from undertaking other work until the commission was completed. Since his next major work, the printed *Islands of the World*, was in preparation by 1526 and was published in 1528, we can deduce from the penalty-clause that the work for San Giustina provided his sole means of support for around three years, from 1523 to 1526. And since he died in 1530, we can reckon that the service books Benedetto illustrated for the abbey represent his most mature style.¹⁰ He may have had time for isolated works, such as ducal commissions, in his last years, but declining health and seeing an edition through the press would hardly have allowed him to execute another major cycle of illuminations.

What, then, of the two manuscripts? The second mentioned in the contract, that is the *Epistolarium*, may well be Additional Manuscript 15815 in the British Library. But this volume only deepens the mystery of Bordon's style. It certainly is an *Epistolarium* from San Giustina, but its illuminations do not correspond to those described by earlier Paduan authorities; they have been carried out by several different artists, and none of them is signed.

⁸ Eg. in 1908. See *Burlington Fine Arts Club: Illustrated Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*, London, 1908, No. 196. The manuscript remained in the Holford Collection until 1927.

⁹ Billanovich, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-50 for the full text.

¹⁰ Billanovich, *op. cit.*, pp. 197 f. (on *Islands of the World*), 215-6 (Bordon's Will and death).

Since the contract of 1523 admitted that Bordon was completing work already in hand, this manuscript cannot by itself help us to identify what is and what is not his work.¹¹ The other manuscript, the *Evangelarium* or Gospel Book, emerged at last from its long stay in the shadows as No. W, 107 in the private collection of Sir Chester Beatty, now housed in a suburb of Dublin. A detailed description was published by Dottoressa Mariani Canova in 1968, and the authoress rightly observed that the study of these illuminations must be fundamental to any examination of Bordon's style, or to the attribution of any other works to him.¹² Ff. 3 and 65 are signed "Benedictus Bordo", just as Brandolese had described them; and though he thought that other artists had worked on the manuscript, the style seems to be uniform throughout.

The *Evangelarium* is a large volume, measuring 35 cm. by 25. The original crimson velvet of the binding survives in a somewhat tattered state, but the ornamental clasps and corner-pieces have been plundered long ago. The principal illuminations are now removed, sealed between panels of glass, and boxed, an arrangement which ensures both their state of preservation and the opportunity of examining them at close quarters. The seventy-seven folios carry seventy-five illustrations of varying size and sophistication, but the series was never completed. Starting from the Gospel for the Nativity on f. 1, it extends only as far as the feast of St. Martin of Tours and the Baptism of San Giustina herself on f. 71 v. The festivals between mid-November and Christmas are missing, and since the last five folios are blank, f. 72 r being already marked with pencil lines for the scribe, it seems certain that the text itself was never finished. This gap perhaps led Brandolese into his confused and confusing statement about unfinished illuminations at the end of the book. Bordon

¹¹ Ibid., p. 214. See also Mariani Canova's article, cit. under n. 3 above, pp. 112-3. Many of the same difficulties apply to British Library, Add. MS. 15813, a Missal which is also from San Giustina, but which is not mentioned in the contract of 1523. The contract itself (Billanovich, p. 249) deepens the mystery by using the phrase "sequendo et inmitando principium iam incohatum ...", thus indicating that Bordon was continuing work in hand, but not revealing whether it was that of other illuminators, or his own of an earlier date.

¹² Op. cit., pp. 113-4.

finished his part of the project; but the project itself was never completed.¹³

The seventy-five illuminations are graded in a carefully planned hierarchy, which, when taken alongside the stringent terms of the contract, reveals how far the artist's choices were made for him. The cycle is dominated by fifteen major pieces, in which the text was restricted to six or seven lines and most of the page occupied by a detailed narrative painting and an ornate border of flowers, grotesques or cameos. These fifteen can in their turn be subdivided. Seven have decoration on only the top and outer margin of the page;¹⁴ in the other eight the scene is completely enclosed by the border. The subjects of these eight principal pages are a strange mixture of the ecumenical and the parochial. Half are the great festivals of the Christian year—the Nativity, the Slaughter of the Innocents, the Resurrection, the Ascension¹⁵—but the other four are narrowly tied to the Order and the Abbey. Full pages are allocated to the mission of St. Benedict, the baptism and martyrdom of San Giustina herself, and the death of her accredited biographer, St. Prosdocimus.¹⁶ The latter is a figure so obscure as to be almost unknown outside Padua. His medieval biographer wanted to make him a disciple of St. Peter and the first bishop of Padua; unfortunately, he also wanted him to be an associate of San Giustina, who was supposed to have been martyred under Maxentius over 200 years later.¹⁷ But the prominence given to such an obscure figure shows what a specialised commission Bordon was given. Below the level of these fifteen illuminations the scale is gradually reduced through half-page illustrations with more or less elaborate marginal decoration down to tiny vignettes inserted into the text itself. Bordon's own

¹³ "... altre verso il fine del libro non ancora compiute". See the discussion of Mariani Canova, *art. cit.*, p. 110.

¹⁴ These secondary illuminations are: f. 1 r (Adoration of the Shepherds), 8 v (Adoration of Magi), 11 r (Last Supper), 16 v (Epiphany), 26 r (Feast of St. Andrew and St. Matthew), 54 r (Assumption of the Virgin), 68 r (All Saints).

¹⁵ Ff. 3 v, 6 v, 12 v, 19 r.

¹⁶ Ff. 38 r, 65 r, 69 r, 71 r.

¹⁷ F. 69 r for St. Prosdocimus. He is included in the *Roman Martyrology* of 1922, p. 262, entry for 7 November. The fullest account of him and his links with San Giustina that I have been able to find is that of S. Baring-Gould, *Lives of the Saints* (Edinburgh, 1914 ed.), xi. 152-4; xiii. 168. This aggressively Protestant account revels in the "infamous forgeries".

personality obviously had the fullest play where his employers' preference had left him the largest amount of space, so it is to the full-page illuminations that we must turn to discover the strengths, the weaknesses, and the individual features of his style.

Landscape and classical architecture seem to have been the two subjects which fascinated him most. He set his Nativity (f. 3 r) against a background of rolling green countryside and blue distance, signed his name on an antique sarcophagus in the foreground, and framed the whole composition within a niche flanked by Corinthian columns. This very bold fusion of different elements was rarely possible, but the various features occur often on their own. Christ ascends into the same rain-washed, blue heaven, barred here and there with white clouds (f. 19 r). St. Matthew and St. Andrew are found fishing in the same pastoral landscape, though on this occasion the subject demands a river, trees, and a few other figures (f. 26 r). The architectural themes naturally dominate the indoor scenes. One of the most striking is St. Giustina's own baptism (f. 71 v), where the eye is led straight back from the font to a scalloped apse set at the end of a colonnade. St. Giustina's martyrdom (f. 65 r) is set in a Roman pretorium, and the perspective is again expertly handled by placing the incident on a floor of red and white marble slabs, and by setting the emperor on a stepped dais at right angles to the eye. As satisfied as he had been with his daring Nativity, Bordon chose to sign this illustration on a bystander's shield.

Perhaps because of his preoccupation with landscape and antique architecture, Bordon seems to have been much less interested in and much less successful with the portrayal of the human form. His figures often lack proportion, and they almost always lack expression. With a static group such as the parade of All Saints this gives a rather effective, monumental quality, but in a scene which demands violent action the bodies seem to become frozen in space like the marble buildings that surround them. St. Giustina looks as if she has posed carefully for the executioner's knife. In the picture of the Ascension Bordon made no attempt to present the swirling upward movement of Christ; only his feet are shown hanging, a shade ridiculously, below the upper edge of the illustration (f. 19 r). Putti have a rather corpulent, unconvincing look about them (e.g., f. 71 v). One is left with the impression that human figures served Bordon either as

stage properties for his magnificent scenery, or as vehicles for the luxuriant and detailed decoration in which he also excelled.

The variety of decorative motifs that Bordon used was almost without limit. Like his Flemish contemporaries, he made minute studies of flowers, insects and animals, and, like them again, he entwined the resulting mass of detail into broad margins to frame his main illustrations (ff. 65 r, 68 r).¹⁸ Sometimes a small group of animals is given a panel to itself (f. 71 v). But Bordon's delight lay in decoration "all' antica", in the classical motifs studied and popularised by Andrea Mantegna and his school during the last quarter of the fifteenth century.¹⁹ He loved to crowd his margins with antique vases of every exotic shape and size (ff. 13 v, 19 r, 20 r, 38 r); to wrap sprays of acanthus leaf round the vases; and then, unexpectedly, to produce a dolphin or a sphinx out of the leaves (ff. 6 v, 71 v). An ox-skull and a grotesque face peer out from the border that surrounds the picture of Christ's Ascension. Bordon revelled in the recondite, the exotic, or the merely subtle. Not content with placing his Nativity between Corinthian columns, he created an elaborate *trompe l'œil* by making out that the whole scene had been painted on a roughly-cut piece of parchment. The gambit seems to have pleased him; he signed his Nativity, just as he had signed another illumination executed in the same cunning style nearly fifty years before.²⁰

Unfortunately, the features that we have described were not the private preserve of Bordon; they were the common currency of a considerable school of illuminators who operated in Venice or Padua, exchanged ideas, and often collaborated on the same project. Some may have enjoyed family, as well as professional, connections.²¹ Nor was manuscript illumination the only art to be

¹⁸ On this aspect of contemporary Flemish work see O. Paecht, "The Master of Mary of Burgundy", *Burlington Magazine*, lxxxv (1945), 295-300; J. G. Alexander, *The Master of Mary of Burgundy: a Book of Hours for Engelbert of Nassau*, New York, 1970; A. Van Buren, "The Master of Mary of Burgundy and his Colleagues: the State of Research and Questions of Method", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, xxxviii (1975), 286-309.

¹⁹ O. Paecht, "Notes and Observations on the Origins of Humanistic Book Decoration", in D. Gordon, ed., *Fritz Saxl: a Volume of Memorial Essays from his Friends in England* (London, 1957), pp. 184-194; M. Meiss, *Andrea Mantegna as Illuminator: an Episode in Renaissance Art*, Columbia, 1957.

²⁰ Landesbibliothek, Gotha, Mon. typ. 1477, f. 13r. See Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, Plate 29.

²¹ J. J. G. Alexander, "Notes on some Veneto-Paduan Illuminated Books of

affected by the style we have described. One has only to glance at the ducal tombs in S. Giovanni e Paolo to realise that the taste for decoration "all' antica" swept Venice with the force of a craze from around 1470, and must be regarded as the stock-in-trade of any artist who was looking for patrons in the most fashionable circles. Style on its own can give no certain indication of an illuminator's identity. It is not surprising that the list of works attributed to Bordon is continually being expanded, while the argument over problem-cases, like the Pierpoint Morgan Aristotle, continues unresolved.²² It is still less surprising that the artist of the *Polifilo* has proved impossible to identify, when there are so many candidates qualified for the post. I propose, therefore, to shift the focus of discussion away from style and towards patronage for a while, because I think it is possible to form some idea of Bordon's circle of patronage without going beyond the small number of works attributed to him on solid documentary evidence. This will act as a check on the more volatile stylistic evidence, to which I shall presently return.

The Dublin *Evangelarium* gives little help here. S. Giustina was an important centre of artistic and intellectual activity, but a commission from the 1520s cannot be expected to cast much light twenty years or more in arrears. There is rather more to be made of the next complete work, which we can trace definitely to Bordon by working systematically backwards through his life. In 1494 Bordon sought a senatorial privilege on the sale of some translations from the *Satires* of Lucian which he had commissioned Simon Bevilacqua to print. The colophon states that Bordon collected the translations and underwrote the costs of the edition.²³ It is natural to conclude that the illuminations in the

the Renaissance", *Arte veneta*, xxiii (1969), 9-19, points to the great similarity in the decorative motifs in a number of different manuscripts. M. Levi d'Ancona, "Giovanni Vendramin da Padova", *ibid.*, xxxii (1978), 39, points out that the illuminator in question is mentioned in the marriage-contract of Bordon's niece.

²² See the article of M. Levi d'Ancona cited under n. 3 above; Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, pp. 122-130; J. J. G. Alexander, *Italian Renaissance Illumination* (London, 1977), pp. 17-18; O. Paecht and J. J. G. Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, ii (Oxford, 1970), Nos. 570, 575, 593. Two volumes from the Library of Arthur Houghton were ascribed to Bordon in the Catalogue of the sale at Christie's on 5 December 1979: see Nos. 227 and 229. I am grateful to Dr. Albinia de la Mare for drawing my attention to these two entries.

²³ See n. 6 above. On this volume see also Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, pp. 123-4.

vellum copy preserved in Vienna are also his, since they show the same quiet landscapes and unemotional figures as the Dublin *Evangelarium*, while the opening page is wreathed in the same fantastic tangle of dolphins and vases.²⁴ The publisher must have decorated this single copy for presentation to a member of the Mocenigo family, whose crest appears on the opening leaf. The Mocenigo were a large clan, but the existence of other works illuminated in a similar style suggests at the least a consistent pattern of patronage. A manuscript of St. Jerome's *Letters*, now in Berlin, also carries the Mocenigo coat of arms, and the illuminations have been attributed by at least two authorities to Bordon. Even if one prefers to regard Girolamo da Cremona or Gaspare da Padova as the artist, the use of perspective, the landscape, the cameos, jewels and fabulous creatures, are enough to show that this patron's taste did not differ much from that of the kinsman who received Bordon's special copy of Lucian.²⁵ Two Aldine octavos, a Martial and a Petrarch, printed on vellum and illuminated in the same "all' antica" style, both carry the Mocenigo blazon.²⁶ And at the end of the line, we have a name; Alvise Mocenigo, then Venetian ambassador to France, helped Aldus Manutius to secure the very early manuscript of Pliny's *Letters* which was used for the edition of 1508.²⁷ It is, of course, quite possible that several different members of the family were involved in the different transactions; but there is a certain coherence of taste in the manuscript, the three printed books, and the diplomatic support for an important humanist project. The connection with the Mocenigo family at least enables us to narrow the circle of Bordon's possible patrons.

As we work back from the signed work at the end of his life, we come upon one more group of illuminations that can be attributed to Bordon on more or less solid documentary evidence. Four law-texts, now in the Landesbibliothek of Gotha, and the two celebrated volumes of Andrea Torresani's Latin edition of Aristotle, now owned by the Pierpoint Morgan Library, all come

²⁴ Ibid., Plates 44, 213-6.

²⁵ Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, 78 D 13. See Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, pp. 154-5 and Plates 24, 97, 99. The authoress, in fact, assigns this volume to Gerolamo da Cremona.

²⁶ British Library, C.4 d.11. See below for further discussion.

²⁷ G. Orlandi, *Aldo Manuzio editore*, i (Milan, 1976), 94. On Mocenigo and his mission see Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, p. 245.

from the personal collection of the German merchant-publisher Peter Ugleheimer.²⁸ The illuminations, of a well marked classical bias, carry his name, his family crest, or both. Two of the volumes in Gotha—a *Digestum Novum* printed by Jenson in 1477 and the *Decretales* of Gregory IX, printed by the same printer two years later—carry variations of the signature “Opus Benedicti Patavini”.²⁹ Taken together, the declaration of authorship and the proof of ownership can at last give us some precise directions. But there are some preliminary difficulties to be cleared up first.

During the period when the San Giustina *Evangelarium* was lost to view, a number of experts wanted to separate the “Benedictus Patavinus” of the Gotha incunabula from the “Benedictus Bordo” of the *Evangelarium*.³⁰ But the re-appearance of that manuscript, and Miriam Billanovich’s careful reconstruction of Bordon’s family background, have ended this controversy. The *Digestum*, the *Decretales*, and the *Evangelarium* are too similar in style to be the work of different hands, and we now know that Bordon could have been of an age to work on Ugleheimer’s books by the later 1470s. But defining the extent of Bordon’s responsibility for the illuminations in those books is a far less tractable problem. He signed only two volumes. The general resemblance of the illuminations in the other four has led some authorities to attribute all six to him, but the name of Gerolamo da Cremona has been associated with the Morgan Aristotle since Berenson’s time, and more recently a third hand, whether of Gaspare Romano or of a “Master of the Seven Virtues”, has been traced in the volumes of Gratian and of Innocent IV.³¹ Our quest for precise connections between artists and patrons may be running into the same difficulty that it encountered with the Mocenigo Lucian—that of having too many possible candidates and too little certainty on one side of the balance.

²⁸ On this group of incunables see Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, pp. 153-6. On the Morgan Aristotle see also H. Thompson, “The Most Magnificent Book in the World?”, *Burlington Magazine*, ix (1906), 16-21.

²⁹ Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, loc. cit., Nos. 78 and 79 in the catalogue.

³⁰ The protagonist of this view was Levi d’Ancona. See the article cited under n. 3 above.

³¹ See the discussion in Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, under catalogue Nos. 71, 72 and 77: M. Levi d’Ancona, “Postille a Girolamo da Cremona”, in *Studi di Bibliografia e di Storia in onore di Tammaro de Marinis*, iii (Citta del Vaticano, 1964), 45-104.

Two answers may be made here. First, the documentary grounds for believing that Gerolamo da Cremona worked in Venice or Padua are not entirely convincing. Neither of the two references that are thought to mention him gives a precise identification and one sends him off to the wrong destination, Florence rather than Venice.³² Second, even if the Morgan Aristotle was illuminated by Gerolamo, it seems to have been his last work. His active career cannot be extended far beyond the publication date of 1483. Much the same can be said of the "Master of the Seven Virtues", whose last attributed work on the *Decretales* of Innocent IV must also have followed fairly soon after the publication of that work in 1481. Whether one, two, or three masters illustrated these surviving books of Peter Ugleheimer, only one of them emerges with both a solid personality and a career which demonstrably extends beyond the mid-1480s: that is Benedetto Bordon.

The name of Peter Ugleheimer provides the first vital link between Bordon's patrons and Aldus' circle of customers and admirers. Ugleheimer was a merchant of Frankfurt who resided in Italy, and one of those entrepreneurs whose energy played the main part in giving typography its triumphant "second start" in the peninsula. He first appears along with his compatriot Johann Rauchfass as a commercial backer of Nicholas Jenson's Venetian company. From 1480 he was a member of the larger syndicate which Jenson formed with his one-time rival John of Cologne. Ugleheimer's interest seems to have been in selling rather than producing books. He apparently moved away from Venice to Milan some time after Jenson and John of Cologne had died in 1481, making no attempt to keep the syndicate active on his own, and when he made his will in December 1498, he was concerned only with sales. But he had not been a sleeping partner. He must have used his position as a shareholder to assemble the personal library the relics of which we are now discussing, and his association with Jenson was so close that the Frenchman's Will made him sole legatee of all "punches, matrices, and other

³² I confess to being a little surprised that scholars have been so ready to accept the "maestro Girolamo" mentioned in the two documents published by Levi d'Ancona as Girolamo da Cremona. Accepting the evidence that he was going to Florence as a suggestion that he might have worked in Venice was an even more daring leap, which worried even the authoress (*op. cit.*, p. 69).

materials for the printing of books".³³ So when Aldus' future partner Andrea Torresani claimed in 1483 that he was now working with Jenson's types, the meaning is clear enough. He, and perhaps as many as thirty other printers who used types of a similar design, bought either a strike or a full set of matrices from Peter Ugleheimer.³⁴ There is a further strong suggestion that Torresani and Ugleheimer were business-partners in the hexameter line: "Ulmus Aristotelem Petrus produxerat orbi", which appears in one of the illuminated volumes now owned by the Pierpoint Morgan Library.³⁵ Whether or not he invested in Torresani's company, it looks as if Ugleheimer underwrote this particular edition.

During my research on the Aldine company, I was intrigued by a number of signs that Aldus may have inherited both technical expertise and commercial contacts from Nicholas Jenson, probably through Torresani. Contemporaries noticed and commented on the general resemblance between Jenson and Aldus, as exponents of roman typography and as leaders of the Venetian industry.³⁶ The detailed evidence is never quite specific, but it is suggestive. A "Francesco da Bologna" was employed by Jenson and Rauchfass in 1475. Whether or not he was the same man, Francesco Griffo of Bologna was Aldus' main cutter of types.³⁷ A bookseller named Gaspar von Dinslaken had been a prominent member of the syndicate of Jenson and John of Cologne, and much of Aldus' marketing in the German-speaking countries was handled by a certain Jordan von Dinslaken. We do not know what the connection between the two men was, but it is hard to believe that they were not related.³⁸ The services of an illuminator could

³³ Material in this paragraph from E. Motta, "Pamfilo Castaldi, Antonio Planella, Pietro Ugleimer ed il vescovo d'Aleria", *Rivista storica italiana*, i (1884), 260-271. For Jenson's Will see C. Castellani, *La stampa in Venezia dalla sua origine alla morte di Aldo Manuzio seniore* (new edition, 1973), pp. 85-92.

³⁴ See Castellani, op. cit., p. 26; H. Carter, *A View of Early Typography up to about 1600* (Oxford, 1969), p. 71.

³⁵ Mariani Canova, *La miniatura veneta*, Plate 22.

³⁶ Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, pp. 38-9.

³⁷ P. Arnaudet, "Graveurs de Caractères et Typographes de l'Italie du Nord", *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 7^e ser., iv (1903), 288-95.

³⁸ E. Pastorello, "Di Aldo Pio Manuzio: testimonanze e documenti", *La Bibliofilia*, lxxvii (1965), 191-2; L. Gerulaitis, *Printing and Publishing in Fifteenth-century Venice* (London, 1976), pp. 20-30, and Lowry, op. cit., pp. 18-9 on the activities of Gaspar von Dinslaken.

have been transferred just as easily as those of a type-cutter or a bookseller. If, as I suspect, Bordon was responsible for illustrating Ugleheimer's Aristotle, then Torresani would almost certainly have dealt with him in the preparation of this special commission.³⁹

But we have no need to use Torresani as a stalking-horse, since there is clear and independent evidence that Aldus could have had access to Ugleheimer's library and Bordon's illumination at an early and vital moment in his publishing career. Ugleheimer's interest in books was apparently shared by his wife Margherita. When he drew up his Will on 16 December 1487 Peter not only directed her to check his business accounts and pay off any debts, but bequeathed all his printing equipment and all his "books printed on parchment or vellum" to her exclusively.⁴⁰ Now custodian of the family library, Margherita seems also to have inherited her husband's business-interests. On 17 April 1499 Aldus Manutius acted as her agent in drawing up a contract for copy of St. Catherine of Siena's *Letters*. Margherita must have acted as underwriter for the edition, and must therefore have been in touch with Aldus for some months. Aldus could have had easy access to Bordon's illustrations at exactly the moment when *Polifilo*, which appeared in December 1499, was in its preparatory stages.⁴¹

But, suggestive though it may be, the evidence of patronage provided by these few documented works is incomplete. It shows that Bordon moved in the same circles as Aldus, and that Aldus could have had access to his work. It does not show that Aldus either knew Bordon's work directly, or employed him. To demonstrate that he did, we must turn back to the evidence of style—more particularly to the style of the illuminations in surviving Aldine copies.

It is a strange comment on the conservatism of scholars and

³⁹ I am very cautiously going against the run of expert opinion in attributing these illuminations to Bordon, though my reasons for doing so are negative. We know that Bordon worked for Ugleheimer, and I am not satisfied that we have any definite evidence that Girolamo da Cremona worked in either Venice or Padua. See nn. 31, 32 above.

⁴⁰ Motta, *op. cit.* under n. 33 above, p. 271.

⁴¹ M. Laurent, "Alde Manuce l'Ancien, éditeur de S. Catherine de Siene", *Traditio*, v (1947), 357-63. The contract between Aldus and Margherita, which contains the only known example of the printer's handwriting, has been reproduced in facsimile on a number of occasions: see for example C. Castellani, *Early Venetian Printing Illustrated* (Venice/London/New York, 1895), p. 32.

bibliographers that the presentation copies which Aldus printed on vellum have escaped serious critical attention for so long. Incunabula printed on vellum attract critical interest because they represent the slow transition from manuscript to printed book. Sixteenth-century manuscripts attract the same kind of interest because they reflect the lingering nostalgia for a bygone age. But since the majority of illuminated Aldine copies were produced after 1500, they are allowed to drop unnoticed between two deeply entrenched academic positions. Every one of the special copies printed in Paris during the early 1470s for Guillaume Fichet has been catalogued, described, and discussed in detail. Yet Renouard's *Annales*, now nearly two centuries old and based in many cases on second-hand information, remains the only comprehensive guide to Aldus' special commissions. This is a deplorable situation, when one considers the key-position of the Aldine press in European typography, the very fine quality of some of the illuminations, and the information that is available about the preparation and pricing of the copies.⁴²

The background is provided by a three-way correspondence between Aldus himself, Isabella d'Este or her secretary, and Isabella's well known agent in Venice, Lorenzo da Pavia.⁴³ The

⁴² Some excellent observations on illuminated Aldines in the Ambrosiana and the Laurenziana can be found in D. Fava, "Libri membranacei stampati in Italia nel Quattrocento", *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* 1937, pp. 55-84, esp. Fig. 7; but the discussion stops short in 1500. A. Renouard, *Annales de l'imprimerie des Alde*, 3 vols, Paris, 1825 and 1834, carries brief notices of copies printed on vellum but no description of illuminations and no reproductions. I have followed up his references to copies in British and French libraries and found them remarkably accurate, even when the location of the books has been changed. On Italian collections Renouard was much more fallible: e.g. (p. 9) the three volumes of Aristotle in the Riccardiana are not on vellum but a fine grade of paper. I have not yet investigated his notices of German and Austrian libraries. It must also be said that a number of very interesting items, not necessarily on vellum, were unknown to Renouard. See B. Whiting, *The Ahmanson-Murphy Aldine Collection* (Los Angeles, 1979), No. 90 (Aulus Gellius, bound for Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon). I am grateful to Dr. Franklin Murphy for this reference.

It is sobering to compare these scattered references with the full description available in A. Claudin, *The First Paris Press: an Account of the Books Printed for G. Fichet and J. Heynlin in the Sorbonne, 1470-72*, Bibliographical Society, London, 1898.

⁴³ Published by A. Baschet, *Aldo Manuce, Lettres et Documents, 1495-1515*, Venice 1867. See A. Luzio and R. Renier, "La coltura e le relazioni letterarie di Isabella d'Este-Gonzaga", *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, xxxiii (1899), 16-20.

exchange was started by the excitement which greeted Aldus' literary octavo editions in the Spring and Summer of 1501. Replying to an enquiry from his mistress, Lorenzo reported on 26 July that he had visited Aldus to buy copies of Virgil, Ovid and Petrarch printed on "carta bona"—here apparently meaning vellum—but that so far only copies of Virgil were available. Petrarch, he added, would be ready in ten days or so, and Isabella was promised that the first and finest of the fifteen special copies in preparation would be hers. Lorenzo went on to give some account of Aldus' future plans. Editions of Dante and Ovid were on the way, but lack of suitable sheets of vellum—"clean and white ... not thick in one place and thin in another"—was likely to make special copies a problem. Isabella's help was enlisted, since the precious material was apparently more readily available and of better quality in Mantua than in Venice. Lorenzo dispatched a Virgil with his letter, and warned his mistress that the price was 5 ducats—more than thirty times the 1.5 lire asked for an ordinary paper copy. No mention was made of any illumination.⁴⁴

Though the Marchioness had made the first approach, even her agent's enthusiasm does not seem to have made her an immediate convert to the Aldine style. During 1503 and 1504 Aldus wrote to her three times on behalf of a dependent named Federigo da Ceresara who came from Mantuan territory and was in constant trouble there after murdering his brother some two years earlier.⁴⁵ Probably to thank her for her help, Aldus sent copies of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* and the Poems of Gregory Nazianzenus on 17 July 1504.⁴⁶ But Isabella does not appear to have pursued her original order in the meantime. On 26 and 27 May 1505 her secretary wrote again to Aldus, asking for vellum copies of all the "small works"—probably meaning octavo editions—which he had printed so far, and excluding only the Virgil which Lorenzo da Pavia had forwarded in 1501.⁴⁷ Aldus replied in a brief but informative note, offering unbound copies of Martial, Tibullus, Catullus, Propertius, and Lucan, with a copy of Persius, Juvenal

⁴⁴ Baschet, Doc. V.

⁴⁵ Ibid., Docs. VI, VII, VIII. On this curious episode see Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, pp. 96-7.

⁴⁶ Baschet, Doc. IX.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Docs. X, XI.

and Horace already bound together and illuminated. Prices had changed little. The large, illuminated volume of the satirists was offered at 6 ducats. Martial cost 4 ducats, Lucan 3, the elegists 3 all together.⁴⁸ The exacting Marchioness was still not impressed. A month later she returned all the books with the caustic comment that they were not worth a half of the sum asked.⁴⁹

The immediate significance of these letters is clear enough. They tell us straightway that fifteen special copies was a usual number, and that printing on vellum was a costly and hazardous business. Irregularities on the surface of the skin would be no obstacle to a pen, but might blurr or fade in contact with a flat printing-frame. This problem perhaps explains both the high price asked, and Isabella's reaction when she discovered it. But other shades of meaning are less obvious. One naturally assumes that vellum copies were always printed as special commissions, with a single client in view and an appropriate scheme of illumination planned. The letters of Lorenzo da Pavia and Aldus prove that this was not the case. No doubt a few special copies would have been spoken for; we know that Pietro Bembo, the Aldine editor of Petrarch, had one run off for himself. But if Juvenal, Martial and Horace—all published in 1501—were still available on vellum and unbound in 1505, then we can only conclude that a proportion of the fifteen copies was left to find buyers on the open market. Illumination, too, seems to have been an unusual extra. Aldus' explicit statement that the volume of satirists was illustrated, suggests that the other copies he forwarded were not. Further, it offers vital proof that Aldus had his own contacts among the Venetian illuminators, and did on occasion sub-let commissions direct from his workshop.

This, in its turn, gives a special interest to the small group of Aldine vellum copies which forms the second phase of my attempt to bring Aldus and Benedetto Bordon into conjunction. In the Bibliothèque Nationale, the British Library, and the John Rylands University Library there are rather more than a dozen of the early sixteenth-century literary octavos the illuminations in which prove beyond any doubt that they were specially commissioned by

⁴⁸ Ibid., Doc. XII. On the price of Aldine octavos see Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, pp. 143, 146, with notes ad loc.

⁴⁹ Quoted in *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, vi (1885), 276, n. 4. This rejoinder was not published by Baschet.

individual collectors, and that those collectors lived in Venice. The clue lies in the various family crests that they all carry. In two cases these allow us to be very specific indeed. The Rylands Library has two copies of Petrarch on vellum, one carrying the arms of the ducal Barbarigo family, the other those of the Bembo. The Bembo copy carries a proud boast from a later owner that he stole it from the library of Pietro Bembo, a close collaborator of Aldus who appears in Lorenzo da Pavia's letter supervising the edition during the summer of 1501.⁵⁰ We cannot be quite so precise about the other copy. One of Aldus' partners, Pierfrancesco Barbarigo, died in 1499, leaving his one-third share of the company to a clutch of rather uninteresting relatives, any one of whom might have been the original owner. But there is a slightly stronger candidate in Pierfrancesco's natural son Santo Barbarigo, whom we know to have been a pupil of Aldus and who was the only member of the family with any clear literary interests.⁵¹ Neither of these copies carries more illumination than the family crest, a few sprays of decorative foliage and a couple of putti—too little to allow even a guess at the artist's identity. But here, at least, we have two of the fifteen special copies mentioned by Lorenzo da Pavia, commissioned by persons very closely associated with Aldus and resident in Venice when the edition was published. There is every likelihood that the illumination was also carried out in Venice.

There is more to be made of a group of six vellum octavos which once formed part of a single collection and are now shared between the British Library and the Rylands Library. All bear the same crest of a lion rampant carrying a crucifix, which is a minor but distinctive variation of the Pisani device adopted by the S. Marina branch of the family. The same crest appears, interestingly, in a sculptured relief which stands above the door of

⁵⁰ Spencer collection No. 15442 (Barbarigo copy) and No. 20957 (Bembo copy). One of Renouard's errors was to confuse the two, probably as a result of misreading Lord Spencer's description. See *Annales*, i. 28-9. For a detailed bibliographical description of Bembo's copy see C. Clough, "Bembo's Personal Copy of his Edition of Petrarch's *Le Cose Volgari*", *Bulletin*, lv (1972-73), 253-58.

⁵¹ M. Barbaro, "Genealogie delle famiglie patrizie veneziane", MS. in Archivio di stato, Venezia, Vol. I, p. 172; E. Pastorello, "... testimonianze e documenti", op. cit. under n. 3 above, p. 214, Doc. XI. On Santo Barbarigo, *ibid.*, p. 201, Doc. V, and G. Morelli, *Dissertazioni intorno ad alcuni viaggiatori veneziani poco noti* (Venice, 1803), pp. 18-30. He was a friend of the antiquarian Zuane Bembo, who described him as a skilful jurist and musician.

a building opposite to Aldus' first shop.⁵² After some years of intermittent probing, I am certain that the original owner was Domenico di Zuane Pisani, the only member of that branch who was of an age to be collecting books seriously around the turn of the century. The documents fall far short of giving us an inventory of his library or proving that he did, in fact, live just across the street from Aldus; but they are sufficient to form a dossier that sets him well within the circle of Aldus' contacts, and reveals something of the background and tastes of those who bought the new octavo texts in quantity. First, Domenico was rich and rather a spendthrift. The Will which he drew up in 1505 declared 7456 ducats invested in various trading ventures, 6891 ducats in city property, and 3645 ducats in estates on the mainland. Assets worth a further 3000 ducats were mentioned, but cannot now be identified. Of the capital investment in the city, 4500 ducats was tied up in the construction of a new town house the location of which was not stated but which might conceivably have been the building in S. Agostin. Set alongside the complaints voiced in the senate about the size of the retinue he was taking to Spain, this recent extravagance suggests that Domenico liked to show the world that he was well off.⁵³ He was much employed in public service, especially abroad: ambassador to Milan, Spain and the papacy, he also served as governor of Vicenza and Avogadore del Commun. He was the sort of busy man who needed a book he could carry easily to beguile such quiet moments as he had during the day's affairs.⁵⁴ Finally, he had a smattering of literary culture and some aspirations to real erudition. In 1493 he borrowed three Greek manuscripts from the Marciana, making himself one of the only men to exercise that right through the official channels at

⁵² Barbaro, "Genealogie", Vol. VI, p. 135. The relief is above the door of a coffee bar, S. Polo 2279.

⁵³ There are two versions of Pisani's Will: Archivio di stato, Venezia (A.S.V.) Notarili, Testamenti, Atti Rizzo, Busta 1227, No.126 and 1229, No. 134. The first, dated 11 June 1505, is in his own hand and gives the rough idea of his affairs that is outlined here. The second is the formal "prova" before the doge, and gives only generalities about the estate and details about family relationships. Neither version mentions a library.

Doubts about the size of Pisani's retinue were raised in the senate on 8 September 1501 (Sanudo, *Diarii*, Vol. III, cols. 745-6).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, ii, col. 894 (1 March 1498); III, col. 120 (18 February 1500/01); VI, col. 144 (29 March 1505).

this early date.⁵⁵ When he left for Spain in 1501, he caused a flutter of anxiety by naming as his secretary a certain "Zuan cretico" rather than a trained official from the chancellery. This was almost certainly Johannes Gregoropoulos, a regular member of the Aldine circle and a signatory of the famous "Statute of the New Academy".⁵⁶ Though the evidence does not offer the absolute precision one would like, it is clear that Pisani paid more than lip service to the Greek revival which Aldus championed, that they shared tastes and contacts, and that they may even have been neighbours. Since there are no other probable candidates in his family, it is practically certain that Domenico Pisani is our man.

The first of his books that concerns us is a copy of the first octavo that Aldus printed, the Virgil of 1501. The second leaf is decorated by a tiny pastoral landscape which shows the shepherd Tityrus of the first Eclogue piping to his sheep: a Corinthian capital, an urn and an ox-skull pick out the inner margin, winged beast-men support the family shield below the text, and the text itself is framed by the now familiar *trompe l'œil* of the torn, curling parchment.⁵⁷ These are all features which could be paralleled from the Dublin *Evangelarium*, but, since the Virgil has lost a good deal of its never-ample illumination through clipping and rebinding, it would be most unsafe to attribute it to any artist. There is rather more to be made of the very fine three-volume set of Ovid's works which Aldus printed in 1502. Pisani's copies are all excellently preserved, and all enclose their first page of text in the characteristic border of entwined leaves and flowers. The *Heroides* and *Fasti* both set the family escutcheon against a small, inset landscape at the base of the page, and both show the lush

⁵⁵ G. Coggiola, "Il prestito di manoscritti della Marciana dal 1474 al 1527", *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, xxv (1908), 52. The three volumes were Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De complexionē et augmentatione*, Johannes Damascenus, *De primis principiis*, Galen, *Therapeutica parva*.

⁵⁶ Sanudo, loc. cit. under n. 53 above. See Castellani, *La stampa in Venezia*, p. 101, where the same nomenclature, "Giovanni cretico", is used. A further clue is given by Sanudo's reference to the Cretan's teaching at Padua, for we know this was true of Gregoropoulos about this time: see V. Oleroff, "L'humaniste Dominicain Jean Conon et le Crétois Jean Gregoropoulos", *Scriptorium*, iv (1950), 104-7; H. Saffrey, "Un humaniste Dominicain, Jean Cuno de Nuremberg, précurseur d'Érasme à Bale", *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance*, xxxiii (1971), 25.

⁵⁷ See n. 20 above.

foliage and blue distance that appear repeatedly in the Dublin manuscript. In the *Heroides*, the landscape is set between the bizarre leaf-dolphins that adorn many of Bordon's works. In the *Metamorphoses*, the tiny scene contains studies of animals rather similar to those which surround the view of S. Giustina's martyrdom in the *Evangelarium*.⁵⁸ The same decorative motifs appear in even more striking form in two other Aldines, now in the British Library. Juvenal and Persius, bound together but with the first page of each author's text illuminated, show the same floral arabesques, dolphins and ox-skulls: fantastic beasts—winged fishhorses in this case—flank the Pisani crest at the beginning of Juvenal's first satire.⁵⁹ An incomplete Statius, containing only the *Thebais* and *Achilleis*, shows both the dolphins and an ornate border of entwined flowers, strawberries and butterflies which might have been a blue-print for the larger version that surrounds S. Giustina's martyrdom.⁶⁰

But, though they offer many examples of smaller decorative motifs, none of the Pisani copies has a full-page illustration which can be compared to Bordon's authenticated work. To fill out this rather surprising gap, we must turn to other volumes in the same libraries. The Rylands Library has a perfectly-preserved copy of Juvenal and Persius, bearing the antlered stag of an old Venetian family called Civran.⁶¹ The verso of the first leaf is given over partly to the crest and some floral decoration, partly to a scene which represents the furious satirist hurling his book at three retreating figures, probably symbols of the vices he is denouncing. It is a tense, violent moment: but the four human figures all have that frozen, expressionless quality which appears in the scenes of S. Giustina's martyrdom or the Slaughter of the Innocents in the Dublin *Evangelarium*. The landscape behind them is a classic vision of Bordon's Veneto. The rolling green hills in the middle distance, the mountains merging with the sky in the background, the castle on a nearby hilltop, all correspond to numerous pages of

⁵⁸ Spencer collection, No. 3666, Vols. I-III, ff. a ii r, aa ii r, aaa ii r. On this edition see Renouard, *Annales* i. 37-38.

⁵⁹ British Library, C 4 g. 10, f. A ii r. Renouard, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁶⁰ B.L., C 4 d. 10, f. K i r. Renouard, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁶¹ Spencer collection, No. 8666. The Civran were a small family by this date, and I have so far been unable to trace any members of it with literary associations. Their crest is depicted in Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia, MS. Ital. Cl. VII 186 (7654), "Origine delle famiglie nobili veneziane", f. 15 r.

the illuminator's authenticated work.⁶² Though it is not possible to point even to a probable owner in this case, the feeling that the illumination is Bordon's becomes a conviction.

Much the same can be said of a Petrarch now in the British Library. Once again, the first leaf carries a full page of illumination which sets an appropriate scene above the original owner's family crest. The poet is shown reading quietly under a tree, while the laurel crown is set on his head:⁶³ woodlands merge into mountains and mountains into sky to form the background; curving dolphins with acanthus fins enclose the entire scene. Below stands the mill-wheel of Da Molin, another Venetian noble family, which differed from the Civran in being both powerful and very numerous during the sixteenth century. This copy again raises the possibility of influential neighbours taking an interest in Aldus' work: just as the Pisani lion stands across the calle from his old workshop, so the Molin mill-wheel decorates a large palazzo beside the Ponte di Ca' Dona, on the south side of what was Campo S. Agostin. But the records do not offer even the slender and fragmentary help that pointed towards Domenico Pisani. The present palazzo Da Molin is a reconstruction of a much earlier building, and the early sixteenth-century tax-returns do not reveal which of the numerous branches of the family lived there. With no minor variations of the crest and no individual of proven literary tastes, we have no chance of narrowing an almost unlimited field.⁶⁴

With the Pisani copies one can feel fairly certain of the original owner, but much less sure of the illuminator; with the Civran Juvenal and the Da Molin Petrarch it is the illuminator who declares himself, rather than the owners. But at least it is possible to conclude with two cases in which the artist and his patron can both be identified with some degree of confidence. An Aldine Martial in the British Library has a full-page illumination very similar in construction and detail to those of the Civran Juvenal and the Da Molin Petrarch. The poet receives a laurel crown from his emperor, in one of those static, monumental groups which Bordon preferred, and against the now familiar landscape of trees

⁶² Eg. Chester Beatty Library, MS. cit., ff. 3v, 13v, 26r, 27v, etc.

⁶³ B.L. C 4 a 5. A black and white reproduction of this miniature may be seen in *The World of Aldus Manutius*.

⁶⁴ Bibl. Marc., cod. cit., f. 18r shows the Da Molin crest.

and distant, fortified hills. The crest depicted below is the double rosette of the Mocenigo, another Venetian patrician family.⁶⁵ The Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris has a similar but even more sumptuous copy of Petrarch's *Cose volgari*, which has two full-page illustrations. The first, on the recto of f. a ii, shows putti scattering roses from a background of fleecy cloud, while others pick flowers or stroke a fawn below; the second, immediately before the *Sonnetti in Morte di Madonna Laura*, shows her lying on a gilded coffin conquered by a triumphant Death who leers down from above. Only the first page carries the blazon of the double rosette. Though the difference in subject-matter leaves fewer obvious points of comparison, the animals and the rain-washed sky in the first illumination have their counterparts in the Dublin manuscript.⁶⁶

We have already mentioned the Alvise Mocenigo, who earned Aldus' gratitude and the dedication of the relevant edition by bringing back a very ancient manuscript of Pliny's *Letters* from his tour of duty as Venetian ambassador in Paris. It is impossible to say now whether it was he or even a member of his immediate family who commissioned the various other works which carry the same badge and similar decoration; but it is certain that Alvise di Tomaso Mocenigo had associations with the Aldine circle well before his embassy in France. He was an esteemed colleague and friend of the diarist Sanudo,⁶⁷ and, between November 1504 and October 1505, when he left for France, he was a regular companion of the Greek humanist Janus Lascaris, who arrived in Venice as the representative of Louis XII towards the end of 1504. Alvise was one of the patricians named to escort Lascaris to the ducal palace when he came to present his credentials. Another, not very surprisingly, was Domenico Pisani.⁶⁸ We know from Aldus'

⁶⁵ B.L. C 4 d.11, f. Aiv. See Renouard, *Annales*, i. 30. A black and white reproduction of this miniature is contained among the plates in *The World of Aldus Manutius*.

⁶⁶ B.N., Paris, Velins 2142, ff. a ii r, n iii r. Renouard, loc. cit. Compare Chester Beatty MS. cit., ff. 19 r (Ascension), 65 r (Martyrdom of S. Giustina).

⁶⁷ Sanudo, *Diarii*, Vol. IV, col. 145; Sanudo proposes Mocenigo as Avogadore del Commun "per esser stato mio collega savio ai ordeni". Aldus dedicated all three volumes of Ovid to Sanudo (Renouard, *Annales*, i. 37-38).

⁶⁸ Sanudo, *Diarii*, Vol. VI, col. 101, 22 November 1504, 24 Nov., *ibid.* (Presentation of credentials): col. 116, 26 December (Mocenigo accompanies Lascaris to S. Giorgio for mass and dinner with doge Loredan). See also B. Knös, *Un ambassadeur d'Hellénisme: Janus Lascaris*, Uppsala/Paris, 1945.

own grateful remarks that Lascaris' residence became a vital centre of literary and philological discussion until his embassy concluded with the outbreak of war in 1509. Since he was housed in the palazzo Morosini on Campo S. Polo, not more than three minutes' walk from the shop, communication must have been easy.⁶⁹ There is every chance that Alvise Mocenigo had taken part in some of these meetings, and that the decision to bring the Pliny manuscript to Venice from Paris both originated and found its obvious instrument at some gathering in the palazzo Morosini.⁷⁰ If he had already purchased illuminated copies of Petrarch and Martial in 1501, then the surviving volumes must be taken as symptoms of a growing literary interest.

Even if one makes no effort to identify the illuminator, this group of vellum Aldines has real significance. The copies enable us to pick up the vibrations of Aldus' influence far beyond his immediate intellectual circle, and to see something of the men to whom the new octavos appealed. These were no aspiring purchasers of cut-price literature. Mocenigo and Pisani were career-diplomats, kept constantly on the move by the demands of their government and obliged to read in the few odd moments when they had time. Pisani was a wealthy man. Mocenigo went on to fill some of the highest civic offices in the Venetian state.⁷¹ Yet they, and others whom we cannot pinpoint, seem to have hovered sympathetically on the fringe of Venetian intellectual life, improving their libraries and occasionally offering the sort of assistance that earned Mocenigo the dedication of an edition. The next question is unavoidable: was the illuminator Benedetto Bordon also a sympathiser on the outer fringe of the Aldine circle, and have we at last found the link between printer and illuminator? There is a fine thread of documentary evidence to suggest that we may have done so.

⁶⁹ Aldus dedicated the first volume of his *Rhetores Graeci* to Lascaris in 1508. For the text see G. Orlandi, *Aldo Manuzio editore*, N° LXV.

⁷⁰ The Paris manuscript had been known and discussed in humanist circles for some years: see E. Lowe and E. Rand, *A Sixth-century Fragment of the Letters of Pliny the Younger: a Study of Six Leaves of an Uncial Manuscript Preserved in the Pierpoint Morgan Library* (New York, Washington, 1922), pp. 37-40. Since the controversy on the Morgan fragment has never been properly settled and is not essential to the present argument, I shall restrict myself to the bibliography cited on p. 255 of *The World of Aldus Manutius*.

⁷¹ He reached the rank of Savio del Consiglio on 2 September 1524 (A.S.V., Segretario alle voci, Elezioni del senato, Miscellanea, f. 10 v).

In the final section of her article, Myriam Billanovich proved beyond serious doubt that, for all his claims to Veronese noble ancestry, the sixteenth-century Latinist Julius Caesar Scaliger was in fact the son of Benedetto Bordon. His diploma in the Arts from the University of Padua called him "filii d. Benedicti Bordoni", and the document itself is illuminated in a style that is unmistakably the father's.⁷² More important for the present argument, the authoress cites two occasions on which Scaliger claimed to have met Aldus. The second occasion, Aldus' visit to Mantua in 1510, does not concern us here. The first is less precisely dated, but more significant. In his first attack on Erasmus, Scaliger stated that: "... when you [Erasmus] had broken your religious vows and were skulking in Aldus' house, I used to come for instruction to the various learned men who met there ...". Taken on its own, this story deserves all the caution that Dottorella Billanovich gave it.⁷³ But taken alongside the evidence of the vellum copies, it gains a certain credibility. The date would have to fall between December 1507 and December 1508, during Erasmus' residence in Venice and Padua.⁷⁴ Lascaris was still in Venice at the time, and the vellum copies suggest that some of his friends and Aldus' had sought Benedetto Bordon's services as an illuminator during the previous six or seven years. It is quite probable that Benedetto's son joined the crowd of well-wishers and aspiring authors who crowded into the shop. An early admiration for Aldus might also do something to explain the virulence of Scaliger's later attacks on Erasmus; so sudden and unprovoked did they seem that it was some time before Erasmus could be brought to believe that "Scaliger" was a real person rather than a pseudonym for Aleander or Alberto Pio.⁷⁵ But a number of Aldus' more fervid Italian admirers were indeed scandalised by the mild satire on the printer's pedantry in the *Praise of Folly*, and Scaliger's hostility might well have been stirred by this imagined sneer at a childhood

⁷² Museo Correr, Venezia, Fondo P.D., MS. 828, No. 21: illustrated in Billanovich op. cit. under n. 3 above, Plates X and XI.

⁷³ Quoted from *J.C. Scaligeri pro M. Tullio contra D. Erasmus Oratio I*, 17, in Billanovich, op. cit., p. 225.

⁷⁴ *Opus Epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi*, ed. P. Allen, i (Oxford, 1906), 437-39 (No. 207), 449, (No. 213). See P. de Nolhac, *Érasme en Italie* (Paris, 1888), pp. 31 f.

⁷⁵ Allen, ed. cit., Vol. ix and x, Nos. 2575, 2581, 2743.

hero of his own and an honoured associate of his father.⁷⁶ It is a small piece of evidence, but it fits naturally into the mosaic.

The arguments for a link between Aldus and Bordon are persuasive, and could almost certainly be expanded further by a proper cataloguing of all Aldine copies containing illumination. The two men shared commercial contacts and probably also shared clients, real friends, and imagined enemies. The alliance between printer and illuminator, unlikely on the face of things but frequently established by the evidence, may prove to apply yet again.⁷⁷ But it is only right to conclude on a note of caution. The stylistic evidence that I have been able to assemble so far is incomplete, and could easily be contested; and even if it could be proved that a large number of Aldines were illuminated by Bordon, we should still be a long way from proving that the woodcuts in *Polifilo* were also designed by him. There are a few pages which carry the familiar decorative motifs—urns, ox-skulls or leaf-arabesques.⁷⁸ But the woodcut and the miniature are different media, and the special nature of *Polifilo* demanded a special style which is rarely comparable with Bordon's documented work. Unless new documentary evidence can be produced, perhaps from the Venetian or Paduan notarial archives, the problem of *Polifilo* will be with us for a long time to come.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Chapter 49 made an inoffensive quip about Aldus' constant reworking of his Grammar. This clearly shocked a number of Italians: e.g. Biblioteca comunale, Treviso, MS. 962 (i), f. 307r ("Hironimi Bononiensis Miscellanea")

Te quoque tam clari, Roterdame, nominis atra

Egit in insanos scribere bilis opus?

Tene putas sanum? Non est insania maior

Quam sanum quando se putat ullus homo.

⁷⁷ See the numerous cases cited by S. Hindman, "Cross-fertilization: experiments in Mixing the Media", in *Pen to Press* (Johns Hopkins U.P., 1977), pp. 101 f.

⁷⁸ See the edition of G. Pozzi and L. Ciapponi (Padua, 1964), Vol. I, ff. f4 v, q6 v, x5 r, etc.

⁷⁹ Many of the attributions in this study, can now be modified in the light of Lilian Armstrong's *Renaissance Miniature Painters and Classical Imagery*, London, 1981, which appeared too late to be used.