

AN ILLUSTRATED INCUNABLE OF PLINY'S NATURAL HISTORY IN THE BIBLIOTECA PALATINA, PARMA*

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COUNT Antonio Giuseppe della Torre Rezzonico of Como (1709–1785), a distant relative of Pope Clement XIII, describes in his *Disquisitiones Plinianae*¹ the copy of Pliny's *Natural History* in the edition printed at Parma in 1481 by Andreas Portilia,² which he had studied in the 'Royal Library' of Parma. 'This copy', he says, 'is to be highly esteemed for two reasons. First, it has been copiously annotated by an anonymous scholar; and second, a diligent *pictor* drew in the margins the images of numerous objects.' This copy is still in the Biblioteca Palatina of Parma, the pressmark being Inc. Pal. 1158.

Della Torre Rezzonico dates these manuscript annotations at about 1492 on the strength of the following *subscriptio* (fol. 266v):³

The emendations written with black ink are the outcome of my own efforts and lucubrations; some of them are admittedly in line with Hermolaus's emendations. But readers must bear in mind that I asked the pertinent questions before he published his work and I still continue to do so. As for the emendations written with red ink, we willingly acknowledge his authorship, as posterity will do (Pl. 20a).

It was in 1492 that Hermolaus Barbarus published the *Castigationes Plinianae*.⁴

The emendations proposed by the unnamed commentator ('castigationes atramento scriptae') are often of high quality. For instance, a passage in Pliny's fish catalogue (*Natural History*, xxxii, 151: '... scomber, salpa, horus') receives the marginal note: 'sorus. vel sauris'. This conjecture is brilliantly confirmed in the fourth-century Codex Bambergensis,⁵ which constitutes the textual basis for Pliny's books xxxii to xxxvii—a manuscript not discovered (by Ludwig von Jan) until 1831. Modern editors accept the reading *saurus* of Bambergensis as against the *horus* of all prior editions. The Parma incunable has a drawing with the legend 'vulgari lingua suro' (fol. 230v) illustrating this very phrase and so anticipating the modern identification of the *saurus* with the horse-mackerel or scad (*Trachurus Trachurus*, L.).⁶

Della Torre Rezzonico gives an extensive account of the illustrations in the Parma incunable:

... in the eighth book we find some emendations and the painted pictures of a rhinoceros (fol. 67v)⁷ and a white hare (fol. 70v); in the ninth the commentator has added in the margin the names of various fish, with the obvious intention of subsequently inserting

* I thank Mrs Johanna Rempel (Waterloo, Canada) for correcting my English.

¹ Parma 1767, ii, p. 298.

² L. Hain, *Repertorium Bibliographicum* ..., Stuttgart and Paris 1826–31, *13094.

³ The edition lacks original foliation; the manuscript folio numbers are later additions.

⁴ Rome, Eucharius Silber (Hain, as in n. 2, *2420).

⁵ Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, M. V. 10. See Fr. Leitschuh and H. Fischer, *Katalog der Handschriften der Königl. Bibliothek in Bamberg*, i, Bamberg 1895, pp. 43f (no. 42).

⁶ cf. E. de Saint-Denis, *Le vocabulaire des animaux marins en latin classique*, Paris 1947, pp. 99f.

⁷ The folio numbers are added here and elsewhere to Rezzonico's text by the author of the present article.

coloured images in the blanks, though he did not carry out the project. The sturgeon (*tursio*) occurs first (fol. 72^v), followed by the lumpfish (*scomber*) (fol. 73), an umbrina (*coracinus*), the perch (*perca*), grey mullet (*mugil*), sea-bream (*pagrus*), red mullet (*mullus*) (fol. 73^v), turbot (*rhombus*), sole (*solea*), (fol. 74) and so on. In the tenth book there was originally a representation of the mythical phoenix (fol. 78^v), now illicitly removed. Then come the screech-owl (*noctua*), the green woodpecker (*picus martialis*), the nightingale (*lusinia [sic]*) (fol. 81^v), the sparrow (*passer*) (fol. 82), the goldfinch (*carduelis*) (fol. 82^v), the bat (*vespertilio*) (fol. 84) ... In the thirteenth book there is the pomegranate (*malus Punicus*) (fol. 103^v), without a caption ... In the fifteenth there are drawings of some varieties of apricot (*aureorum malorum*) (fol. 110^v) and plum (*prunorum*) (fol. 111) with their designations added ... At the beginning of the eighteenth book there are the names of some vegetables, first beans (*faba*) (fol. 135^v) represented in excellent colours ... and then the *nomina* cease ... [in book xxxii] there is depicted the mantis shrimp (*cammarus*)⁸ (fol. 223).

Rezzonico's list is both unspecific and incomplete. To his aquatic animals we have to add the following (in the order of the miniatures): 'the sparrow (*passer*) which is identical with the flying gurnard (*milvus*)'⁹ cackarel (*maena*) (fol. 74); squid (*lolligo*); black-fish (*sepio*) (two representations); octopus (*polypus marinus*) (fol. 74^v); the lobster (*pagurus*) (Pl. 20b); a crab (*leo*) (fol. 75); shrimp (*squilla parva*); pinna (*pinna*); sandy (?) ray (*raia*) (fol. 76^v); a shark (*canicula*); the weever (*araneus*) (fol. 77); shad (*trichias*); garfish (*acus sive belone*); rock goby (*gobius*) (fol. 77^v) (Pl. 20c); star-fish (*stella*) (fol. 78); horse-mackerel (*saurus: vulgari lingua suro*) (fol. 230^v). The peacock (*paro*) (fol. 80) and the hoopoe (*upupa*) (fol. 81^v) are to be included with the birds. To the fruits and plants should be added three varieties of quince (*museum precoce, chrysomella, muluiana*) (fol. 110^v), some sorts of plums (*uersicolor, nigra, candicans hordearia, asinina*), the apricot (*armeniaca*), peaches (*malina* or *nucipruna* (?), *precocium*), an apple (*ortomastica*) (fol. 111), pears (*pyrum superbum, seuerianum, dolabellianum*) (fol. 111^v), the almond (legend lacking), chestnuts (*tarentina, balanitis*); carob (*siliqua*), mulberry (*mora*) (fol. 112^v), strawberry (*fraga terrestris*), strawberry-tree (*unedo*), gooseberry (*Acinus qui oxiachantos*), some varieties of cherry (*aproniana, actia, duracina, lauria, macedonia, chamaecerasi*), cornel berry (*cornus*), and the black olive (legend lacking) (fol. 113).

Our Parma volume thus has the following total of illustrations: 2 terrestrial animals, 8 birds (including *vespertilio*), 31 fruits and 26 aquatic animals. Of the original 70 drawings, 67 remained when Rezzonico saw it, the phoenix, peacock and *leo* (a variety of crab) having already been cut out. Rezzonico specifies only the phoenix as missing.

The marginal drawings vary in quality. For the birds and the land animals, the artist obviously depends on an older iconographic tradition, whence the rather schematic design of the plumage in the drawing of the screech-owl, the sparrow, or the hoopoe, and the anatomical lapse in the rendering of the green woodpecker, where the artist shaped the claws like a psi (Ψ), instead of the correct X. A living (or dead) specimen of the phoenix could hardly be to hand. The rhinoceros originates (indirectly or possibly directly) in the famous sketch which the German printer

⁸ The equation 'cammarus=mantis shrimp' is a hypothesis of the *anonymus*. Modern scholars accept the lobster as the equivalent of the *cammarus*. Rezzonico's

list gives the equations of the *anonymus* and so does our supplement.

⁹ Sain-Denis (as in n. 6), p. 65.

Ferdinand Valentin Moravia sent from Lisbon to Germany in 1515.¹⁰ This sketch had been employed by Albrecht Dürer, Hans Burgkmair and Albrecht Altdorfer as a model for their respective representations of the pachyderm. The springing white hare must be seen in relation to an iconographic tradition created by North Italian Renaissance artists such as Giovannino de' Grassi¹¹ or Antonio Pisanello.¹² In the white hare the artist does not, however, attain the level of draughtsmanship of his predecessors.

On the other hand, the representations of fruits and aquatic animals are undoubtedly based on direct observation: they are genuine nature studies executed with a remarkable appreciation of reality. The shadows cast by the fish may indicate that the artist worked from dead specimens placed before him. Some fish are placed belly-down so that the ventral and anal fins, for instance of the *lucerna* and the *gobius*, are barely visible or not at all. Some other fish lie on their flanks: accordingly the pectoral fins of both the *suro* and the *coracinus* are visible. For the same reason the fins of most fish are not extended to show their natural beauty, but are tattered, frazzled-looking and have often collapsed. On the whole the artist succeeded in rendering the physiognomy of his objects with portrait-like accuracy. The animals, fish and fruits are scientifically identifiable in their respective botanical and zoological species. The lobster (*pagurus*) (Pl. 20b) is a minor masterpiece.

At least as remarkable as the quality and quantity of the miniatures is the ambitious general concept and layout of the illustration project. The unnamed author of the marginal notes, who was also the person who commissioned the drawings from the anonymous artist, had in mind nothing more nor less than an illustrated encyclopaedia of zoology and botany whose frame and structure was to be supplied by Pliny's *Natural History*. Della Torre Rezzonico notes, without indicating numbers, that the *interpres* on many pages throughout the *Natural History* wrote names alone in the space left for a picture which was not subsequently executed by the artist.¹³ By our count, there is a total of more than 500 instances of such indications.¹⁴

Had the artist brought his project to an end, there would be more than 140 illustrations to the ichthyological parts of the *Natural History* (Bks ix and xxxii) alone. F. M. Paciaudi (1710–1785)—from 1761 until his death librarian of the *Regia*

¹⁰ H. Walter, 'Contributi sulla recezione umanistica della zoologia antica. Nuovi documenti per la genesi del "1515 RHINOCERVS" di Albrecht Dürer', *Res Publica Literarum*, xii, 1989, pp. 267–[77].

¹¹ See the sketch-book (*taccuino*) of Giovannino de' Grassi, (Bergamo, Biblioteca civica, MS A VII, 14), fol. 16 (reproduction in F. Klingender, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, London 1971, p. 424). Is it a coincidence that the beak of the green woodpecker on fol. 79^v of the Parma incunable shows the same incorrect curvature as the green woodpecker drawn by Giovannino de' Grassi (Bergamo, Biblioteca civica, MS A VII, 14, fol. 12^v; reproduced in A. Cadei, 'Giovannino de' Grassi nel Taccuino di Bergamo', *Critica d'arte*, xvii, 1970, p. 23).

¹² Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des dessins, 2445, Codex Vallardi (reproduction in G. A. dell'Acqua and R.

Chiarelli, *L'opera completa del Pisanello*. Milan 1972, no. 72, pl. xxxv B).

¹³ 'Nono [libro] interpres piscium varia adjecerat nomina, ut eorum figuram coloribus redderet, quod postea omisit ... in nonnullis foliis nudae proferuntur appellations relicto picturæ spatio, quæ methodus servatur in decimo sexto, ubi nomina sylvestrium plantarum fructuumque ...'

¹⁴ The numerous marginal catchwords are not included here. Furthermore, in the text a conspicuous number of words is underlined with brownish ink. The legends in the margins often correspond to these words. But many underlined words in the text lack the marginal legend, so that the objects marked by the *anonymus* for subsequent illustration considerably outnumber the marginal legends (500).

Bibliotheca Parmensis—wrote a detailed description of the incunable on its flyleaf. 'If only', he regrets, 'the industrious artist had portrayed in colour everything that Pliny mentions and describes in his thirty-seven books! No Pliny manuscript would exceed it in value.'¹⁵ Nevertheless, the drawings realized are unique of their kind. They are the earliest extant examples of ichthyological illustration intended for systematic documentation and scientific identification.¹⁶ We do not meet such complexes of scientific ichthyological illustration until some forty years later in the printed editions of Pierre Bellon,¹⁷ Guillaume Rondelet,¹⁸ Conrat Gesner¹⁹ and above all in the magnificent illustrated treatise on ichthyology, *Historia aquatilium animalium* by the Italian naturalist and papal physician in ordinary, Ippolito Salviani.²⁰

On the other hand, we should not think of the ichthyological illustrations in the Parma Pliny as being unparalleled. Other collections of illustrations, now lost, undoubtedly existed at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Lodovico Gonzaga ordered the treatise *De natura animantium* by Pier Candido Decembrio to be illustrated (one of its four books deals with aquatic animals), but for reasons unknown the plan was never executed.²¹ The first ichthyological monograph of modern times, the *De romanis piscibus libellus* of Paulo Giovio (Jovius), of Rome 1523, was also intended to be illustrated. This is true at least for the dedicatory copy of the treatise which Giovio sent to Cardinal Louis Bourbon de Vendôme (1493–1552).²²

The illustrations of the Parma incunable reflect a rather early period of Renaissance discussion on the antique ichthyological nomenclature handed down to us by Pliny the Elder and other classical authors. In any case Giovio's monograph seems to have been gone unnoticed by its owner. In the margin of fol. 72^v we find a skilful representation of the sturgeon (*accipenser sturio*, L.) with the legend *tursio*. The equation *tursio=sturio*²³ was, at that time, wrongly attributed to Theodorus Gaza (1389–1478),²⁴ the translator of Aristotle's *Historia animalium*. It was last defended

¹⁵ 'Utinam diligens pictor universitatem rerum, quam Plinius libris XXXVII dicendo, disputandoque persequitur coloribus descripsisset! Nullus fortasse esset Plinianus codex, qui pretio antestaret.'

¹⁶ cf. Cl. Nissen, *Die zoologische Buchillustration. Ihre Bibliographie und Geschichte*, ii, Stuttgart 1978, pp. 62ff (ch. 3: Die Renaissance des Naturstudiums), pp. 113ff (ch. 4: Neuzeit). The same is true of the illustration of trees and fruit. See O. Pächt, 'Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscape', this *Journal*, xii, 1950, pp. 13–47.

¹⁷ P. Bellon (Bellonius), *De aquatilibus libri duo. Cum eiconibus ad vivam ipsorum effigiem, quoad eius fieri potuit, expressis*, Paris 1553.

¹⁸ G. Rondelet, *Libri de piscibus marinis, in quibus verae piscium effigies expressae sunt* ..., 2 vols. Lyons 1554–55.

¹⁹ C. Gesner, *Historiae animalium lib. IIII, qui est de piscibus et aquatilibus animantium natura. Cum iconibus* ..., Zurich 1558.

²⁰ I. Salviani, *Aquatilium animalium historiae liber primus*, Rome 1554.

²¹ A. Luzio and R. Renier, 'Il Filelfo e l'umanismo alla corte dei Gonzaga', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, xvi, 1890, pp. 147f. For information about

Decembrio's *De natura animantium* see C. Pyle, *Das Tierbuch des Petrus Candidus. Codex Urbinus Latinus 276. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart 1984. The illustrations in the dedication copy of this treatise (MS Urb. lat. 276; one of the 'codices primae classis' of the Vatican Library) sent by its author to Lodovico Gonzaga, are to be dated in the last decade of the 16th century.

²² In his chapter (vi) on the tunny (*de thynno*) Giovio remarks: 'Properea xyphii forma, ut in aliis fiet piscibus, pictura non exprimetur, quod eum videre hactenus mini non contigerit.' For information about Cardinal Louis Bourbon de Vendôme see *Nouvelle biographie universelle*, vii, Paris 1853, p. 36, and G. C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica medi et recentioris aevi*, iii, ed. G. v. Gulik, Münster 1923, p. 16.

²³ The equation 'sturgeon=accipenser' has now become *communis opinio*; cf. Saint-Denis (as in n. 6), p. 103.

²⁴ Giovio maintains in his chapter (iv) on the sturgeon (*Dr. sturione*): 'Nos docebimus Theodorum Torsionem pro Sturione nequaquam accepisse, vel si accepit, plurimum erravisse ... Eam (sc. opinionem) paucis ante annis accrimine defendebat Longolius Gallus' (Basle 1531, p. 35). This statement obviously originates from personal acquaintance with Longolius. Longolius, how-

by the Flemish scholar, Christophorus Longolius (1488–1522), who had been keenly interested in Plinian ichthyology as a student.²⁵ Hermolaus Barbarus, Giovio and Massarius²⁶ as well as the sixteenth-century ichthyologists mentioned above (Salvianus, Bellon, Rondelet and Gesner) disagree with the identification, adducing various arguments and differing interpretations of the actual meaning of the antique term *tursio*, and its relation to the medieval *sturio*.

Nevertheless Della Torre Rezzonico's dating of the marginalia to 'before 1492' needs to be made more precise. The emendation 'saurus vel sauris' quoted above may have been suggested by a Suidas manuscript,²⁷ but more probably comes from Athenaeus whose *Deipnosophistae* were first published in 1514.²⁸ The drawing of the rhinoceros (fol. 67v) presupposes the arrival of the famous *Ganda* at Lisbon as a state gift from Guzerat (India) to King Emanuel I of Portugal in 1515.²⁹ Finally the *anonymus* added to Pliny's chapter on the *trabs* (a variety of comet: *Natural History*, ii, 96) the following marginal note: 'preparante turcarum rege expeditionem in regem Pannonicarum trabs emicuit anno 1523. aprilis.' The significance of this note would have been apparent only after the Battle of Mohács in 1526. Thus, the philological activity of our unknown commentator on Pliny's *Natural History* extends to a period of nearly four decades (from about 1490 to 1526).

To whom might the marginalia and, accordingly, the project of the illustrated encyclopaedia of zoology and botany be attributed? Della Torre Rezzonico, referring to contemporary discussion but without mentioning names, remarks in a sensibly ironical undertone: 'I leave it to others to divine [and to announce] from an oracular tripod the author of the two works (i.e. the marginalia and the drawings).'³⁰ We happen to know of such an attribution. The *polyhistor* and historiographer of the city of Parma, Ireneo Affò (1741–1797),³¹ who succeeded Paciaudi as librarian of the Biblioteca Palatina, mentions this very copy of Pliny's *Natural History*:

Un singolarissimo exemplare (he says) ne possiede la Regia Biblioteca Parmense, ornato in diversi luoghi di egregie miniature nel margine rappresentanti uccelli, pesci, frutti, ed altre produzioni naturali, messe vicine ai luoghi, dove Plinio ne parla. Vi sono altresi alcune castigazioni a penna, osservate anche dal Rezzonico, che io riconosco di mano di Francesco

ever, in the notes he contributed to the edition of Pliny's *Natural History* by Nicolas Berault (Paris 1516), deals with neither the *sturio* nor with the *tursio* (for information about this edition I am indebted to Dr Gerlinde Huber, Mannheim).

²⁵ cf. M. M. de la Garauderie, 'Christophe de Longueil', in *Contemporaries of Erasmus. A biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, eds P. G. Bietenholz and Th. B. Deutscher, ii, Toronto-Buffalo-London 1986, p. 343.

²⁶ Franciscus Massarius Venetus, *In nonum Plini de naturali historia librum castigationes et annotationes*, Basle 1537, p. 28.

²⁷ In the codex A of the Suidas (Par. gr. 2626, 14th cent.) a 'manus recentior' added to the text 'σαύρις δὲ ὁ ἵζθως' the marginal note 'Σαύρις. εἶδος ἵζθυδιου, καὶ κλίνεται σαύριδος' (ed. A. Adler, Pars iv, Leipzig 1935, p. 330).

²⁸ Athenaeus (vii, 120 ΣΑΥΡΟΣ; 122 ΣΦΥΡΑΙΝΑΙ) deals with the *saurus* and the *sauris* in close succession to each other and in a similar context so that identification of these terms seems natural. Salviani quotes him in that sense (as in n. 20, p. 78): 'Nam cum apud Athenaeum Speusippus σαύρος (quem σταύριδα vocat), Cestram (quae ab aliquibus Sphrynaena dicitur) et acum similes faciat ...'.

²⁹ T. H. Clarke, *The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs, 1515–1799*, London and New York 1989, pp. 16ff; cf. Silvio A. Bedini, 'The Papal Pachyderms', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, cxxv, 1981, pp. 80–83.

³⁰ '... Quis porro utriusque operis autor fuerit ex tripode sella alius devinet.'

³¹ For Ireneo Affò see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, i, Rome 1960, pp. 355–57.

a-c: Pliny, *Natural History*. Parma 1481. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Inc. Pal. 1158

Meminerint legentes, castigationes in hoc volumine atramento scriptas laboris m̄ri esse ac vigiliarū: et si aliquę s̄nt sententie hermolai concinenteſ: tamē me priusquā ille otus suum publicę utilitati exponeret dubiū fuisse, et nunc anq. dubitam⁹ sic legendū fideo sed quia a rubro scripta sunt admoneamus vos illius esse, ac c̄n posteris nos illi debe.

a—Subscriptio of marginalia (p. 208)



b—Anon., *Pagurus*

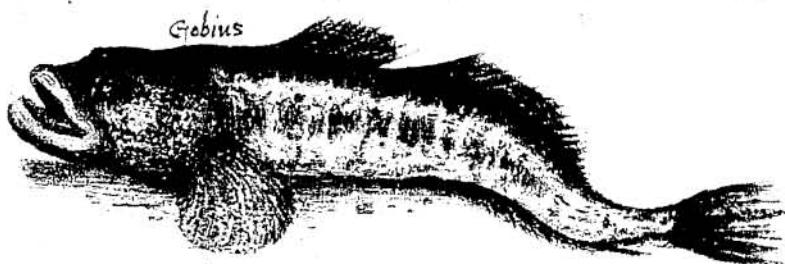
(= *Homarus Cammarus*, L.). *nequatur: fluida carne nō habet callum.*

miniature, fol. 74v. *de cancris. Ca. xxxi.*

detail (pp. 209f) *is. Hyeme aprica loca lectātur. Aestate in opaca gurgi*

cleam & toronē & lycū amnē esse multifaria. In pōto un

Gobius



c—Anon., *Gobius* (= *Gobius Paganellus*, L.). miniature.

fol. 77v. detail (pp. 209, 213 n.)

demus. sic inuicibiliter de corporis castitate: uel animi puritate spirituale gaudium
babere mereamur.

Firmis libelli smarodi Abbas quem uocant Diadema
Monachorum. In quo eis si non reperiās elocu
tione uerborum lenocinio coniunctam:
s' tamen eius praecepta adeo salubria ad
salutem animę ut quisquis eduerit secu
tus uitam perpetuam sibi polliceti possit fui
absolutus die xxiii. septembris. MDXVII.
et coepitus xi eiusdem Mon. omisso diebus p̄ his

d—Autograph of Francesco Carpesano, 1517. Smaragdus Abbas, *Diadema monachorum*.
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS 1472, last folio, detail (p. 213)

Carpesano, elegantissimo Scrittore de' latini Comentarij de' tempi suoi.³²

Affò's identification is repeated on a small paper slip now pasted on fol. 167 of the Parma incunable, unsigned and bearing a note in Latin, ascribed by Pietro Zorzanello (Schedario Zorzanello)³³ to Affò.³⁴

The biography of Francesco Carpesano (1451–1528) accords closely with the chronological data which have emerged from the Parma incunable itself.³⁵ The two autographs mentioned by Affò are preserved in the Biblioteca Palatina (MS Parm. 876, *Commentaria suorum temporum*) and the Archivio Vescovile di Parma ('Libro Rosso' [without shelf-mark], *Compilatio iurium et instrumentorum publicorum pertinentium ad Baptisterium Parmense*). In the Biblioteca Palatina is a third autograph of Carpesano's, a copy of the *Diadema monachorum* by Smaragdus Abbas (MS Parm. 1472) (Pl. 20d). At first glance there is a remarkable similarity between the signed Carpesano autographs and the marginalia in the Parma Pliny. A more detailed analysis of the pertinent documents obliges us to recognise that they are written by two different hands.³⁶ At this point it should also be noted that Carpesano, in the chapters of his *Commentaria* devoted to Hungarian events in the second decade of the sixteenth century, and specifically with reference to the catastrophe of Mohács, does not commemorate the comet of 1523 mentioned in the marginal note to the Parma incunable.

Thus, the question of the origin of the marginalia and the drawings must be answered in more general (geographical) terms. One might be tempted to assume that they originate from Parma, as Affò did, for the following reasons: the book was printed there; its illumination is said to have North Italian (Paduan) qualities;³⁷ studies of natural phenomena were centred in North Italy; and the volume was

³² L. Affò, *Signe di memoria su la topographia Parmense*, Parma 1791, p. lxxxiii. I owe this information to Dr L. Farinelli (Parma).

³³ The 'Schedario Zorzanello' is a manuscript card file by Pietro Zorzanello (from 1927–1934 Director of the Biblioteca Palatina of Parma) covering the incunables of that library. I believe that Zorzanello is right in relating Affò's note to the *subscriptio* of fol. 266^v ('Meminerint legentes...').

³⁴ 'Haec verba manu Francisci Carpesani Parmensis exarata videntur. Consule Historiam suorum temporum cuius autographum penes nos est. Consule quoque nonnulla librorum Ecclesiae Baptismalis volumina per eundem descripta.'

³⁵ Francesco Carpesano was born in 1451 in Parma. He studied there and became a priest in 1472, and was a member of the *Consorzio dei vivi e dei morti* of the Parma Cathedral. As secretary of the Bishop of Parma from 1480, he was entrusted with important diplomatic missions during the war between Milan and Venice in 1482. In 1512 he helped to manage the transfer of the city of Parma from the Duchy of Milan to the Papal States. Carpesano was not only an influential ecclesiastical politician and administrator, but also has (by the *Commentaria suorum temporum*) an important place in Italian Renaissance historiography. For further details see *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, xx, pp. 597–99; G.

Zarotto, *Francesco Carpesano, 1451–1528: Commentaria suorum temporum (1476–1527)*, ed. G. Z., Parma 1975 (=Fonti. Deputazione di storia patria, ser. i, 8).

³⁶ It will be sufficient to list some particulars by which the two scribes can be separated from each other: (1) The capital 'G' in Carpesano's autograph is drawn with one curved sweep; in the Parma incunable with three strokes (cf. Pl. 20c; *Gobus*). There are no exceptions to this rule. (2) The right-hand down-stroke of the minuscule 'a' in Carpesano's autograph, is regularly parallel to the vertical strokes of all other letters; in the Parma incunable the same letter shows a slight inclination to the left. (3) The 'feet' of the descenders (p, q, f etc.) are executed by the author of the Parma marginalia without special care. Carpesano gives them a very distinct shape: they are markedly parallel to the line.

³⁷ cf. M. Levi D'Ancona, 'Un libro d'ore di Francesco Marmitta da Parma e Martino da Modena al Museo Correr. II', *Bullettino dei Musei Civici Veneziani*, xii, 1967, p. 27, n. 16: '... E lo stile della miniatura di Parma sembrerebbe padovano, almeno di derivazione, con la sua carta lacca fra cui si intravede la scena miniata'. M. Salini ascribes the Parma frontispiece to Francesco Marmitta. Cf. D. Fava, *Tesori delle biblioteche d'Italia. Emilia e Romagna*, pt. II: *Storia del libro manoscritto*, Milano 1932, p. 373.

commented on in the eighteenth century by North Italian scholars (Rezzonico, Paciaudi, Affo), and since then it has been in the Biblioteca Palatina, Parma.

The most promising approach to the unresolved problem of the identity of both commentator and miniaturist is, I think, palaeographical. Given the opportunities now available for research in humanist autographs, however, this is an endless enterprise. It will therefore be useful to pinpoint some aspects of the Parma incunable which may focus the inquiry on central Italy, that is to say on Naples or even on Rome, rather than on Parma and the vicinity of Emilia.

In the chapter devoted to what is meant to be a typology of aquatic animals (*Natural History*, ix, 74 [=cap. xx]) Pliny records a fish with eight fins living in the Lacus Fucinus. The entry is referred to by the *anonymus* in the marginal note 'Fucini lacus piscis' (fol. 74), which is one of the 500 *nomina* mentioned above. That this note has not simply the function of a catchword, but was intended to be the legend for a rendering of a fish, becomes unequivocally clear from its position in the margin.³⁸ In the commentator's mind the mention of the eight-finned fish in the *Natural History* was obviously a sufficient basis for its identification.³⁹ That is to say, he did not exclude the possibility of bringing a specimen of that species (not yet identified) from the Lago del Fucino to his draughtsman—in a portrayable state. The distance between the Lago del Fucino (in the Abruzzi) and the city of Parma (400 km as the crow flies) would certainly have been a serious obstacle.

The frontispiece to Book ii of the *Natural History* (fol. 15) may enable us to circumscribe the origin of the illustrations. The historiated initial letter (M) shows Mother Nature (Pl. 21a), a woman seated on clouds and dressed *alla maniera antica*: she holds a celestial globe in her lap, splashing milk on it from her uncovered breast.

This allegory is known to be connected with the art of the *regno di Napoli*.⁴⁰ From 1485⁴¹ the Aragonese library of Naples possessed a manuscript copy of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* illuminated by one Gaspare Romano. In the famous letter which Pietro Summonte (1485–1526) directed to the Venetian nobleman and art connoisseur, Marcantonio Michiel (1486–1552), on 20 March 1524 this manuscript is referred to as follows:⁴²

Del Gaspare romano haec accepimus: che illuminò [cioè minio] lo Plinio bellissimo del reverendissimo e illustrissimo signor cardinale don Joanne di Aragona figliolo del signor re Ferrando primo: nel quale Plinio, per lo principio di ciascum libro, è un'opera di [tanta

³⁸ This note is in the right margin of fol. 71^v on a level with chapter xxiv *De planis piscibus*, but it refers clearly to chapter xx *Digestio piscum in figuris corporum*. The margin of the latter (ch. xx) had previously been occupied by the drawings of *riombus* and *solea*.

³⁹ Today this problem is still unresolved. Cf. Plin l'Ancien, *Historie naturelle*, livre IX, transl and ed. E. Saint Denis, Paris 1955, p. 122 (comment on para. 73): 'Ce poisson du lac Fucin pourvu de huit nageoires, est indéterminé. Cuvier se demandait même s'il fallait penser à un mollusque ou à un crustace.'

⁴⁰ I. Nicolini, 'Pietro Summonte, Marcantonio Michiel e l'arte napoletana del rinascimento. I. *Napoli n'blessima*, n.s. iii, 1923, pp. 42–172 (for Gaspare Romano see pp. 170–72); T. De Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei re d'Aragona*, 4 vols. Milan 1947 (passim); J. Ruysschaert,

'Miniaturistes "Romains" à Naples', in De Marinis (as in n. 40), *Supplemento*, i, Verona 1969, pp. 263–74; W. Kemp, *Natura. Ikonographische Studien zur Geschichte und Verbreitung einer Allegorie*, Phil. Diss. Frankfurt am M. 1973, pp. 17–25. Levi D'Ancona (as in n. 37, p. 27, n. 16) relates the Parma frontispiece to Gaspare Romano and the letter of Summonte (cf. n. 44 below).

⁴¹ That year Cardinal Giovanni d'Aragona, son of Ferrante il Vecchio, died and his book collection was transferred to the Royal Library of Naples (De Marinis, as in n. 40, n. p. 187).

⁴² Nicolini (as in n. 40), pp. 170–72; Summonte's letter has been recently edited by R. Pane, *Il Rinascimento nell'Italia meridionale*, i, Milan 1975, pp. 63–71. Pane is not concerned with the Gaspare Romano problem.

vaghezza] e di tanta eccellenza che più non si poria desiderare. E, fra li altri lavori, ci è la Natura, dipinta cum le parti e circustanze sue, ordinate per un huomo docto di quel tempo, messer Lucio Fosforo,⁴³ ch'è delle belle e rare cose che si vedono ad nostri tempi. Questa è una donna assectata, di admiranda bellezza, al garbo antiquo, che avante lo sino tene un mondo e con le cicce li sparge latte. Questo Plinio, che, ad iudicio di chi lo vide, era cosa divina, insieme con altri molti preziosi libri de quella ricca biblioteca de nostri re, fòro impegnati in le turbulenzie di questo Regno ad mercanti fiorentini:⁴⁴ dapo non se ne sa più nova.

The miniatures of the codex are now lost.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, we have a concrete idea of the Nature allegory described by Summonte. Andrea Matteo III Acquaviva d'Aragona (1458–1519), Duke of Atri, owned a library in Naples rich in manuscripts which he took pains to have illuminated by renowned miniaturists of his time. In two manuscripts from that collection, now in Vienna (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS Philos. graec. 2, Aristotle) and Naples (Biblioteca dei Girolamini, MS 221, Themistius-Aristotle), we find reprises of the Nature allegory invented by Lucio Fosforo and converted into a pictorial representation by Gaspare Romano.⁴⁶ Gaspare Romano (also referred to in a document as Gaspare Padovano) has recently been shown to have been active not, as previously believed, in Naples,⁴⁷

⁴³ The humanist Lucio Fosforo was born before 1450 in Rome. He was a friend of Bartolomeo Platina and Pomponio Leto and belonged to the latter's Roman Academy. He was involved in the famous conjuration against Paul II in 1468 and was incarcerated for a time with other Pomponians in Castel S. Angelo. Sixtus IV made him Bishop of Segni in 1481. He died in Rome in 1503. See further Nicolini (as in n. 40), p. 171; G. Mercati, *Per la cronologia della vita e degli scritti di Niccolò Perotti*, Rome 1925, p. 100 n. 2 (=Studi e testi xlii), and the indexes of P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, London 1963–, s.v. 'Fosforo'.

⁴⁴ De Marinis (as in n. 40, ii, p. 192) relates the expression 'turbulenze di questo regno' to the siege of Otranto by the Turks in 1480. He believes he has recognised the manuscript in the inventory of the articles of value pledged by Ferrante il Vecchio to the Florentine merchant Giovanni Battista Pandolfini in 1481 (see n. 45 below).

⁴⁵ The manuscript itself is extant as Vat. Ottob. lat. 1953–4. The frontispieces had been cut away before Cardinal Georges d'Amboise acquired part of the Neapolitan library from the bankrupt estate of the Aragonese (between 1501 and 1504). He incorporated his purchase into his library at Château de Gaillon, near Rouen, and ordered folios lacking in the Pliny manuscript to be replaced by new ones. These now show the Cardinal's coat of arms. Cf. E. Pellegrin, *Les manuscrits classiques latins de la Bibliothèque Vaticane* (=Documents, études et répertoires publ. par l'IRHT, xxi), i, Paris 1975, pp. 626ff., with bibliography; M. Buonocore, *Bibliografia dei fondi manoscritti della Biblioteca Vaticana, 1968–1980* (Studi e Testi ccxxviii), Città del Vaticano 1980, i, p. 447; Levi D'Ancona (as in n. 37, p. 24) tentatively proposes the hypothesis that the Pliny illuminated by Gaspare Romano is identical with the Parma incunable and that Summonte, accordingly, refers to this same (printed) copy. This identification is

to be rejected. The 'Pliny' of Cardinal d'Aragona [d. 1485] was probably not an object of the Ferrante-Pandolfini contract of 1481 (cf. Ruysschaert, as in n. 40, p. 265 n. 2). Furthermore, we learn from Summonte's report that the manuscript copy of Pliny's *Natural History* illuminated by Gaspare Romano for Cardinal d'Aragona was provided with at least 37 historiated letters if not full-page frontispieces ('... nel quale Plinio, per lo principio di ciascun libro, è un'opera di tanta vaghezza'), while the Parma incunable has only one frontispiece (book ii). Neither Levi D'Ancona nor Ruysschaert nor Salmi were aware of the zoological and botanical illustrations in the Parma incunable.

⁴⁶ H. J. Hermann, 'Miniaturlhandschriften aus der Bibliothek des Herzogs A. M. Acquaviva', *Jahrbuch der Kunstsammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* xix, 1898, pp. 158f. (pl. v) and pp. 191f. (pl. xiii); idem, *Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der illuminierten Handschriften in Österreich*, viii, pt. vi, 4, Leipzig 1933, pp. 60ff. It must be pointed out that the relationship between the Parma frontispiece and the Neapolitan reprises of Gaspare Romano's Mother Nature, in spite of significant differences in graphic conception, is very close. The *Nature* figures in both the Parma frontispiece and the Vienna Aristotle seem to be seated 'behind the page'. The figures would not be visible at all if the miniaturists had not 'opened' the paper in this very place by an illusionistic cut. Although this pictorial device occurs elsewhere in 15th-century Italian book illumination, its very specific combination with the Mother Nature motif makes it more probable that it is a part of Romano's original conception rather than a mere coincidence.

⁴⁷ See e.g. E. Aeschlimann, *Dictionnaire des miniaturistes du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance dans les différentes contrées de l'Europe*, Milan 1940, pp. 162f. Nicolini dates Gaspare's death as being prior to 1500 (as in n. 40, p. 172). He does not assert (as Ruysschaert seems to

but in Rome. He appears to have had a close professional relationship with a group of copyists and miniaturists (Bartolomeo San Vito, Gioacchino de Gigantibus, Giovanni Todeschino) who originated in the artistic milieu of Padua, but worked, like Gaspare, in Rome. On the strength of the collaboration referred to by Summonte between Gaspare Romano and Lucio Fosforo even the Pliny manuscript of Cardinal Giovanni d'Aragona (1456–1485) has been supposed to have been written and illuminated in Rome.⁴⁸

The frontispiece has another feature which requires attention. In the right margin is a two-piece coat of arms hanging by a cord from an inscribed ornamental frame. The coat of arms is deformed into what might be interpreted as a sign, say, of an inn. Its lower part shows a dolphin, its upper an elephant and castle. On the elephant's right we recognise the vanishing silhouette of its keeper (mahout) (Pl. 21b, c). In 1514 Emanuel I of Portugal, as is well-known, had presented Pope Leo X with an elephant, Hanno by name, the first such animal to appear in Rome since antiquity.⁴⁹ Hanno's docility and clowning soon made him the favourite pet both of the Roman populace and of the Pontiff, who was inconsolable at the beast's untimely death in 1516, just two years after his arrival in Rome. Hanno was given a last resting place within the Vatican precinct.⁵⁰ He was immortalized in an epitaph composed by Leo himself (and rendered in Latin hexameters by Filippo Beroaldo the Younger), as well as in a life-size fresco commissioned to Raphael.⁵¹ Hanno had inhabited a stable in the Corridore near the intersection of Borgo Sant'Angelo and Piazza S. Pietro. In the same Borgo, renamed *Borgo dell'elefante* (*lio*fante), is recorded the existence of not only one *vicolo dell'elefante*, but also of an inn *alla segna dell'elefante*.⁵² Might there be a link between the name of that inn in the Borgo Sant'Angelo and the coat of arms resembling an inn-sign in the frontispiece of the Parma Pliny? The dolphin in the lower part of the sign could well be an allusion to Hanno's provenance from overseas (India and Portugal). The argument in favour of a Roman origin for the Parma miniatures might thus be strengthened.⁵³

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believe, as in n. 40, p. 266), that Gaspare Romano passed his last years in Naples.

⁴⁸ cf. Ruysschaert (as in n. 40), p. 266; L. Armstrong, *Renaissance Miniature Painters and Classical Imagery. The Master of the Putti and his Venetian Workshop*, London 1982, pp. 48ff, in attempting to identify the Master of the London Pliny, considers Giacometto Veneziano and Gaspare Romano.

⁴⁹ During the ceremonial entrance in Rome Hanno carried on his back a silver castle filled with Emanuel's gifts for the Pope. Cf. Bedini (as in n. 29), p. 77.

⁵⁰ Hanno's tusks and part of his skeleton were discovered in 1962 during excavations in the courtyard of the Vatican Library. Cf. Bedini (as in n. 29), pp. 89f.

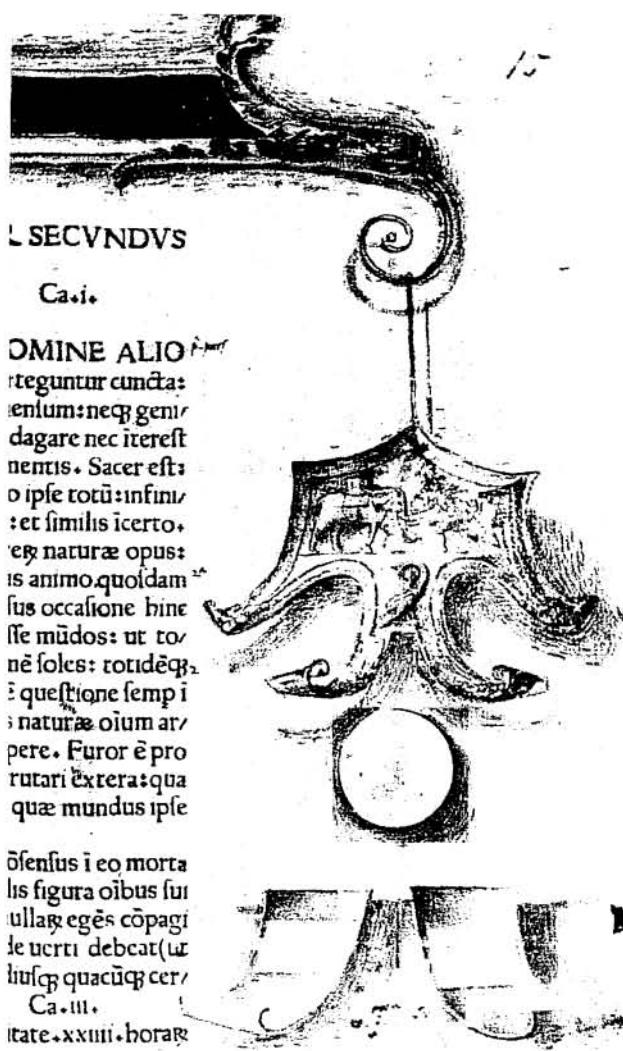
⁵¹ The fresco, now lost, has been several times copied. The extant drawings are published by M. Winner, 'Raffael malt einen Elefanten', in *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, xi. 1964, pp. 71–109.

⁵² Bedini (as in n. 29), p. 89.

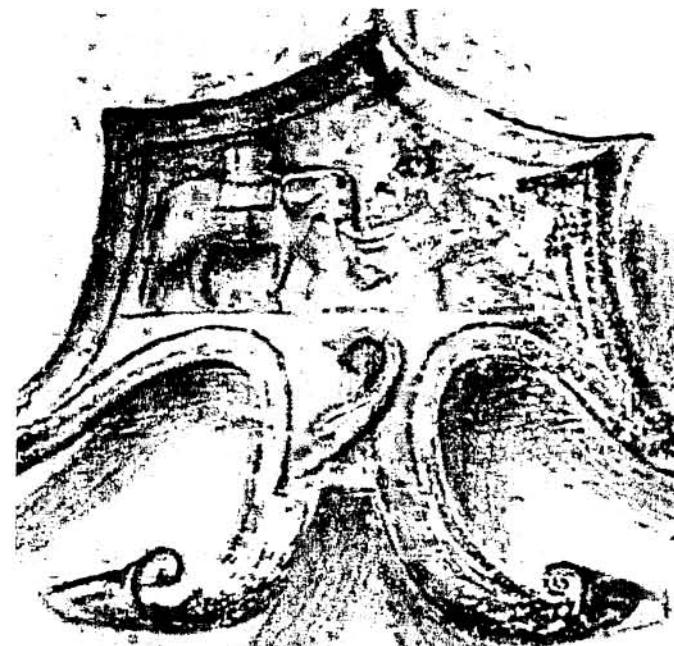
⁵³ The elephant is an obligatory element in a traditional illustration cycle of 37 miniatures which we find

not only in several 14th- and 15th-century manuscripts, but also in some early printed editions of Pliny's *Natural History* (cf. L. Armstrong, 'The Illustration of Pliny's *Historia Naturalis* in Venetian Manuscripts and Early Printed Books', in *Manuscripts in the Fifty Years after the Invention of Printing*, ed. J. B. Trapp, London 1983, pp. 97–106). In spite of its rather medieval character I do not believe the Parma elephant to be dependent on this cycle, in which neither the tower on the back of the pachyderm nor the keeper are present. A more important difference is that in the medieval cycle the elephant marks the opening of book viii, which begins with a description of that animal, while in the Parma incunable the elephant is part of the frontispiece of book ii (the very beginning of Pliny's *Natural History*). For the medieval iconography of the elephant see W. S. Heckscher, 'Bernini's Elephant and Obelisk', *Art Bulletin*, xxix, 1947, pp. 155–83.

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a—Anon., *Natura rerum parens*, miniature (p. 211)

b—Anon., sign or coat of arms, miniature (p. 216)



c—Detail of Pl. 21b (p. 216)

a-c: Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Inc. Pal. 1158,
fol. 15 (details)