



# **Habits Ancient and Modern: Surface and Depth in the Pillone Library Volumes**

**Habits Ancient and Modern:  
Surface and Depth in the  
Pillone Library Volumes**

Andrew S. Brown

An exhibition at the Beinecke Rare Book  
and Manuscript Library, Yale University,  
January 18–April 21, 2019





## Noah's Ark

The earliest reference to the Pillone library appears not in an antiquarian's notebook or a bookseller's catalog, but in a popular encyclopedia of fashion: Cesare Vecellio's *De gli habiti antichi et moderni di diversi parti del mondo*, or *The Clothing* [or "Habits"], *Ancient and Modern, of Various Parts of the World* (1590). A distant cousin of Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) and a prominent painter and author in his own right, Vecellio (ca. 1521–1601) sought to introduce his fellow Venetians to the costumes worn by people of every social degree around the globe. It is all the more striking, then, to encounter among the book's nearly five hundred woodcut illustrations—which depict figures ranging from fur-clad Norwegian peasants to Turkish and Chinese noblewomen—an extended celebration of the Pillone estate in nearby Belluno, Italy.<sup>1</sup>

Vecellio explains that the Pillone family home of Casteldardo contains "many different kinds of books" and "is full of every ancient object one could desire...Throughout the region it is called 'Noah's Ark,' a name chosen for it by the most illustrious Cardinal dalla Torre, with the result that everyone passing through the region wants to visit it as a marvelous and unique thing."<sup>2</sup> What he fails to mention, however, is that this passage is also a veiled act of self-promotion. The library's status as "a marvelous and unique thing" had largely been secured

by the fact that Vecellio repeatedly visited Belluno in the 1580s to create a series of miniature paintings, which adorned 172 books in a fashion never before seen among Italian collectors.<sup>3</sup> Throughout this period most large-format books were vertically shelved not with their spines visible, as today, but with the edge of their pages facing outward, creating a finely textured, almost fluid expanse. Individual fore-edges had previously been inscribed with insignia, shelf marks, or titles as a means of organizing libraries and identifying specific works.<sup>4</sup> But it was the unusual composite surface of the Pillone collection as a whole that Vecellio took as the canvas for his paintings. As in contemporary illustrations of the ark, where birds and beasts peer through portholes or around pillars, here authors gaze out from between the clasps that (by providing a convenient fingerhold) allow their works to be taken up and read (fig. 1).

Just as the ark's putative resting place had evaded Renaissance historians, however, the library at Casteldardo seems to have slipped out of the knowledge of bibliophiles in the following years. It remained in the ownership of the Pillone family for roughly three centuries before being purchased in 1875, first by the Venetian agent Paolo Maresio Bazolle and then by Sir Thomas Brooke (1830–1908), a manufacturer of woolen cloth and one of the most significant book collectors of nineteenth-century England. He may have learned of the Pillone volumes from William Stirling-Maxwell, who contributed an essay praising them to a catalog of Brooke's library printed

Fig. 1. Five of the thirteen Pillone library volumes in the Beinecke's collections

for friends and fellow collectors.<sup>5</sup> After the library's installation at Armitage Bridge House in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, Stirling-Maxwell commended how it had retained its coherence and completeness over centuries: "A sight more pleasant to the eye of a lover of books than the rows of Vecellio's illuminated fore-edges is not easily to be found in these islands. Single specimens of this style of book decoration may be found in choice libraries, but so many have probably never been assembled in a single bookcase."<sup>6</sup>

Brooke's considerable wealth ensured that his collection eventually came to occupy not only the official library of the estate but also "the billiard room, drawing room, and the master's room," as well as an "upstairs library" annex.<sup>7</sup> The "single bookcase" of Pillone texts seems, however, to have maintained a unity that outlived even its owner: both the volumes and the shelves that stored them remained undisturbed at Armitage Bridge House for nearly half a century after his death. The French bookseller Pierre Berès, who purchased the collection from Brooke's heirs in 1957, evidently conceived of it in similar terms. His lavishly illustrated catalog contains a plate staging many of the books in one case, their paintings exhibited for the reader.<sup>8</sup>

Comprising thirteen volumes from the Pillone library, *Habits Ancient and Modern* reproduces this established way of viewing the collection by presenting its fore-edge illustrations in a single array. As in Vecellio's later attempt to encompass the fashions of the globe, the "habits" or attire of the paintings' subjects are

essential to their splendor. But this exhibition also traces other features of the library, which have not always been so visible. Guided by Vecellio's term *habiti*—which refers not just to clothing but to the full range of material goods, customs, and practices that make up distinctive local cultures—*Habits Ancient and Modern* uncovers how the Pillone library reflects the fundamentally collaborative development of the printed codex in Renaissance Europe. From their original bindings, to their interior illumination, to their histories of readership and use, these volumes repay a perspective that looks beyond the surface of their paintings, to consider the early printed book as a cultural object that remained very much in flux during this period.

## Una Libreria Finita?

### I. Building the Library

The volumes now held at the Beinecke Library provide a representative view of the original Pillone collection, the contents of which included ancient histories, chronicles, theological works, scholarly commentaries, and early modern travel literature. Despite its later reputation as a unified whole, the library was assembled through a series of purchases made over nearly a century, first by Antonio Pillone (d. 1533) and later by his long-lived son, Odorico, a respected jurist in Belluno (1503–1594).<sup>9</sup> Citing the diversity of its contents, the bibliographer Anthony Hobson argued that the collection exemplifies a new goal among many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian book owners: to establish "an ideal library, complete in itself, 'una libreria finita,' containing everything a cultivated man needed to read."<sup>10</sup>

By contrast with the libraries of other major Renaissance collectors—such as Jean Grolier in France, Diego Hurtado de Mendoza in Spain, or the unknown original owner of what Hobson calls the "Apollo and Pegasus" collection (distinguished by a medallion containing these two figures stamped onto the books' bound covers)—the assemblage of volumes long known as the Pillone (or, after Brooke's purchase, the "Venetian") library is entirely composed of printed books, with no manuscripts among their number.<sup>11</sup> This fact might suggest that it was the new technology of the printing press, and its early flourishing in Venice

and other Italian cities, that prompted Antonio and Odorico's aspiration to preserve humanist knowledge in the space of their own secluded study. It is important to keep in mind, though, that as working professionals both Antonio and Odorico would undoubtedly have owned other manuscripts and printed books. As Cardinal dalla Torre observed in Vecellio's account, moreover, the family was also famous for its collections of military relics and paintings.

These facts raise the question of why, in the 1580s, the Pillone family (or Vecellio himself) chose to use fore-edge paintings as a means of distinguishing these volumes from the texts and artifacts already housed at Casteldardo. Antonio and Odorico may have begun by storing newly acquired printed texts in a separate location from other books, with Vecellio's addition of these miniature paintings serving merely to beautify a collection that had been organized long before his arrival. Or it may be that owner and painter worked together more consciously to create a distinct new intellectual and material entity, in much the same way that Grolier commissioned new styles of bookbinding that became closely associated with his own collection.<sup>12</sup> In any case, it was the series of visits during which Vecellio applied his paintings, as much as any deliberate intentions on the part of the Pillone family, that defined the collection for later visitors and commentators. These images, that is, work to fix their volumes in time and space—and in relation to one another. They transform the books from independent textual





olam rerum inopia urge  
imper fuerit pluris uir  
aliquando: si uerū loqui  
p doctorum uirorum in  
im inficitur: quidā ita pecu  
questus: q uirtutis aut lit  
admodū grauis: multorū  
dignum quippe est: nec fa  
sepissime reiectis meliori  
nihil praefer pontificum  
i haec nostra cōspexit aetas  
a duce esse: praestantis do  
tribendi negotium tradu  
o nunc regi gloriari possi  
sapientiae studiosos. Q d  
lum censens: quanti ē uir  
n cessant exercitibus: nū  
tubi nullus uirtuti locus  
sentitor pēscāt ingenia: pri  
ninetur cōsulio necesse ē  
s laudari pōt: quae cū om  
leritūc & doctis fauet ut  
at uirtutis emulationem  
etina: & dicendi facultas

Fig. 2. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *L. Annaei Senecae opera* (Basel: Johann Herwagen, 1537), sig. Uir. 2017 +319. Manuscript annotation.

Fig. 3. Diodorus Siculus, *Diodori Siculi historiaru[m] priscaru[m] a Poggio i[n] Latinu[m] traducti liber primus[-sextus]* (Venice: Thomas de Blavis, 1481), sig. A1r. 2017 +312. Detail showing manicules in margin.

objects into elements of a larger, more durable, and more ambiguous whole. In the sections that follow, therefore, *Habits Ancient and Modern* examines several typical features of early printed books, while also illustrating how the Pillone collection troubles these traditional categories of analysis.

## II. Annotations

If the Pillone collection had indeed been envisioned as an independent microcosm, another question remains: in what ways was it actually used? And what traces of their owners or visiting readers survive in these books? In general, the Beinecke volumes are only sparsely annotated, seemingly confirming Stirling-Maxwell's later comment that "Dr. Odorico and his forefathers were evidently lovers of tall copies and ample margins, which they wisely left uncontaminated with midnight oil."<sup>13</sup> However, some of the books do display marks of the habits of use that they invited. The margin of one page from the letters of Seneca has been inscribed top-to-bottom with a vertical line and a command to "lege," or read (fig. 2). Similarly, the *Bibliothecae historica* of Diodorus Siculus, translated by the humanist bookhunter Poggio Bracciolini, contains a series of quickly sketched "manicules"—drawings of pointing hands, which were used to identify passages of interest (fig. 3). Though these corporeal marks possess what William Sherman calls "an uncanny power to conjure up the bodies of dead writers and readers," it is difficult to determine precisely what drew Antonio or Odorico to these passages.<sup>14</sup>

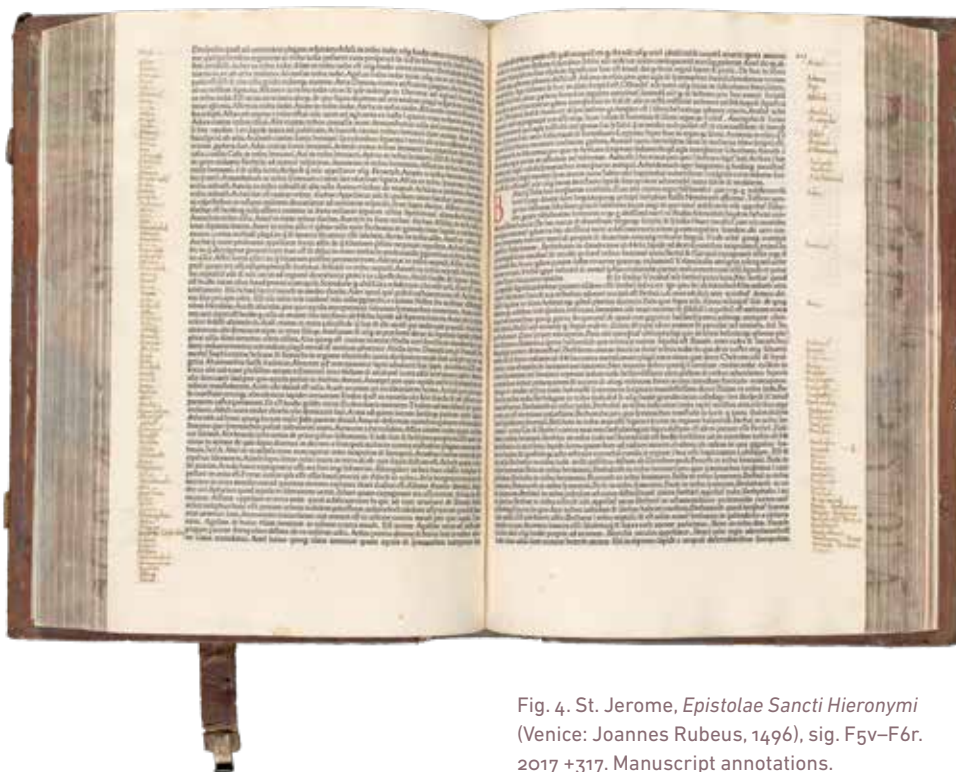


Fig. 4. St. Jerome, *Epistolae Sancti Hieronymi* (Venice: Joannes Rubeus, 1496), sig. F5v–F6r. 2017 +317. Manuscript annotations.

Other volumes and topics appear to have been read more thoroughly. A copy of the letters of St. Jerome is heavily annotated with the names of biblical persons and locations drawn from the text, which occasionally fill the entire margin in cascading columns (fig. 4). Likewise, a reader has copied headings from the table of contents in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* for ease in later finding (fig. 5). These notes appear to have little immediate relevance to the professional lives of Antonio and Odorico. As the historian Ann Blair observes, however, among humanist readers “notes were treated less as temporary tools than

as long-term ones, worthy of considerable investment of time and effort, of being saved for reuse and in some cases shared with others (collaborators in a project or one's colleagues or heirs).”<sup>15</sup> Evidence of these rhythms of collaborative, intergenerational study may survive in another section of Diodorus Siculus's universal history, where readers have commented on the career of Alexander the Great in two distinct inks and hands—perhaps those of Antonio and Odorico themselves (figs. 6 & 8). The outside edge of these notes has also been removed through page-trimming, suggesting that the book was used before it was bound

in its current form, and certainly before Vecellio applied a painting of busts and obelisks to its cropped fore-edge.

Another volume has been marked up even more systematically, this time for the purposes of censorship. The Pillone copy of the *Adagiorum Chiliades*, a collection of Greek and Latin proverbs assembled by the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus, has had its compiler's name methodically expunged, including from the running title at the top of every leaf (fig. 7). Erasmus was one of many authors newly listed in the 1564 Index of Prohibited Books, which had been promulgated by the papacy after the Council of Trent. Because Odorico Pillone probably purchased this book from his relative Bonaccorso Grino (then living in southern Germany) sometime around 1550, it is likely that a member of the Pillone household was responsible for the time-consuming task of removing the offending name from the text.<sup>16</sup>

Far from making the book unreadable, the expurgation of Erasmus's name has the effect of reimbuing his adages with the timeless popular wisdom from which he claimed to derive them, converting them into a communal property not dependent upon the fortunes of a single author. While we frequently imagine censorship in the form of prepublication bans or wholesale book burnings, Catholic readers like the Pillone family continued to have partial access to illicit books throughout this period. Such post-publication suppression leaves behind what Hannah Marcus describes as “an archive of practice,” which shows

how “early modern readers interacted with their books amidst a culture of censorship.”<sup>17</sup> As if to acknowledge this uncertain middle ground, Vecellio tactfully minimized the author's identity in his fore-edge painting, writing the book's title in tall, broad letters while inscribing “er. rot.” more modestly. But Erasmus of Rotterdam still sits—in a pose strikingly similar to the one he holds in a famous portrait by Hans Holbein—writing on a new page with a codex propped up before him.

### III. Bindings

Such marks of use provide the most direct evidence of how readers engaged with these volumes. However, the surface of the printed page is not the only venue through which collectors could impart meaning to their books. The Pillone library is also distinguished by the fact that all of the volumes retain their original bindings. Together, these offer invaluable snapshots of the development of new “habits” of book binding and design during this period. Antonio Pillone provided the earliest foundations for the collection by purchasing incunabula from the printing houses that had recently emerged in Venice, Padua, Treviso, and other northern Italian cities.<sup>18</sup> In contrast with the impressive bindings in which they are now enclosed, however, these books would typically have been sold either as unbound sheets or in limp vellum (i.e., calfskin) wrappers, similar to the one found on the smaller *Comentari della Moscovia*. Buyers like Antonio would therefore have had books bound at their





5



7



6

Fig. 5. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Incipit secundus liber secunde partis beati Thome de Aquino, Ordinis Predicatorum* (Venice: Leonardus Wild, 1479), sig. Pl4v–Pl5r. Annotations on table of contents.

Fig. 6. Diodorus, *Diodori Siculi historiarum* (see fig. 3). Annotations in two inks and hands.

Fig. 7. Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chiliades Des. Erasmi Roterodami* (Basel: Johann Froben, 1546), sig. Q3v–Q4r. 2017 +321. Expurgation of Erasmus's name from running titles.

Fig. 8. Detail of fig. 6

De  
militibz non summebz disciplina m-  
ilitarem.

gravius

De his q seceza hostibz reuelleret  
q qui moneta uicincideret aut  
adulterina cuderet: aut paderet  
misteria et signa: q q fallat  
aut lueret.

Contra eum qui muliere libe-  
ram violat &

Contra adulteros & adulteras.



Fig. 9. Tiberius Catus Silius Italicus, *Silii Italici Punicorum liber primus[-septimusdecimus]* (Parma: Printer of Hieronymus "Epistolae," 1481). 2017 +311. Vellum wrapper with manuscript instruction to binder: "Cooperto" (i.e., full binding).

Fig. 10. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Omniboni Leonici rhetoris clarissimi in Marci Tullii Oratorem ad Qu. fratrem commentarium foeliciter incipit* (Venice: Thomas de Blavis, 1488). 2017 +314. Vellum wrapper with manuscript instruction to binder: "Couerto" (i.e., full binding).

Fig. 11. Jacobus Philippus Bergomensis, *Supplementum Chronicharum* (Venice: Bernardino Rizzo, 1493). 2017 +315. Vellum wrapper with manuscript instruction to binder: "A fondello" (i.e., half binding).

Fig. 12. Bergomensis, *Supplementum Chronicharum* (see fig. 11). Leather and brass clasp with decorative stamp.

9



10



11

12

own expense, often at a separate location from the shop where they had been purchased—a practice that allowed them to tailor each volume's appearance to their own tastes.

A copy of the *Punica* by the Roman poet Silius Italicus has had its original vellum wrapper bound inside of its exterior binding. This wrapper bears the single word "Cooperto" in Antonio's hand: a direct instruction from owner to binder on how the book should be completed (fig. 9). The term refers to a "full" leather binding, here consisting of tanned goat-skin stretched over hard wooden boards in the style that predominated among the earliest Italian printed books.<sup>19</sup> The similar inscription "Couerto" appears in a volume of selected works by Cicero and other rhetoricians (fig. 10), while the *Supplementum Chronicharum* (an offshoot of massively popular histories such as the *Nuremburg Chronicle*) contains a vellum wrapper with the note "A fondello," indicating a somewhat cheaper half-leather binding, which wraps around the spine and leaves the wooden boards exposed (fig. 11). Each of the bindings in the exhibition still bears one or more leather and metal clasps, which survive from the period's typical arrangement

of two across the fore-edge, one for the upper edge of the pages, and another for the lower edge.<sup>20</sup> In the case of the *Supplementum Chronicharum*, these clasps at once secure the knowledge within the text and invite readers to access it with a stamp reading "AVE," or "HAIL" (fig. 12).

These three books were probably bound sometime between 1490 and 1510 by one of two binderies in Belluno, each of which used distinct stamps and rolls in order to ornament their covers.<sup>21</sup> This technique of "blind tooling" on plain leather was less expensive than methods like gold tooling (filling each impression with gold leaf) or costly and relatively fragile fabric bindings. It nonetheless allows for complex decorative elements, which here have been deliberately preserved by raised metal bosses. These repeating patterns of knotwork, borders, and floral imagery may have proven particularly inspiring for Vecellio, who also published a popular book of lace-work patterns, *Corona delle nobili et virtuose donne* (1591).

Odorico expanded upon his father's collection later in the sixteenth century by purchasing books that accorded with his own interests in law, medicine, and



13





13



14

philosophy. These included a commentary on Aristotelian metaphysics by the contemporary scholar Agostino Nifo (figs. 13–16). The volume's covers are divided by quadruple borders into a grid of forty squares, each containing a fleur-de-lis emblem. A vellum inlay set into the front cover also displays a calligraphic rendering of the book's title (fig. 13). Based on its distinctive grid design, Hobson suggests that the book was bound at a shop in Padua that “specialized in selling medical books and works of Aristotelian philosophy,” two topics for which the city was renowned.<sup>22</sup> Odorico, who studied law at the University of Padua, may have commissioned a binding for the volume during his time there; indeed, a scrap of paper covered in accounting notes and inserted between its pages suggests that he kept it especially close to hand (fig. 14).

This fact may also explain yet another layer to the binding. Pages from an earlier edition of Aristotle's *Physics* have furnished binder's waste for Nifo's comments on the *Metaphysics*, where they appear as a pastedown on the interior of both boards and emerge from the gutter at several locations within the text (fig. 15). This faint suggestion of an ongoing dialogue between ancient philosopher and modern commentator even accords with Vecellio's illustration for the volume, which portrays two men—one in the black robes of a scholar, the other in a red gown and ermine cape—deep in conversation, each grasping the same codex in one hand (fig. 16). Whether an act of convenience based on the materials at hand or a considered, almost punning design



15

Fig. 13. Agostino Nifo, *Eutychi Augustini Nyphi Philothei Suessani Metaphysicarum disputationum dilucidarium* (Naples: Sigismund Mayr, 1511). 2017 +318. Front cover binding with blind-tooled grid design containing fleur-de-lis stamps.

Fig. 14. Nifo, *Eutychi Augustini Nyphi Philothei Suessani Metaphysicarum disputationum dilucidarium* (see fig. 13). Paper scrap with manuscript accounting notes.

Fig. 15. Nifo, *Eutychi Augustini Nyphi Philothei Suessani Metaphysicarum disputationum dilucidarium* (see fig. 13). Binder's waste from Aristotle's *Physics* used as pastedown.

Fig. 16. Cesare Vecellio, fore-edge painting on Nifo, *Eutychi Augustini Nyphi Philothei Suessani Metaphysicarum disputationum dilucidarium* (see fig. 13)



16



choice, this example illustrates how even seemingly neutral features of bookbinding can contribute to a text's significance.

#### IV. Rubrication and Illumination

These unusual features of the Pillone volumes somewhat outshine a more common technique for ornamenting early printed books: rubrication and illumination. Virtually all of the Beinecke copies contain spaces for decorated capital letters, most of which are marked by small guide letters in print or manuscript. By contrast with the attention paid to binding and fore-edge decoration, however, these have only been completed in some volumes.<sup>23</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* is filled with blank capital spaces, and in Seneca's *Tragedies* the illuminator has made virtually no



attempt to conceal the guide letters beneath red and blue ink (fig. 17). A few examples nonetheless demonstrate significant time and effort, as at the opening of a collection of rhetorical treatises (fig. 18) or the beginning of each book in Silius Italicus's *Punica* (fig. 19). And in the letters of St. Jerome, an illuminator has responded to the undersized spaces left by the printer with puckish inventiveness, superimposing his capitals in order to create the illusion of depths within the surface of the page (fig. 20).

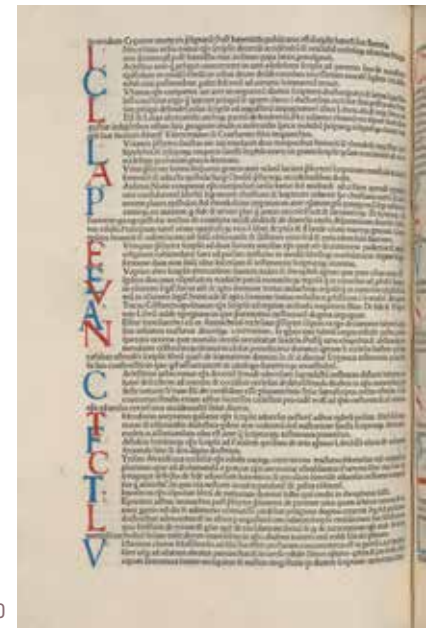
#### V. Marbling

Vecellio's fore-edge paintings have understandably tended to attract viewers' attention, but he also took pains to adorn the upper and lower edges of the pages in most of the Pillone volumes.



Book owners had routinely inked titles or simple patterns on the outside edges of the page block as a means of identifying specific volumes while they were shelved.<sup>24</sup> Vecellio appears partly to have adopted this practice, adding titles and authors' names as a final layer over most of his paintings. His upper- and lower-edge designs are especially remarkable, however, because several instances imitate the art of paper marbling, which had recently been introduced to Italy from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>25</sup>

Marbling became increasingly common as a means of decorating pastedowns, endpapers, and fore-edges in later centuries, but a guide purporting to describe how it was produced would not be published in Europe for nearly a hundred years, in Athanasius Kircher's



*Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (1646).<sup>26</sup> In the process of marbling, colored oils are combined with a surfactant agent to prevent them from mixing before being placed on the surface of a liquid base; dampened paper is then gently lowered onto this surface until the

Fig. 17. Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae cum[m] duobus co[m]mentis* (Venice: Matteo Capcasa, 1493), sig. U3v–U4r. 2017 +316. Illuminated capital letters over visible printed guide letters.

Fig. 18. Cicero, *Marci Tullii Oratorem* (see fig. 10), sig. B1r. Illuminated capital letter.

Fig. 19. Silius Italicus, *Silii Italici Punica* (see fig. 8), sig. A2r. Illuminated capital letter.

Fig. 20. St. Jerome, *Epistolae* (see fig. 4), sig. 11v. Overlapping illuminated capital letters.



floating colors have adhered to it.<sup>27</sup> In spite of the specialized nature of the technique, Vecellio's imitations effectively recreate many features of true marbling designs, suggesting that he had encountered examples of the art earlier in his career. The lower edge of Erasmus's *Adagiorum chiliades*, its covers bound in pale pigskin somewhere in southern Germany, has (somewhat hastily) been painted in a deep red, with irregular brownish lines mimicking the streaks and whorls produced by marbling's interplay of colors (fig. 21). Other books display higher contrast and greater variations in pigment, as in the bold, almost electric purple-on-blue bolts applied to the upper and lower edges of the volume of rhetorical treatises by Cicero and others (fig. 22). In an era when most Europeans could only have acquired pre-marbled sheets of paper via the commercial channels that linked cities like Venice to the Ottoman world, Vecellio's work is an important precursor to the design innovations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

## VI. Fore-Edge Paintings

In his celebration of the Pillone library, William Stirling-Maxwell observed that "as the tomes are generally of a comfortable corpulence," each of their fore-edges "presented a considerable and conspicuous field for [Vecellio's] fancy."<sup>28</sup> But it would be more accurate to describe this "field" as a complex, multifaceted surface—one that stretches from the fore-edge of each book to their upper and lower edges, over their covers and spine, and across the shelves that originally

stored them. As described above, several of the volumes bear portraits of their authors, providing visual support for the notion that the library was intended to encompass the full scope of humanist learning. Seneca appears on his *Opera* (fig. 23) as a bearded sage in conversation with the emperor Nero (who is distinguished by his armor and bare legs), while on the *Tragedies* he is a young man bearing a codex like a talisman with its pages held outward, one finger gesturing toward the text within (fig. 24). By contrast, Cicero's red robe and ermine fur cape resemble nothing so much as the garb worn by noble figures in Vecellio's clothing manual, such as the Doge of Venice or the electors of the Holy Roman Empire—yet another instance of the artist's penchant for self-reference and publicity (fig. 25).

These images imply a relatively straightforward parallel between surface adornment and the depths of the text. But other examples indicate that both Vecellio and the Pillone family conceived of the collection as an aesthetic object in its totality. Jerome's *Epistolae* shows the saint in the midst of shrugging off the red robes and hat of a cardinal, which drape across his lap and pour from the edge of a rock upon which he has propped his text. The wilderness that envelops him extends onto the upper and lower edges of the pages—forking paths through grass on the bottom, and treetops, tiny birds, and blue skies faded by sun exposure on top (fig. 26). While this 1496 copy was printed in Venice by Joannes Rubeus, the Pillone library also contained a complete edition

Fig. 21. Erasmus, *Adagiorum Chiliades* (see fig. 7). Marbling on lower edge of page block.

Fig. 22. Cicero, *Marci Tullii Oratorem* (see fig. 10). Marbling on lower edge of page block.

Fig. 23. Vecellio, fore-edge painting on Seneca, *L. Annei Senecae opera* (see fig. 2)

Fig. 24. Vecellio, fore-edge painting on Seneca, *L. Annei Senecae Tragoediae* (see fig. 17).





of Jerome's works printed by Johann Froben (publisher and friend of Erasmus) at Basel in 1537. Completed in the same style as that of the Beinecke volume, Vecellio's paintings for this series also show the saint in various postures and stages of undress. Taken together, this grouping demands that viewers look beyond the surface of a single book—indeed, beyond distinct editions, produced by different publishers in separate countries and centuries—in order to fully grasp the arc of Jerome's life and work.

Other paintings from the collection personify the concepts of the book they adorn, or otherwise anticipate how it will be used and interpreted. On the *Lexicon Graecolatinum*, two men gesture animatedly at each other; appropriately, one wears a version of Venetian dress from Vecellio's clothing book, while the other resembles that book's figure of a Greek monk (fig. 27). Cicero stands with his index finger extended, as if in the midst of delivering an oration (see fig. 25). Still other texts show how Vecellio made the most of the space available to him on slimmer volumes by sketching simple landscapes containing towers, obelisks, busts, and other vertically oriented figures (fig. 28).

Fig. 25. Vecellio, fore-edge painting on Cicero, *Marci Tullii Oratorem* (see fig. 10)

Fig. 26. Vecellio, upper-edge painting on St. Jerome, *Epistolae* (see fig. 4)

Fig. 27. Vecellio, fore-edge painting on *Lexicon Graecolatinum* (Basel: Johann Walder, 1541). 2017 +320

Fig. 28. Vecellio, fore-edge painting on Diodorus, *Diodori Siculi historiaru[m]* (see fig. 3)





One volume from the Beinecke collection belongs to a smaller group of works for which Vecellio (or one of his apprentices) has applied ink drawings directly to a vellum binding.<sup>29</sup> This copy of the *Comentari della Moscovia* (1550), a travel book authored by the diplomat Sigismund von Herberstein, displays a filigreed design on its spine and images on each of its covers. Turning it to one side reveals a horse drawing a sledge across the tundra (fig. 29), which has been copied from a woodcut within the book (fig. 30). The other is occupied by a Russian man garbed in a long coat and fur hat, who resembles another figure from Vecellio's clothing encyclopedia—in this case, one of the "noble Muscovite ambassadors" from whom Herberstein might have taken his accounts. Like the foldout map of Russia included with the text (fig. 31), these illustrations expand the book's contents beyond the conventional bounds of the printed codex.

Each of these examples demonstrates that the Pillone library can only be understood by considering how it has existed as a library over the centuries; that is, by conceiving of it not as a series of atomized texts, but as a thoroughly material entity situated in time and space. Brought together more by its visual and tactile embellishment than by its interior contents, the collection highlights a number of questions not always asked in the study of early print, which typically focuses on the production, circulation, and reception of texts. How, for instance, were Odorico's purchases later in the sixteenth century informed by the incunabula already selected by his father,

Antonio? Which other contemporary craft practices were involved in the creation of the library at the Pillone estate, such as carpentry, wood carving, or textile design? And what sorts of "users" of books, in the broadest possible sense, did Vecellio anticipate when designing his fore-edge paintings—readers, viewers, or something in-between?

As suggested by the early account of its fame among travelers, the library should perhaps be thought of not as a set of humanist works but as a multimedia gallery, more akin to the Pillone family's collections of paintings and weapons than to other prominent libraries of the period. A number of challenges remain for any attempt to reckon with these issues. We do not even know, for instance, whether the shelves in the study at Casteldardo were situated perpendicular to the room's longest walls (as remained most common throughout the period), or flush with them (as in the newer style of sites like the Spanish royal library at El Escorial). Despite these lacunae, Vecellio's paintings and the volumes they adorn open up promising new perspectives for book historians and viewers alike.

Fig. 29. Vecellio, front cover ink drawing on Sigismund von Herberstein, *Comentari della Moscovia* (Venice: Giovanni Battista Pedrezano, 1550). 2017 439

Fig. 30. von Herberstein, *Comentari della Moscovia* (see fig. 29). Woodcut of horse-drawn sledge.

Fig. 31. von Herberstein, *Comentari della Moscovia* (see fig. 29). Engraved foldout map of "Moscovia" and surrounding regions.





## Slender Figures and Thin Images

In Book Four of *De Rerum Natura*, the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius describes images as *simulacra*: tangible “membranes” or “barks” that stream constantly from the physical world and into the eyes and minds of viewers. As the author Lucy Hutchinson phrased it in her seventeenth-century English translation, these “slender figures and thin images... euer passe off[f] from the outside of all things,” generating new forms of human thought and perception.<sup>30</sup> The Pillone

family seems not to have owned a copy of Lucretius’s poem, which had recently been rediscovered by Poggio Bracciolini and made available in a Venetian printed edition of 1495. But its account of these motile, razor-thin images, which shake themselves free from the surface of objects to circulate in the world, resonates with the experience of viewing the library and its fore-edge paintings (fig. 32). Vecellio’s slender figures help to make visible a new ideal of book ownership that emerged during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and which remains partly in force today.

By attending to these books’ other surfaces, though, *Habits Ancient and Modern* also invites viewers to look at the printed codex in potentially destabilizing ways. The blank page may have served as the primary venue for early printers to experiment with new styles of book design. However, the activities of collectors like the Pillone family (and the illuminators and binders they employed) open up the further possibility of seeing such volumes not just as containers for printed text, but also as assemblages of overlapping and nested surfaces, each implying

its own unfathomable depths within. Like Lucretius’s fragile barks, floating upon the obscure sea of the cosmos, Vecellio’s paintings provide a fixed object for our vision even as they demand that we look and think beyond them. As we peer between the clasps at Erasmus, Jerome, or Tacitus, their eyes bent to the study of books, we are witness to an engagement with objects that had—and still have—the capacity to fascinate, vex, and surprise.

Fig. 32. Twelve of the thirteen Pillone library volumes in the Beinecke’s collections





## Notes

1 It is worth noting that the book's woodcuts were actually executed by the German engraver Christoph Krieger, with Vecellio providing the drawings on which they were based. See Cesare Vecellio, *The Clothing of the Renaissance World: Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas*, ed. and trans. Margaret F. Rosenthal and Ann Rosalind Jones (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2008), 14–15.

2 Ibid., 271.

3 Surveys of the historical development of fore-edge paintings are given by Mirjam Foot, *Pictorial Bookbindings* (London: British Library, 1986) and Carl J. Weber, *Fore-Edge Painting: A Historical Survey of a Curious Art in Book Decoration* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: Harvey House, 1966).

4 For more information on how these storage practices changed over time, see Henry Petroski, *The Book on the Bookshelf* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 119–28.

5 Brian Barber, "Working in 'The Cause of Bibliomania Throughout the World': Sir Thomas Brooke (1830–1908), a Yorkshire Businessman-Bibliophile," *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 90 (2018): 171.

6 Quoted in Thomas Brooke and G.I. Ellis, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Printed Books Collected by Thomas Brooke and Preserved at Armitage Bridge House, Near Huddersfield*, 2 vols. (London: Ellis and Elvey, 1891), 2:665.

7 Barber, "Working in 'The Cause of Bibliomania Throughout the World,'" 6.

8 Pierre Berès and Lionello Venturi, *Bibliothèque Pillone* (Paris: Pierre Berès, 1957), fol. 9v.

9 A.R.A. (Anthony) Hobson, "The Pillone Library," *The Book Collector* 7 (1958): 37.

10 Anthony Hobson, *Apollo and Pegasus: An Enquiry into the Formation and Dispersal of a Renaissance Library* (Amsterdam: G.T. van Heusden, 1975), 61, 101 n. 3.

11 Ibid., 3–7. On Grolier and Hurtado de Mendoza, see Anthony Hobson, *Renaissance Book Collecting: Jean Grolier and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, Their Books and Bindings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Hurtado de Mendoza in particular focused on commissioning scribal copies of Greek manuscripts.

12 Hobson, *Renaissance Book Collecting*, 9–21.

13 Quoted in Brooke and Ellis, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Printed Books*, 2:665.

14 William H. Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 29.

15 Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 63.

16 Hobson, "Pillone Library," 37.

17 Hannah Marcus, "Expurgated Books as an Archive of Practice," *Archive Journal* (August 2017), <http://www.archivejournal.net/essays/expurgated-books-as-an-archive-of-practice>. See also Marcus, "Bibliography and Book Bureaucracy: Reading Licenses and the Circulation of Prohibited Books in Counter-Reformation Italy," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 110, no. 4 (2016): 433–57.

18 Hobson, "Pillone Library," 30–32.

19 Anthony Hobson, "Italian Fifteenth-Century Bookbindings," *Renaissance Studies* 9, no. 2 (1995), 132–33.

20 Ibid., 133–34.

21 Plates 1–4 in Hobson, "Pillone Library," delineate many of these design elements, and Hobson is responsible for identifying the bindery of origin for many of the collection's volumes.

22 Anthony Hobson, *Humanists and Bookbinders: The Origins and Diffusion of the Humanistic Bookbinding, 1459–1559* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 125.

23 G.D. Hobson, "Further Notes on Romanesque Bindings," *The Library*, 4th ser., 15, no. 2 (1934): 170, demonstrates that these processes may occasionally have been undertaken at the same shop at which the books were bound, though in other cases from the period it is clear that a volume was not illuminated until well after binding.

24 Petroski, *The Book on the Bookshelf*, 122.

25 Phoebe Jane Easton, *Marbling: A History and a Bibliography* (Los Angeles: Dawson's Book Shop, 1983), 33–37.

26 Athanasius Kircher, *Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae* (Rome: Hermann Scheus, 1646), 814–15. A translation of Kircher's instructions is provided by Charles M. Adams, "Some Notes on the Art of Marbling Paper in the Seventeenth Century," *The Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 51, no. 7 (1947): 411–17.

27 Easton, *Marbling*, xiii.

28 Quoted in Brooke and Ellis, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts and Printed Books*, 664.

29 On the likely participation of these apprentices, see Hobson, "The Pillone Library," 37.

30 Lucy Hutchinson, "The Translation of Lucretius," in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. Reid Barbour and David Norbrook, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1:226, Book 4, Lines 47–48.

---

This catalog is one of four for the exhibition  
*Bibliomania; or Book Madness: A Bibliographical  
Romance*

Copyright © 2019 by Yale University

Designed and typeset in DIN Next typefaces  
by Rebecca Martz, Office of the Yale University  
Printer

Copy edited by Lesley K. Baier, Office of the  
Yale University Printer

Printed by GHP in West Haven, Connecticut

Cover: Detail of fig. 32

Yale





COR  
T



SEN  
T



SEN  
T



LEX  
T