PRINTING with movable type was introduced into Italy in 1465 by two Germans, Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz, who printed the first Italian book, Lactantius’s *De Divinis Institutionibus*, at the Monastery of Subiaco near Rome. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, Italian printers had earned an unrivalled reputation for the printing of works in clear and elegant types, the most celebrated being ‘Roman’ and ‘Italic’. They were also renowned for the beautiful layout and design of their books. By this time, virtually every major city in the Italian peninsula could boast at least one printing press, while in Venice alone there were more presses to be found than in any other city in the world. Indeed, it has been calculated that just under fifty per cent of all sixteenth-century books were printed there. Italian printers ‘par excellence’ such as Antonio Blado, Aldus Manutius and his heirs, Gabriel Giolito de’ Ferrari, the Giunta family, and Francesco Marcolini, to name the most famous, had earned a justifiable reputation for printing books in comparatively long print runs and, equally important, for publishing textually accurate and carefully edited works, a prerequisite for the literary and scientific researches of the Humanist scholar, especially in subjects such as biblical and classical exegesis. Italian printers were also famed for illustrating their books with woodcuts and engravings of the finest quality. These were not only of great beauty but were essential for scientific works, especially books on anatomy.

The tradition of producing finely printed and lavishly illustrated books was continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by such celebrated printers as Giambattista Albrizzi and Giambattista Bodoni, to name but two, and is still very much alive in our own century. Contemporary Italian printers are renowned for the attractive presentation of their books, the clarity and elegance of their texts, the beauty of their ‘livres d’artiste’ and, above all, the very high quality of their colour printing. Indeed, a high proportion of books requiring fine colour reproduction are printed in Italy, regardless of language or place of publication.

The British Library’s collections of Italian fine printing are exceptional. Books printed in Italy formed a high proportion of the Library’s foundation collections, and the Italian collections were greatly enhanced in the nineteenth century by the acquisition of George III’s Library and Thomas Grenville’s magnificent bequest, together with the judicious purchases of Sir Anthony Panizzi. Today, purchased additions to the Library’s Italian
collections are made as funds permit. All the twentieth-century imprints described below have been added to the Library’s holdings between 1975 and 1990. With the exception of some of the Officina Bodoni books all were printed in Italy. All are first editions unless otherwise indicated and all have been purchased except for the editions of The Sayings of the Seven Sages of Greece and Coatlicue which were donated to the Library.

**Italian Futurist Works**

Three years after the publication of his famous Manifesto of Futurism in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909, Marinetti published his influential Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature in which he made his celebrated statement: ‘After free verse – now at last, WORDS IN FREEDOM!’ Marinetti and the Futurist writers believed that words should be freed from the ‘prison’ of traditional syntax and that adjectives, conjunctions, adverbs and even punctuation itself should be abandoned. Marinetti also advocated the use of onomatopoeia and the visual impact of print, imaginative typography and word distortion and where appropriate 3 or 4 different inks and 20 different typefaces.


This work entitled ‘Bayonets’ by the lesser-known Italian Futurist Umberto Bottone clearly shows the literal ‘freedom’ of words both in prose and poetry, hence their ‘free’ and at times apparently random distribution on the page.

Cup. 408. ww. 37.


Cangiullo believed that since music was the only truly ‘international’ language, poetry would be appreciated by a wider audience if it were literally written on the preprinted music manuscript paper used by composers of music. He also believed that with this added visual advantage, the reader would better appreciate the musicality and lyricism of his poetry.

Cup. 408. ww. 38.


Cup. 408. ww. 45.


X. 958/18063.


This fascinating anthology contains work of the
futurist poets including Catrizzi, Cremonesi, Dolfi, Escodamè, Farfa, Fillia, Focolaldi, Gerbino, Guatteri, Mainardi, Maino, Marchesi, Marinetti, Sanzin, Simonetti and Vianello. Marinetti’s interesting introduction to the poets sheds much light on the aims of the futurist poets and futurism in general. This copy is inscribed to Romana [De La Salle (?)] as an ‘omaggio futurista’ by Marinetti.

Cup.408.ww.41.


Many of the Italian Futurist writers, particularly the majority of the younger poets, held the older generation of Italian poets in contempt. Giovanni Pascoli, for example, was deemed to be too sentimental and Gabriele D’Annunzio too decadent and tainted with Nietzscheanism. Marinetti’s literary relationship with D’Annunzio has always been difficult to establish. Although the two writers had much in common, Marinetti appears to have had a love–hate relationship with D’Annunzio and his oeuvre. In this early work, which he dedicated to D’Annunzio, Marinetti’s text betrays a hint of mockery, which is captured by the illustration on the dust cover showing the warrior bard and future hero of Fiume dusting his laurels.

Cup.408.ww.47.


The original French edition of Marinetti’s ‘Mafarka’ was published by E. Sansot in 1909 at Paris, the cultural capital of Europe. The first Italian translation of his scandalous new ‘African novel’ which best exemplified Marinetti’s theories at the time appeared one year later. Mafarka, the story of a black Futurist Superman who is a warrior and at the same time the founder of a new ‘religion’ of ‘daily
Heroism and the Will made extrinsic,’ brought Marinetti further notoriety since he was prosecuted for obscenity at a trial which caused a sensation.

Cup. 408. ww. 42.


The Futurists were anticlerical in the main and seized every opportunity to mock the clergy – ‘we are as distant from internationalist unpatriotic Socialism (ignoble celebration of the rights of the stomach) as from timid priest-ridden Conservatism, symbolized by carpet-slippers and the warming pan.’ Indeed, at the first performance of Marinetti’s ‘Le Roi Bombance’, at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre in Paris on 3 April 1909, a full-scale riot was sparked off by the thunderous sound effects of a priest’s digestive system in Act II. ‘The Pope’s Aeroplane’, a ‘prophetic novel in free verse’ is no exception. The original French edition Le Monoplan du Pape was published in Paris by E. Sansot in 1912. This edition is the first Italian translation from the French. This particular copy is inscribed by Marinetti to his friend [Barres (?)].

Cup. 408. ww. 43.


Marinetti wrote this poem in 1939 to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Futurist movement. He dedicated the work to ‘Italian Futurist poets and artists’, and also to the newspapers Le Figaro and Le Temps in whose columns the Futurist movement was discussed at length.

Cup. 408. ww. 40.


This uncommon autobiographical work whose title translates literally as ‘Tins of love in preserve’ shows Marinetti in a humorous vein. The illustrations and decorations by Pannaggi and particularly the ornaments and tailpieces by Carlo Petrucci impart an unusual charm to this edition.

Cup. 410. f. 163.


Some of the fundamental themes of Futurism included the cult of war which was considered to be ‘the sole hygiene of the world’, the cult
of technical progress, the beauty of speed and the cult of the machine and, in particular, the aeroplane — ‘We shall sing... of the flight of aeroplanes, the sound of whose propellers is like the flapping of flags and the applause of an enthusiastic crowd...’. Marinetti’s ‘Aerial Dictionary’ was considered prescribed reading for disciples of the movement.

Books printed by the Officina Bodoni

Giovanni Mardersteig, the great scholar-printer and founder of the famous hand press of the Officina Bodoni who died in 1977, was granted special permission to print books with types cast from the original matrices used by the great Italian printer and letter-cutter Giambattista Bodoni of Parma (1740–1813). Mardersteig initially set up his hand press at Montagnola di Lugano in Switzerland in 1922. Perhaps one of the most celebrated Officina Bodoni editions was the national edition of the works of the Italian writer and futurist Marinetti.
poet Gabriele D’Annunzio which was printed in 1927. Shortly after the publication of this edition the press was transferred to Verona where it has remained to this day. With the addition of copper-plate and lithographic presses the Officina Bodoni expanded and produced books of extremely high editorial and scholarly standards many of which were illustrated by contemporary artists such as Pietro Annigoni, Giacomo Manzù and Gunther Böhmer. All books printed by the Officina Bodoni are invariably elegant and printed with painstaking precision, are often beautifully illustrated and are always attractive. They are consequently much sought after by collectors wishing to own examples of the work of a man who has been referred to as ‘probably the finest pressman the world has ever seen or is ever likely to see’. The British Library’s collections of works printed by the Officina Bodoni are particularly fine. Additions to the British Library’s collections since 1975 include:

This is copy no. 175 of 300 copies printed on Cernobbio paper in red and black set in Mardersteig’s 12-, 11-, and 10-point Dante type. The text of Leonard Baskin’s lecture, ‘To Colour Thought’, was first delivered on the occasion of the opening of the Graphic Arts collection in Yale University Library on 9 May 1966. The ten illustrations were printed (in collotype and offset) at the Meriden Gravure Company, Connecticut. The frontispiece is a reproduction from William Blake’s Small Book of Designs and the calligraphic half-title was designed by Crimilda Pontes.
Cup.510.ee.56.

This edition of Dante’s Vita Nuova which contains a preface by Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) was printed on a hand press using Bodoni’s original types. Only 225 copies of this edition were printed on handmade Fabriano paper, and five other copies were printed on vellum.
Cup.510.ee.51.

This work is an edition of Codex Vaticanus lat. 6852 which contains the treatise by the Veronese humanist Felice Feliciano in which he described the geometrical construction of Roman capital letters. This is copy no. 154 of the English edition of 400 copies. German and Italian versions were also published in 1960.
Cup.510.ee.58.

This is copy no. 93 of an edition of 160 copies signed in the colophon by Pietro Annigoni. The edition has been printed on handmade Pescia paper and consists of 150 numbered copies and 10 ‘ad personam’. The Cyrillic type was designed by Wadim Lazursky and was specially cut for the Officina Bodoni. Gogol spent the years 1838–42 in Rome where he wrote Dead Souls and it was during his stay there he wrote his first draft of The Overcoat.
which bears the date 1841. This copy has been bound by Sally Lou Smith in brown goatskin with grey and dark brown crumpled onlays, tooled in blind.


Printed on the handpress of the Officina Bodoni. One of a limited edition of 80 copies.

Cup.408.w.8.


Printed on the handpress of the Officina Bodoni. One of a limited edition of 60 copies.

Cup.408.w.9.


This is copy no. 18 of a limited edition of 135 numbered copies of which only 100 were for sale. This selection of MacDiarmid's lyrics was set in a slightly modified version of Mardersteig's Dante Italic and was printed on handmade Pescia paper. The frontispiece portrait of the poet was engraved by Freddy Theys. This was the last book printed at the Officina Bodoni in Giovanni Mardersteig's lifetime and is a variant of the Copyright receipt copy.

Cup.510.ee.59.


Cup.510.ee.55.


This copy is one of a limited edition of 200 and is printed on special Fabriano paper. It is bound in a quarter vellum binding with marbled paper overboards and contains a variant of Mardersteig's printing device (of a cross surmounting an orb and bull's horns) in that it is printed in light blue instead of black which is more usual for this edition.

Cup.510.ee.63.

**Sayings.** The Sayings of the Seven Sages of Greece. Verona: Editiones Officinæ Bodoni, April 1976. 90 pp.; 25 cm.

The Greek text which is largely based on the version of Joannes Stobæus and translated by
Betty Radice is set in Griffo type based on that cut by the punch-cutter Francesco Griffo in 1494 for Aldus Manutius. The book is printed in black and terracotta on hand-made Magnani paper. This copy, specially printed for The British Library, is one of ten ‘ad personam’ copies from a limited edition of 160.

Cup. 407. gg. 60.

**Italian ‘livres d’artiste’**


This is Copy no. 474 of a lavish edition of 990, which faithfully reproduces in full colour the ‘oeuvre’ of the famous Italian artist Pietro Annigoni. This edition, which also contains ‘critiques’ of Annigoni’s work, will remain an indispensable monograph for students and art critics alike. This copy is no. 68, part of a more exclusive run of 99, since it contains a specially commissioned and signed lithograph by the artist. Annigoni, who died in 1988, is principally known to the British public for his portraits of Her Majesty The Queen and the portrait of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent as Chancellor of Leeds University.

HS. 74/6.


A definitive critical study of the Tuscan artist (1266–1337) which is accompanied by full-colour reproductions of the highest quality to illustrate his ‘oeuvre’.

HS. 74/59.


This unusual and striking example of a contemporary ‘livre d’artiste’ is the work of the Mexican artist Raymundo Sesma. Sesma, who was born in 1954 and has lived in Milan for several years, has illustrated Cardoza y Aragón’s prose poem *Coatlicue* (which describes the ancient Mexican goddess to whom human sacrifice was offered) with a series of seven collographs. Sesma’s collographs are applied in several layers and are built up to produce a richly textured three-dimensional effect, which has become almost a hallmark of his work. The box which accompanies it was specially designed by Angelo Penna. This edition was printed on handmade ‘Arches’ paper in Dante type. Only twenty-six copies of this very expensive book, which is a work of art in its own right, were printed. This copy which is no. 2 was presented to the British Library by the artist in person in December 1989.

C. 188. c. 9.


The illustrations to accompany these selections from Homer’s *Ilid* are by the distinguished Italian artist Giorgio De Chirico for a lavish contemporary edition of the Greek classic. (That shown is the illustration for Book XIII.) The translation by the Italian poet and Nobel prizewinner Salvatore Quasimodo was printed in a limited edition of which only 350 were intended for export. This edition was printed
on handmade paper, specially produced by the Miliani paperworks of Fabriano, and is bound in a contemporary Italian binding of black goatskin. The front cover is decorated with a specially commissioned gilt on bronze medallion by the sculptor Guido Veroi. De Chirico illustrated this work with a total of 26 separate plates.


This de luxe edition of episodes from Homer’s Odyssey was also selected and translated from the Greek into Italian by Salvatore Quasimodo. It was printed in a limited run of only 350 copies which were intended for export of which this is copy no. 143. The edition was printed on handmade paper specially produced by the Miliani paperworks of Fabriano and is illustrated by 20 coloured plates by the Italian artist Giacomo Manzù. The book is bound in a contemporary Italian quarter binding of black goatskin over wooden boards. The front cover is decorated with a specially commissioned gilt on bronze bas relief sculpture also by Giacomo Manzù.

A MEMENTO OF NAPOLEON

Morna Daniels

On 5 May 1821 Napoleon died in exile on his island prison of St Helena. Amongst those Englishmen particularly affected by the news was John Cam Hobhouse, the eldest son of Sir Benjamin Hobhouse. His mother was a dissenters, and Hobhouse himself had attended a school run by a Unitarian before going on to Westminster. It was not surprising, therefore, that his anti-Establishment sympathies inclined him to radicalism. While an undergraduate at Cambridge he became a close friend of Byron, with whom he travelled to Spain, Albania, Greece and Constantinople. In 1819, supported by Sir Francis Burdett and the radical tailor Francis Place, he unsuccessfully contested Westminster as a radical against George Lamb, the official Whig candidate. In December that year the House of Commons committed him to prison until the end of the session for breach of privilege by his assertion in a pamphlet that only troops prevented Parliament being dissolved by popular protest. Despite this, in the General Election of 1820 he defeated Lamb and was returned for Westminster.

Hobhouse had first-hand experience of the consequences of the Napoleonic Wars. In 1813 he toured Germany and saw the terrible devastation wrought by the campaign which had culminated in the ‘Battle of the Nations’ near Leipzig. However, when in 1814 the victorious allies entered Paris, Hobhouse’s patriotism – his brother was in the triumphant British army – warred with his sorrow at the fall of a great man and sympathy for Napoleon’s revolutionary ideals. Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, and a friend of Hobhouse’s father, had provided Hobhouse with a pass to visit Paris and see the entry of the Bourbons. On the news of Napoleon’s escape from Elba in 1815, Hobhouse hurried back to the Continent. On 16 April he saw the Emperor review his army and admired his rapport with the troops, and the way he left the saluting base to march for a while beside each column. ‘I cannot help wishing that the French may meet with as much success as will not compromise the military character of my own countrymen,’ he wrote. ‘As an Englishman, I will not be witness to their triumphs; as a lover of liberty, I would not be spectator of their reverses.’ In the subsequent fighting which led to Waterloo, Hobhouse’s brother was killed, shot in the neck at Quatre Bras.

In 1816 Hobhouse published his own account of ‘The Hundred Days’, The Substance of some letters written by an Englishman resident