

The World of Ariosto



ibliographic exhibition to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*



*Curated by Maria Pavlova
in collaboration with Anna Wawrzonkowska*



Oxford 2016



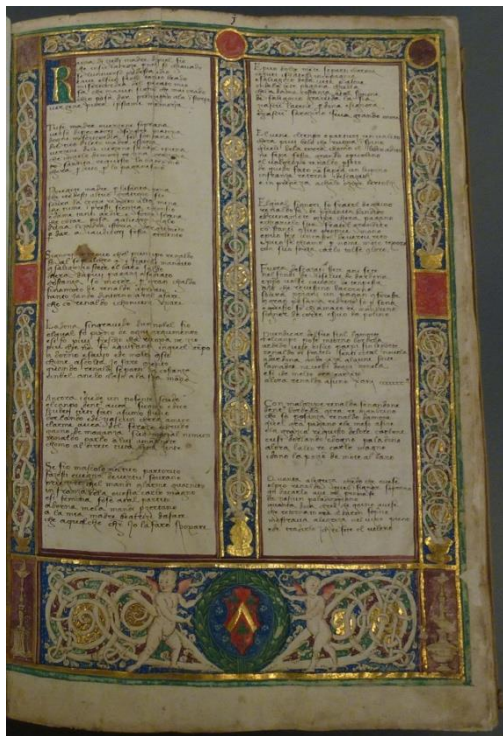
his small exhibition, split between two Oxford libraries, marks the 500th anniversary of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, one of the literary masterpieces of the Italian Renaissance. Set against the backdrop of a war between Charlemagne and the Saracen King Agramante, the poem recounts the heroic exploits and amorous adventures of Christian and Saracen knights and damsels, including the story of Orlando's unreciprocated love for the Saracen princess Angelica. Drawing inspiration from medieval and early Renaissance chivalric romances, it represents the pinnacle of the chivalric genre in Italy. The exhibition is hosted by the Weston Library and the Taylor Institution Library. The Weston Library display brings together a selection of manuscripts of works by Ariosto's predecessors as well as a copy of the third – and definitive – edition of *Orlando furioso* (1532). The display in the Taylor Institution Library presents a selection of sixteenth-century editions of *Orlando furioso* and works inspired by or connected to Ariosto's poem.

The curators are very grateful to Jennifer Varallo and Sallyanne Gilchrist at the Weston Library and Clare Hills-Nova at the Taylor Institution Library for their expert advice and generous help.

Part II

Weston Library, Blackwell Hall

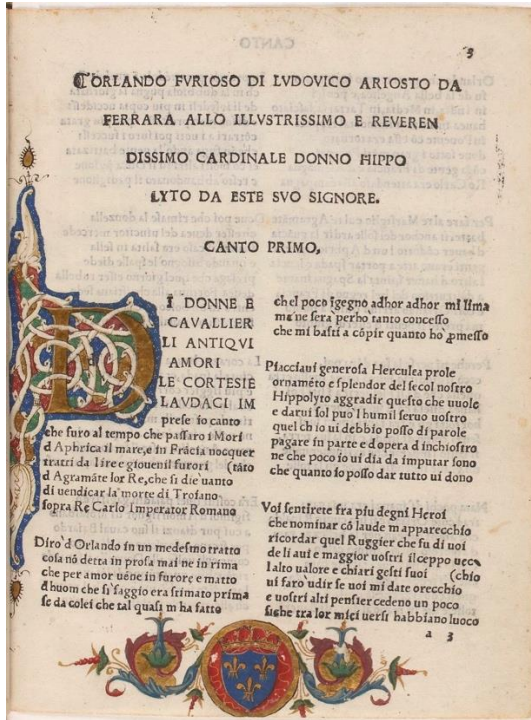
1. *Libro della regina Ancroia*



This lavishly illuminated manuscript was produced by a certain Giovanni Colonna and commissioned by Giovanni di Ser Francesco de' Mazi (or Maggi) in 1474. It contains an anonymous poem about a Saracen warrior queen, Ancroia, and her unrequited passion for a Christian knight, Guidon Selvaggio. The poem's popularity is attested by the fact that it was printed six times between 1479 and 1499. Ariosto was familiar with this story, since Guidon Selvaggio features among the characters of *Orlando furioso*.

MS Canon. Ital. 102, title-page

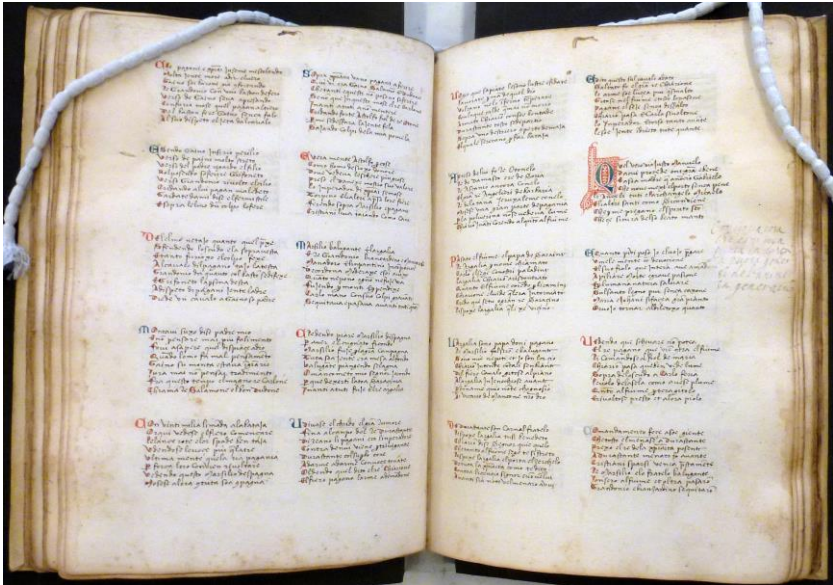
2. Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Ferrara 1516



This is a reproduction of fol. 3r of King Francis I's copy of the first edition of *Orlando furioso* (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Rés. Yd. 242). The first edition, in 40 cantos, appeared on 22 April 1516 in Ferrara, printed by Giovanni Mazzocco dal Bondeno. Ariosto sent an illuminated copy to the newly crowned King Francis I of France, whose chivalric virtues he praises in the encomiastic digressions of his poem. Like the *Aneroia* manuscript, it is decorated with *bianchi girari* (a white vine-stem border), a motif which originated in fifteenth-century Florence and which was frequently used in humanistic and classical manuscripts produced in Ferrara. The illuminated opening page of King Francis' copy is reproduced in *Orlando furioso secondo la princeps del 1516*, ed. by Marco Dorigatti in collaboration with Gerarda Stimato, Florence 2006.

Private Loan

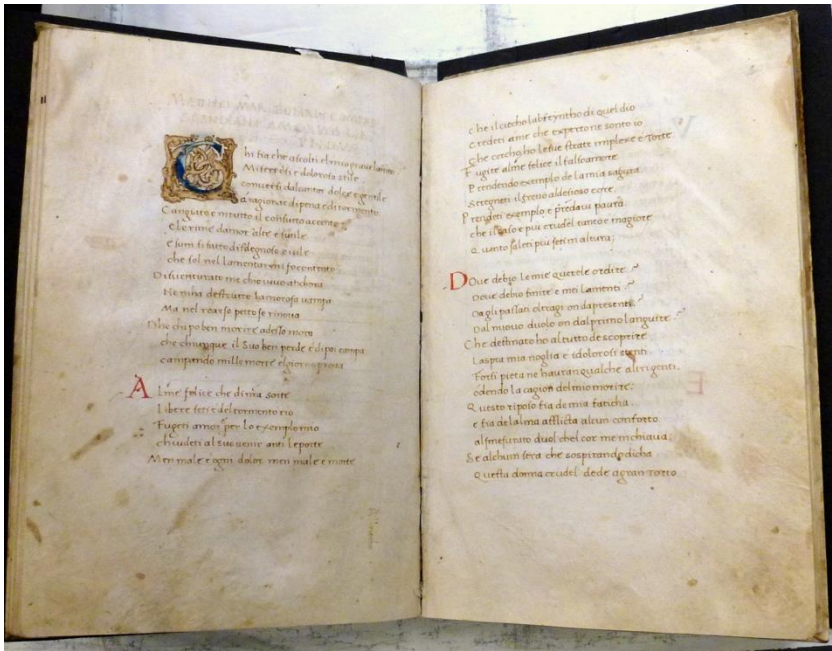
3. Altobello



This manuscript of *Altobello*, an anonymous chivalric poem narrating the adventures of the eponymous Persian knight, seems to date back to the second half of the fifteenth century. The poem was published in 1476 in Venice, which means that it was probably the first chivalric romance to be printed in Italy. Though set at the time of Charlemagne, *Altobello* incorporates elements from Arthurian literature, with love being one of its main themes.

MS Canon. Ital. 42, fols. 53v-54r

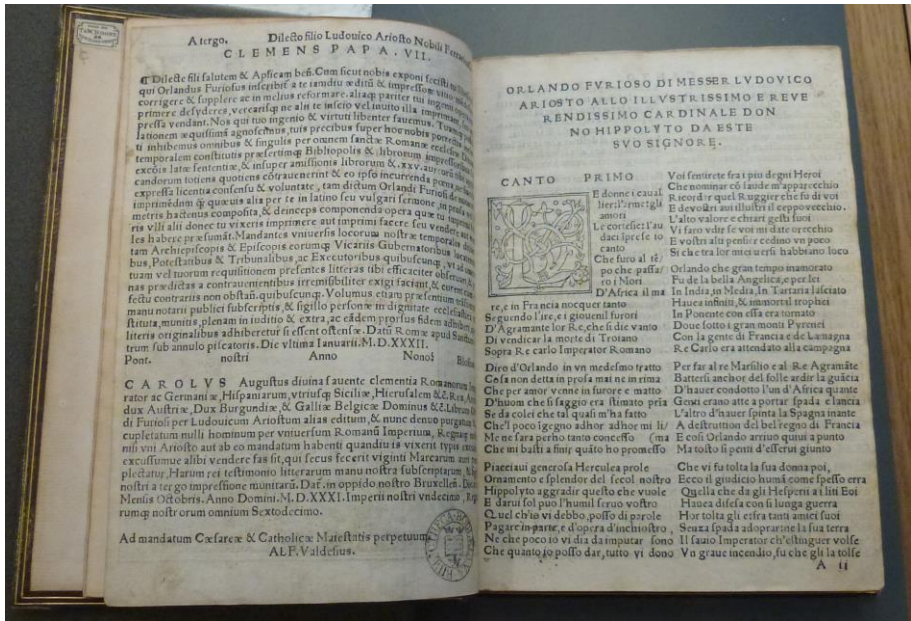
4. Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Amorum libri tres*



Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441-1494) is the author of *Inamoramento de Orlando* (also known as *Orlando innamorato*), a chivalric romance in which Orlando falls head over heels in love with a Saracen princess and to which Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* is a sequel. Boiardo was also a very gifted lyric poet. This fifteenth-century parchment manuscript contains poems from his *Amorum libri tres*, a collection of love poetry composed in the Petrarchan style.

MS Canon. Ital. 47, fols. 28v-29r

5. Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, Ferrara 1532



First published in 1516, *Orlando furioso* was reprinted in revised editions in 1521 and 1532. In the final and definitive version, which appeared the year before Ariosto's death, the number of cantos rose from 40 to 46, as the poet added several new episodes. Moreover, Ariosto made significant stylistic and linguistic changes, striving to make his Italian conform to the new ideal outlined in Pietro Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua* (1525), an extremely influential work which advocated a literary language based on Petrarch and Boccaccio.

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