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A SURVEY OF SOME OF THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLIOTECA LANCISIANA IN ROME*

by

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ONE OF the more important libraries in Italy for the student of the history of medicine and of the biological sciences is the Biblioteca Lancisiana¹ in Rome. This library is situated in the sixteenth-century Palazzo del Commendatore, which stands alongside the famous Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Sassia on the Borgo Santo Spirito near the Vatican. Although this institution has an outstanding wealth of both printed and manuscript material, it does not seem to be as well known to historians of medicine (or, indeed, to historians of other subjects) as it should be and many of its important manuscript holdings remain unexploited.

The foundation of the library goes back to the early eighteenth century, when Giovanni Maria Lancisi (1654–1720), known for his work in various fields of medical science and public health, as well as for his bibliophilia, established it as a separate entity in the Palazzo. It was founded in 1711 and opened with the intervention of Pope Clement XI on 22 May 1714.² Lancisi's own library was added to the rather small existing library of Santo Spirito, which had been founded in the early seventeenth century.³ It seems to have flourished and increased in size for a time, but later failed to keep pace successfully with the development of the medical sciences and could not maintain its position as an outstanding medical research library.⁴ What is more, it apparently was unable to make the transition from a working medical library to one primarily concerned with the study of the history of medicine; by the nineteenth century, it was all but forgotten by scholars and historians of medicine. This seems evident from the fact that so distinguished and so thorough a scholar as Luigi Amabile⁵ was unaware of its important holdings in an area of research in which he

*I should like to thank the Wellcome Trust for awarding me a Research Grant which made possible the research upon which this paper is based. Further results of the research will be communicated in future papers. My study at the Biblioteca Lancisiana was aided in a number of ways by Avv. Luciano Tului, Sig. Angelo Palma, and Dott. Paolo Sipàla, and I am most grateful to them.

¹ On the Lancisiana and its history see esp. Amato Bacchini, *La vita e le opere di Giovanni Maria Lancisi (n. 1654+1720)*, Rome, 1920, pp. 71–86; *Annuario delle Biblioteche Italiane*, 2nd ed., Rome, 1956–59, vol. 3, pp. 112–13; and Pietro de Angelis, *Giovanni Maria Lancisi, La Biblioteca Lancisiana, L'Accademia Lancisiana (nel 250° anno di fondazione)*, Rome, 1965, pp. 105–82. References to further literature will be found in these volumes.

² See the inscription in memory of the event reproduced in De Angelis, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

³ For information on the existing library and an inventory of its holdings in 1652 see De Angelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–19. The foundation of the Ospedale itself goes back to the Papacy of Innocent III (1198–1216) and has been the subject of a variety of studies by De Angelis, published in the same series (i.e. *Collana di Studi storici sull'Ospedale di Santo Spirito in Saxia e sugli Ospedali romani*) as his book cited in note 1, esp. vols. 20, 23, and 27, which give a history of the institution from its foundation until 1600.

⁴ For its decline see G. Bilancioni, 'Decadenza di un nobile lascito: La Biblioteca Lancisiana', *Rivista di storia delle scienze mediche e naturali*, 1916, 7, 21–25. See De Angelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–82 for the library's development under its different directors.

⁵ See below, note 36, for further details. Frati, however, did know of its Malpighi mss. See below, note 51.

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had an immensely detailed knowledge. In the twentieth century several scholars who have worked on Lancisi himself have made use of the library,⁶ but those such as Ducceschi,⁷ Spanpanato,⁸ and Adelman,⁹ who have utilized some of the manuscripts there for other purposes, are the exception rather than the rule. As we shall see, a good deal of relevant and important manuscript material in the Lancisiana has not yet been properly studied.

Hopefully, the present article will serve to make some of the holdings of the library better known and an increased interest in the collection on the part of scholars throughout the world will, in turn, encourage the authorities of the library itself to provide a better range of services to those who research there. We cannot, of course, call attention to all of the important manuscript holdings of the Lancisiana in one brief paper, but we shall attempt to give some indication of the sort of thing which the scholar might expect to find in the collection.

As might be anticipated, given the history of the library, the most important manuscript collections are from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And, indeed, a large proportion of these contain materials relating to two important Italian medical writers of the period, Marco Aurelio Severino (1580–1656) and Lancisi himself. Of these two men we shall say more below, but let us first say something of the collection in general and of some of the earlier manuscripts preserved there.

As is the case with so many other important manuscript collections throughout the world, that of the Lancisiana has never been properly catalogued. The first to signal at least a portion of the library's varied holdings in print seems to have been Ducceschi,¹⁰ who gave a list of some of the more important letters to be found in the extensive Severino correspondence. Few, however, seems to have taken notice of his important paper.¹¹ More recently, P. O. Kristeller¹² has noted a few of the manuscripts and, in 1965 there appeared a summary inventory,¹³ not without mistakes and omissions,¹⁴ however. This inventory, largely if not wholly based on the earlier handwritten inventory in the Lancisiana, was unfortunately published in a series which does not seem to have a very wide distribution outside of Italy and which might easily escape the notice of those not directly concerned with the history of medicine in Italy.

There are only a few manuscripts in the collection which date from before the sixteenth century. Of these, two Latin manuscripts of writings of Avicenna on vellum¹⁵

⁶ See below, note 53.

⁷ Virgilio Ducceschi, 'L'Epistolario di Marco Aurelio Severino (1580–1656),' *Rivista di storia delle scienze mediche e naturali*, 1923, 5, 213–23.

⁸ In his edition, Tommaso Campanella, *Lettere*, Bari, 1927, pp. 204, 209–10, 225–26. Cf. p. 428, where Spanpanato says that the letters come from Lancisiana ms. 11 (LXXIV.I.11), fols. 449–51. Cf. Ducceschi, op. cit., p. 218, and Luigi Firpo, *Ricerche campanelliane*, Florence, 1947, p. 280.

⁹ See below, note 51.

¹⁰ Op. cit.

¹¹ It was noted, however, by Firpo, op. cit., p. 280, and by Belloni in the work cited below in note 35.

¹² *Iter Italicum*, London-Leiden, 1963f, vol. 2, pp. 117–18. Professor Kristeller informs me (private communication) that he plans to include further information on the Lancisiana mss. in a subsequent volume of his *Iter*.

¹³ De Angelis, op. cit., pp. 151–63.

¹⁴ For some examples see below, notes 25–27.

¹⁵ MSS. 121, *Libri in re medica omnes*, s. XIII; and (*) 329, *Opera Latina*, s. XIV. Here, and in subsequent notes, I indicate by an asterisk those manuscripts which I have not personally inspected. Information on those not actually seen is generally taken from De Angelis.

seem to be perhaps the most important.¹⁶ From the point of view of general interest the most noteworthy is probably MS. 328, the *Liber fraternitatis Sancti Spiritus*, which contains the signatures of many eminent visitors and benefactors to Santo Spirito, beginning with Pope Eugenius IV in 1446 and continuing down to the Italian nobility of the twentieth century.¹⁷

The sixteenth-century holdings are somewhat more extensive.¹⁸ For example, there are four manuscripts of works by Girolamo Mercuriale (1530–1606),¹⁹ one of the most eminent figures in Italian medicine during the second half of the sixteenth century. These must be taken into account when someone finally undertakes a comprehensive study of Mercuriale and his significance.²⁰ There is also a medical manuscript of Antonio Musa Brasavola (1500–1555),²¹ one of the most important figures in medicine at Ferrara after Leonicensio. The medical background and interests of Agostino Nifo (1470–1538),²² generally better known as a philosophical writer, are amply shown by manuscripts of two of his works extant in the Lancisiana. A study of these should add another dimension to any comprehensive understanding of the Sessan, whose philological concerns have recently been emphasized.²³ These include a manuscript of Nifo's *De arte medendi*²⁴ and a commentary on Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*,²⁵ which seems to have previously escaped the notice of earlier Nifo scholars and other investigators as well. In the same manuscript (no. 158) are found logical and scientific works of several sixteenth-century medical and philosophical writers, which have also escaped the attention even of recent scholars who have made special studies of several of them. It includes writings of Joannes Baptista Montanus [da Monte] (1498–1551),²⁶ Simone Porzio (1496–1554),²⁷ Francesco

¹⁶ Mlle. Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny is cataloguing the mss. of Latin translations of Avicenna's philosophical works (see *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 36 (1961) f.), but there has yet to be initiated a comprehensive project to catalogue the medical writings.

¹⁷ De Angelis, op. cit., pp. 150–51. The other fifteenth-century mss. are (*)130, Seneca's *Tragedies*, and (*)332, identified by De Angelis merely as 'Patologia e Terapia Medica'.

¹⁸ Following De Angelis' dating there are twenty.

¹⁹ (*)7, *De natura humana*; (*)8, *In problemata Aristotelis*; (*)131, *Commentaria in Hippocratem*; (*)322, *De morbis articularibus*.

²⁰ This would seem to be a major desideratum, for Mercuriale's publications were many (36 different editions are listed in the *Catalogue of Printed Books in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library. Vol. I. Books Printed before 1641*, London, 1962, pp. 224–25 and this list is far from complete). There are also many mss. See, e.g. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum, index*. Mercuriale taught at the universities of Padua, Bologna, and Pisa. There has been recent interest in Mercuriale. See e.g. A. Simili, 'Girolamo Mercuriale lettore e medico a Bologna', *Rivista di storia delle scienze mediche e naturali* 1941, 23, 161–96; *idem*, part II with the same title as preceding (Bologna, 1966; also in *L'Archiginnasio*, 1965, 60); and Italo Paoletti, *Gerolamo Mercuriale e il suo tempo*, Lanciano, 1963. None of these mentions the Lancisiana mss.

²¹ (*)78, *De morbis particularibus*.
²² For Nifo's life and works see especially P. Tuozi, 'Agostino Nifo e le sue opere', *Atti e memorie della R. Accademia di scienze, lettere, ed arti di Padova*, 1903–1904, N.S. 20, 63–86; and E. P. Mahoney, 'The Early Psychology of Agostino Nifo' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1966), which has extensive bibliographical references to earlier literature.

²³ By Mahoney, op. cit., who takes little notice of his medical background.

²⁴ MS. 221. The title-page reads as follows: 'Augustini Nipi De arte medendi liber primus, qui est de curativis intentionibus omnium morborum.' The *incipit* (fol. 2r) of the first book is: 'Quoniam inopem est aegritudinem curare: (ut gal. inquit) nisi moverimus eam . . .'. The text of the ms. differs markedly from the printed work, *Aug. Nipi . . . de ratione medendi libri quatuor*, Naples, 1551, with which I have compared it.

²⁵ MS. 158, part I, fols. 55r sgg., which begins: 'Augustini Nipi philosophi suessanij in libros aphorismorum hypocratis incipit anno ab incarnatione 1518 die veneris 5^o mensis novembris.' Neither Tuozi nor Mahoney mention this work and it is missed in De Angelis' list.

²⁶ Part I, fol. 218. *Quaestio utrum humiditas sit causa continuationis*. Missed by De Angelis.

²⁷ Part I, fols. 219 sgg. *Several quaestiones on logic and natural philosophy*. Missed by De Angelis.

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Storella (fl. 1549–1575),²⁸ Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia (1510–1580),²⁹ and Bernardino Longo (fl. 1550–1599).³⁰ Other sixteenth-century manuscripts in the Lancisiana contain writings of Girolamo Balduino (fl. 1549–1573),³¹ another of the important sixteenth-century Italian writers on scientific methodology, and Bernardino Cirillo (1500–1575),³² as well as a Latin translation of Hero of Alexandria's (fl. first century A.D.) *Pneumatica*.³³

Of the large number of seventeenth-century manuscripts in the Lancisiana the seventy-seven volumes³⁴ pertaining to Marco Aurelio Severino³⁵ are undoubtedly the most important. Here are collected an enormous range of medical, scientific, philosophical, and literary works, as well as the very extensive correspondence of one of the dominant figures of early seventeenth-century Italian medical thought. These form a significant complement to go with the already substantial list of his published works. Among the manuscript volumes is preserved a very large portion³⁶ of the material necessary for a full-scale study of Severino, who was a figure of truly international repute and importance in seventeenth-century bio-medical thought. Indeed, in the Lancisiana we find a variety of Severino's works which, when studied, will show him to be a much more significant figure than previously realized. For example, there is a much more detailed version of his life—perhaps written by Severino

²⁸ Part I, fols. 346^r–359^r; part II, fols. 1^r–12^r, 48^r–54^r. Commentary on Aristotle's *Physica*, dated 1555 (cf. fol. 48^r). There is no mention of this manuscript by A. Antonaci, *Francesco Storella, filosofo salentino del Cinquecento*, Galatina, 1966, Università di Bari, Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di Filosofia, n. 9.

²⁹ Part I, fols. 1^r–53^v, lectures on Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*, dated 1551. A commentary on Galen by Ingrassia is contained in ms. (*)159.

³⁰ Part I, fols. 236^r–345^r; Part II, fols. 39^r–45^v (*Quaestio de primo cognitio*, dated 15 March, 1549).

³¹ (*)321, *Commentaria in Aristotelem*. This is not mentioned in G. Papuli, *Girolamo Balduino, ricerche sulla Scuola di Padova nel Rinascimento*, Manduria, 1967.

³² MSS. 337 to 343 (not seen) contain his letters collected by Firmano Lazzaretti da Recanati. These letters may shed a good deal of light on Cirillo, most of whose writings were never printed, and perhaps now, even the mss. of most of his writings have disappeared. He held a position of some importance at Santo Spirito during the papacy of Paul IV and this probably explains why his manuscripts have remained there. For further information see A. Dragonetti, *Le Vite degli illustri Aquilani*, Aquila, 1847, 103–8.

³³ MS. 249. This ms., which contains the translation by Giambattista Burana (fl. 1500), is not included in the most comprehensive list now in print by W. Schmidt (ed.), *Heronis Alexandrini Opera quae extant omnia*, Leipzig, 1899–1914, vol. 1, supplement.

³⁴ For a complete list see De Angelis, *op. cit.*, pp. 151–63.

³⁵ Quite a number of persons have written on Severino, not always accurately. Among the more useful secondary literature on him and his contributions to medicine are the following: The anonymous *Vita* prefaced to Severino's *Antiperipatias*, Naples, 1659, fols. 3^v–4^v; A. Portal, *Histoire de l'Anatomie et de la Chirurgie . . .*, Paris, 1770, vol. 2, pp. 493–505; *Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte . . .*, Leipzig, 1884–88, vol. 5, pp. 242–43; L. Amabile, 'Due Artisti e uno scienziato: Gian Bologna, Jacomo Svanenburch, e Marco Aurelio Severino nel Santo Officio Napoletano', *Atti della R. Accademia di Scienze morali e politiche della Società Reale di Napoli*, 1891, 24, 433–503, esp. pp. 455–86, 497–503; *idem.*, *Marco Aurelio Severino*, ed. D. Zangari, Naples, 1922 (also in *Rivista critica di cultura calabrese*), 1922, 2; P. Capparoni, *Profili bio-bibliografici di Medici e Naturalisti celebri italiani dal Secolo XV al Secolo XVIII*, Rome, 1925–1928, vol. 2, pp. 65–69; F. J. Cole, *A History of Comparative Anatomy*, London, 1949, pp. 132–49; N. Badaloni, *Introduzione a G. B. Vico*, Milan, 1961, pp. 25–37; L. Belloni, 'Severinus als Vorläufer Malpighis', *Nova Acta Leopoldina*, 1963, N.S. 27, pp. 213–24. As an example of the unreliability of many reference works on Severino see Allen G. Debus (ed.), *World Who's Who in Science*, Chicago, 1968, p. 1526. Here eight mistakes are to be found in one seventeen-line article! A more exhaustive bibliography of secondary literature and of Severino's own publications will be contained in forthcoming papers by Charles Webster and myself.

³⁶ Much of the remainder was collected by Amabile, who died before he could utilize it fully. His notes and transcriptions are preserved in Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale MSS. XI.AA.35–37. Further information on additional ms. sources for Severino will be contained in our subsequent papers.

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himself and completed after his death by his close friend Johann Georg Volckamer (1616–1693)³⁷—than we find in the abbreviated printed version, which has been the foundation of all later biographical writings about him.³⁸ There is also a copy of Severino's vernacular defence of his own methods of medical practice, *Il medico a rovescio*,³⁹ previously considered to have been lost.⁴⁰

Leaving aside the many other volumes of Severino's papers, which not only shed light on Marco Aurelio as an individual, but also give a detailed picture of medical practice in Naples in the first half of the seventeenth century and indicate the range of interests and activities of a successful physician of the time, let us briefly turn to his correspondence. In all, there are twelve volumes of letters,⁴¹ divided between those he received and copies of those which he sent, in addition to various individual letters spread throughout other volumes of his papers. Ducceschi pointed out nearly a half-century ago the importance of the material to be found there, but thus far only Spampinato, in his above-mentioned edition of Campanella's *Lettere*, seems to have actually made use of it. Here I can only urge scholars concerned with seventeenth-century intellectual history to look into Ducceschi's helpful, but far from complete, inventory,⁴² and then to delve into the manuscripts themselves in search of important unstudied material in their fields of interest.

Among the letters are some which should be of particular concern to readers of this journal and which Charles Webster and I plan to publish in the near future. These are the letters which passed between Severino and five English medical contemporaries. Only the most significant of the five, William Harvey (1578–1657), is mentioned by Ducceschi.⁴³ The Severino–Harvey correspondence is of some importance, for of all of the great figures in the history of science, Harvey was one of the least prolific and the quantity of his output pales in comparison to that of Galileo, Descartes, Huygens, Newton, or other contemporaries. Therefore, any addition which can be made to the known *corpus Harveianum* is of importance. In the Lancisiana collection is a single unpublished letter of Harvey to Severino and eight letters from Severino to Harvey.⁴⁴ In addition, there are numerous references to Harvey in other letters in the collection, various discussions of Harveian doctrine throughout Severino's manuscript writings, and one treatise which is primarily a critical discussion of Harvey's work on the circulation of the blood.⁴⁵ Fuller details, however, must be left to our subsequent studies.⁴⁶

³⁷ MS. 49.

³⁸ For details see Amabile, *Marco Aurelio Severino*.

³⁹ MS. 324. This ms. must be studied further to illuminate the nature of the charges brought against Severino and his own defence. For further details see *Vita* (cited in note 35), fol. 4r.

⁴⁰ E.g. Amabile, *Marco Aurelio Severino*, p. 23.

⁴¹ MSS. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 30, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71.

⁴² The periodical in which it is found is not particularly widely distributed outside of Italy, but there is copy on open access at the Wellcome Library, which I have used.

⁴³ Op. cit., pp. 219–20.

⁴⁴ For further details, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ MS. 34, *ΑΓΥΡΑΙΜΑ: Id est circulatio sanguinis nulla*, a treatise of 261 fols.

⁴⁶ Mr. Webster and I plan to study this and other relevant materials in future publications dealing with the Harvey–Severino relations and disputes. Severino's relations with Harvey have been briefly noted by Geoffrey Keynes, *The Life of William Harvey*, Oxford, 1966, pp. 178, 328–29, who fails to realize the extent of the documentary evidence connecting the two men. Severino's letter to Thomas Bartholin, dated 1643, which discusses Harvey's doctrine of circulation, is noted by W. Pagel and F. N. L. Poynter, 'Harvey's Doctrine in Italy: Argoli (1644) and Bonaccorsi (1647) on the circulation of the blood', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1960, 34, 419–29, at p. 421. On the reception of Harvey's doctrine in Italy, see also W. Pagel, *William Harvey's Biological Ideas*, Basle and New York, Karger, 1967, pp. 59–69, 350.

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The volumes of Severino's letters also contain correspondence with George Ent (1604–1689),⁴⁷ John Houghton (1608–after 1650),⁴⁸ Richard London (c. 1603–after 1646),⁴⁹ and Samuel Remington (1609–1638).⁵⁰ These letters we also plan to edit in the near future. When this material has been published and more fully studied, it should enable us to establish more clearly the importance of the intellectual relations between Italy and England during the first half of the seventeenth century, particularly with reference to medicine.

The Lancisiana contains also three manuscripts⁵¹ of Marcello Malpighi (1628–1694), the most important of those who took up Severino's lead in the development of the science of comparative anatomy.⁵²

Of the eighteenth-century manuscripts in the Lancisiana, in addition to the seventy volumes pertaining to Lancisi himself and obviously better known to historians than most of the other material in the library,⁵³ there are also manuscripts of other eminent figures, including Herman Boerhaave (1668–1738).⁵⁴

This brief notice by no means exhausts the manuscript collection of the Lancisiana and I have said nothing of the printed books to be found there, the library being particularly rich in sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century items.⁵⁵ Nor have I made an endeavour to be complete in commenting on the items which I have mentioned, but have merely tried to indicate that the Lancisiana is a library in which much further material of interest to scholars in the history of medicine and the history of science is to be found. It will, of course, take years to study all of these manuscripts, but the task should prove to be worthwhile and will undoubtedly contribute to a fuller comprehension of various aspects of medical history of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

⁴⁷ On Ent see *DNB*, vol. 17, pp. 377–78.

⁴⁸ English translations of five of the letters from Severino to Houghton have been published by Josiah C. Trent, 'Five Letters of Marcus Aurelius Severinus to "The Very Honourable English Physician, John Houghton"', *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1944, 15, 306–23. On Houghton, see also M. H. Fisch, 'John Houghton', *J. Hist. Med. All. Sci.*, 1946, 1, 338–39, and J. M. Raach, *A Directory of English Country Physicians, 1603–1643*, London, 1962, p. 58.

⁴⁹ After spending over fifteen years at Caius College, Cambridge, London travelled to Italy, where he took an M.D. at Padua and later died at Genoa. For further details see John Venn, *Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College, 1349–1897*, Cambridge, 1897, vol. 1, pp. 255–56.

⁵⁰ For information on him see Raach op cit., p. 77.

⁵¹ These are (*)166; (*)167; and (*)222, three volumes of *consultationes*. These were utilized by Howard K. Adelmann, *Marcello Malpighi and the Evolution of Embryology*, Ithaca, 1966, I, xix, and were already described by C. Frati, *Bibliografia delle opere a stampa di Marcello Malpighi e degli scritti che lo riguardano*, (Milan, 1897; repr. London, 1960?), pp. 13–14.

⁵² Cole, op. cit., p. 132 calls Severino's *Zootomia Democratica*, Nuremberg, 1645, 'the earliest comprehensive treatise on comparative anatomy.'

⁵³ The mss. were listed by Bacchini, op. cit., pp. 112–14, who also cited several of them in his book, as well as by De Angelis, op. cit.

⁵⁴ (*)353 and (*)354 described by De Angelis (p. 162) as 'Semiotica et Pathologia'. There is no mention of them in G. A. Lindeboom, *Hermann Boerhaave, the Man and His Work*, London, 1968. Apparently, these writings were not published, for there is no mention of any printed edition in the comprehensive G. A. Lindeboom, *Bibliographia Boerhaaviana*, Leiden, 1959. Moreover, such MSS. do not seem to be among those sold at auction after Boerhaave's death, for they are not listed in *Bibliotheca Boerhaaviana sive catalogus librorum . . . D. Hermanni Boerhaave . . . quorum publica fiet auctio in Officina Luchtmanniana die lunae 8 Junii et sgg. diebus 1739*, Leiden, 1739, fol. 2, where the MSS. are listed.

⁵⁵ De Angelis, op. cit., pp. 163–76 lists the seventy incunabula in the Lancisiana.