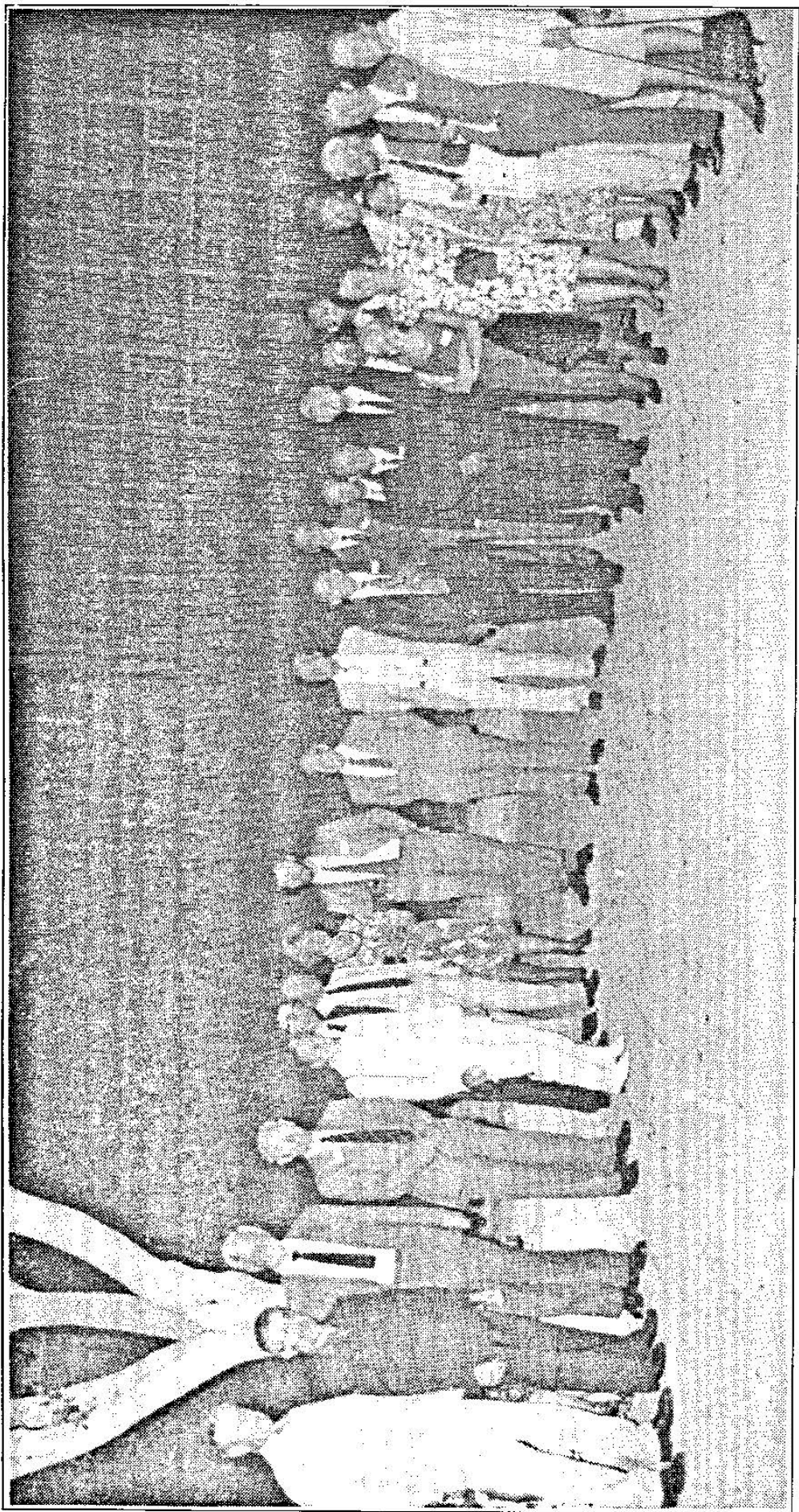




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*Delegates at the Reception given by the Rector of the University of Malta.*

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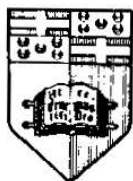
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*Edited by:*  
Edward Chaney and Peter Vassallo

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*Editors' Note*

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# CONTENTS

A MEMOIR OF MARIO PRAZ Vittorio Gabrieli	i
GABRIELE BALDINI DISCEPOLO E AMICO Mario Praz	viii
SOME DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COURTESY MANUAL AFTER CASTIGLIONE John Woodhouse	1
DISGUISE AND RECOGNITION IN RENAISSANCE COMEDY Peter Brand	16
ASTROLOGY AND 'LE VICE ANGLAIS' Vittorio Gabrieli	33
GIOVANNI TORRIANO: IL PRIMO INSEGNANTE DI INGLESE IN ITALIA Sergio Rossi	36
GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BIONDI: AN ITALIAN HISTORIAN OF THE WARS OF THE ROSES Dianella Savoia	51
THE GRAND TOUR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY John Stoye	62
ARCHITECTURAL TASTE AND THE GRAND TOUR: GEORGE BERKELEY'S EVOLVING CANON Edward Chaney	74
TRANSLATIONS AS A METAPHOR FOR SALVATION: EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY ENGLISH VERSIONS OF DANTE'S <i>COMMEDIA</i> Valeria Tinkler-Villani	92

FROM PETRARCH TO DANTE: THE DISCOURSE OF DISENCHANTMENT IN SHELLEY'S <i>THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE</i> Peter Vassallo	102
WORDSWORTH AND ITALY Alan G. Hill	111
DICKENS AND ITALY Michael Hollington	126
L'ITALIA DI SAMUEL BUTLER Mariagrazia Bellorini	137
DOCUMENTS Edward Chaney	155
FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION	160



# MASTER AND PUPILS – a Memoir of Mario Praz –

VITTORIO GABRIELI

Since Mario Praz's demise on March 23rd 1982 – unexpected and untimely, in view of his persisting intellectual alertness – and since the official obituaries<sup>1</sup> and the appreciative offerings by disciples, colleagues and other scholars in several papers and journals, hardly anything significant has appeared in Italy to weigh and critically assess his cultural legacy, and to honour the memory of the country's 'chief of men' in English studies, scholarship and history of literature.

In the last issue, the "Memorial" no. 30, of *English Miscellany* (1984) – the yearly" symposium of history, literature and the arts" founded by Praz in 1950 was included the Bibliography of his printed writings to date. A first updating bibliography appeared in vol I of *Friendship's Garland* (Rome 1966) the Festschrift presented to him on his retirement, and a further supplement was published in *Panopticon Romano Secondo* (Rome 1977), a collection of Praz's Roman writings. The conclusive issue of *English Miscellany* reprinted some of the tributes, both Italian and foreign, previously published, to his international reputation and scholarly achievement. One of them, by Gianfranco Contini, in stressing Praz's singular personality, his outdistancing most competitors in the field and his cosmopolitan approach to literature, went so far as to assert that he had become nearly a 'stranger', an outsider to his own countrymen: 'Mario Praz, lo Straniero'.

Mario had actually become a sort of XX century 'Hythlodæus', one is tempted to gloss, perhaps with some exaggeration: the fictional character in Thomas More's *Utopia*, a fabulist from Nowhere placed among the self-styled 'scientific', 'cultural', 'operators' in the area he cultivated and fertilized for over half a century, his productivity leaving agape all knowledgeable colleagues.

Praz's personality and taste as a connoisseur of Empire furniture, as a collector of pictures and a shrewd judge of the figurative arts,

were well illustrated by the Exhibition 'Le Stanze delle Memoria. Vedute di ambienti, ritratti in interni e scene di conversazione della collezione Praz Dipinti ad acquarelli 1776 - 1870'. This was organized by Dr Stefano Susinno and Ms Elena di Majo in the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna in Rome, May-September 1987.

The fame of the Master seems to have been obscured, if not blighted or dented in Italy, by the same temporary eclipse which befell Benedetto Croce since his death in 1952. But whereas the waning of the great philosopher's star was affected by political no less than cultural forces in postfascist Italy—chiefly by the emergence of an aggressive Marxist dogmatism reacting against the hegemony of the liberal, idealistic thinking embodied in Croce's vast historical *oeuvre*, Mario's undisputed supremacy in English scholarship seems to have suffered in his own country from the by now dwindling vogue of new currents of taste and fashion in literary criticism: mainly structuralism, semiology, sociology, psycho-analysis, 'mythical' or symbolic criticism.

No doubt he had sharply exposed, pilloried or poked fun at the excesses of these old and new schools of thought, of chiefly French or American derivation. Mario made no secret of his boredom with and contempt for, what he labelled, with a snorting dismissal, 'tutta la bardatura della retorica strutturalista', the 'new scholasticism'. The rhetoric and 'psytticism' indulged in by many a younger levy of the Italian more or less avant-garde, 'postmodern', academics, like as many Dickensian Sloppys 'doing' their Freud, Lacan, Greimas, or De Man 'in different voices', often raised his indignant or mocking strictures. He protested against their gleeful luxuriating in abstract theories, new-fangled terminologies, and absurd taxonomies; against their 'slaughtering' or 'ousting' of the creative imagination and against their obliteration of form and beauty through oversophisticated dwelling upon 'problems' of structure and symbol, or on the infrastructures of social forces underlying in their views, works of art.

As an example of Praz's sceptical view of Sergio Perosa's overenthusiastic evaluation of a contemporary poet, John Berryman, I should like to quote what he wrote in *Il Giornale* of 11 August 1978: 'Un 'Maudit' Americano'. The Master's command of interdisciplinary approach stands out in what follows:

'Che la poesia di Berryman sia 'grande', 'la voce più intensa e più nuova del secondo dopoguerra', e addirittura "un esempio di grande poesia postmoderna", in quanto 'recupere alla poesia della pienezza emotiva e vitale dell'io', mi pare debba ammettersi con molte riserve. La coesistenza simultanea di ordini diversi di stile e di soggetti del discorso, le dislocazioni grammaticali, sintattiche, semantiche impiegate nelle ricerca di esprimere il dramma dell'io diviso, non approdano, a mio parere, a risultati più convincenti di quanti ne abbia raggiunti li *stream of consciousness* di moda nella prima metà del secolo. Si tratta, nella migliore della ipotesi, quanto a validità artistica (per tacere di rispondenza alla realtà, ch'è tutt'altra cosa) di svolazzi e arabeschi come quelli che usavano nelle fioretture calligrafiche in cui si nascondevano le firme di personaggi importanti nell'epoca rococo.'

It is to be hoped that Agostino Lombardo's official commemoration of Praz at the National Academy of Lincei in Rome, early in 1992, will help revive his faded image and his message in the world of learning. Our contemporaries and especially our younger scholars should be made better aware of the extraordinarily seminal quality of Praz's contributions to English studies and of the relevance of his heritage. Perhaps it is not too rash to expect, or hope, that a serious documented biography will be soon taken in hand by some suitable researcher, not necessarily a new Boswell – whose *Life of Johnson*, after all, came out only seven years (1971) after the great Doctor's death.

He/she will have the unprecedented advantage of drawing upon Praz's manuscript 'Journals' (September 1943 – September 1980), partly in English and partly in Italian. They were deposited by his daughter Lucia Shakir in the library of the Rome Academy of Lincei and entrusted, in July 1988, to that illustrious institution. They are still, as far as I know, unexplored. To a perfunctory, superficial examination by the present writer, the nearly two thousand pages in loose copy-book sheets of varying size, covered in pen or pencil by his 'vermiculate' hand, appeared as an autobiographical chronicle of remarkable interest. It is likely to shed considerable light upon Praz's lived reality in Rome, exhibiting at least the lineaments of some of his odd and sinister dreams tormented loves and frustrating attachments: of his more or less gratified desires. The encounters and relationships of Mario's maturity and surprisingly sensitized, mellow old age, with many scholars, artists

and Distinguished People of those decades are recorded in a hurried, matter-of-fact style. Little, though, if anything at all, one learns from these journals about his working plans and his habits of unflinching industry at his desk. We don't need to be told, however, that he never rested on his oars or laurels.

Another desideratum to honour the memory of Praz is a re-examination and selection of his impressive reviewing record over the last sixty years – a wish I already voiced in my article 'Praz in Inghilterra: 1923 – 3' (*English Miscellany*, 30, 1984). The object would be to collect and reprint those of his minor writings which still possess an enduring critical value. They record the essayist's stylistic and creative development no less than, in John Donne's phrase, his immoderate, 'hydroptic' thirst of knowledge, his 'voluptuous desire' of human learning. Many of his reviews provide plenty of evidence of 'il Maestro's' constant practice which became more articulate in the final years of his life, to 'ridimensionare' and set in proper perspective, when not to depedestalise, cut down to size and debunk, inflated reputations and excessively acclaimed 'experimental' products of contemporary literary criticism and of the figurative – or more frequently non-figurative! – 'sister arts'. In his last period, Praz's rejection of the XX century *Zeitgeist* and of most of its culture grew more embracing and uncompromising. One is led to wonder whether he too, like R.L. Stevenson, had so much 'unwrapped *his* thoughts from about life as to have hardly left any filament for him to hold by'.<sup>2</sup>

Praz's own last collection of his 'occasional' writings and best 'elzeviri' dates back to 1980. It is named, after a piece which was first published in the 'Corriere della Sera' of February 18, 1943 and reprinted in *Lettrice Notturna* (1952), *Voce dietro la Scena. Un'antologia personale*. His last piece of this kind, which appeared in 'Il Giornale' of Milan on March 14, 1982, a few days before his death, was devoted to an Italian translation of Joyce's *Epiphanies*, and expressed critical reservations about this hyped up offspring of the author of *Ulysses*.

While many of Mario's best-known works have recently appeared in French translation and, since 1982, been reprinted by Italian publishers, a particular mention deserves the elegant volume *Mario Praz* which Blaise Gautier brought out and edited in 1989 as one of the 'cahiers pour un temps' produced by the Centre Georges

Pompidou. It is now my privilege to offer to the *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies* an unpublished essay of 'il Maestro', so that his own voice, still far from the drawling and world-weary accents it had assumed in the last few months of his life, may be heard again and readers can feel as if Mario were still among us: 'l'ombra sua torna ch'era dipartita'! In its few pages the essay presents a unique document illustrating Praz's prevailing attitude to his disciples and friends (admittedly, his pupils always played a limited role in his life).

This attitude was never protreptic, condescending or lecturing, but rather smilingly or yawningly ironic and leg-pulling. It was a blend of guarded affection and balanced appreciation of their intellectual abilities, taste and efforts: mostly detached but leaning to an unsparing 'anatomy' of their character. He rarely held his fire or pulled his punches, where he felt it was necessary. Gabriele Baldini, although technically never one of his pupils – he had graduated in Italian literature with a thesis on a minor author, Alfredo Panzini (1862 – 1939) – had attended Praz's classes in English literature at Rome University, as he recalled in his charming autobiographical book *Le Rondini dell'Orfeo* (Torino 1965). Over the years, he had become one of Mario's colleagues in Rome University's Faculty of Magistero and a close friend. Thanks to his generous nature, immense musical sensibility and knowledge, and to his creative, if undisciplined mind, Gabrieli proved an amusing and serviceable companion to Praz, escorting him often to concerts and plays, but also in his travels. Mario, however, was obviously baffled and, I suspect, at times unsettled by this disciple's adventurous, exuberant, easy-going and seemingly frivolous habits. These occasionally clashed with our Maestro's wide-ranging curiosity and methodically planned explorations of foreign countries, to which he was primarily attracted by their museums and art monuments. All this comes across quite clearly in Mario's Memoir of Gabriele.

To place this writing in context, suffice it to recall that it was designed to join a sheaf of contributions, by Gabriele's most intimate friends, to a memorial volume I edited after his death – *Ricordo di Gabriele Baldini* (Roma, 1970). His wife Natalia Ginzburg, however, to whom I showed the proofs of Praz's tribute objected to (in fact refused to approve) its publication. She regarded it as discreditable to the reputation of her husband, a piece of covert

denigration, pervaded and inspired, in her view, by a lurking hostility, envy and resentment against Gabriele.

Though I could not disagree more with her judgement and unsubstantiated charges convinced, as I still am that Gabriele's keen sense of humour would have been delighted and amused by 'Il Maestro's complaints and bitter jabs at his 'unreliability', I then complied with Natalia's wish and refrained from including Mario's piece in the memorial volume, not to wound her feelings in her still fresh bereavement. She may have later changed her views about Praz's character and purpose, which had raised her suspicions in 1970 and caused her irrational veto. She attended his funeral, standing with other devoted friends of Gabriele on the University staircase in Rome, when a brief farewell function was held.

The proofs of Mario's essay have since remained unused with me. As far as I know and can guess, it never appeared in print at the author's initiative. I now welcome this opportunity to publish this striking piece, associated with the memory of two friends: an admired Master and a beloved fellow-pupil. 'I documenti é giusto farli conoscere', Natalia recently stated in commenting upon the publication of some autobiographical and politically controversial notes of Cesare Pavese (*La Stampa*, Turin 21 August 1990). The novelist and poet was a great friend of hers and took his own life forty years ago. He had been deeply impressed and affected by F.O. Matthiessen's suicide in Boston not long before (1950).

In my view, Praz's observations do not reflect adversely on Gabriele's human personality or scholarly output. Of his work in English literature Mario had previously written with more than a nod of acknowledgment<sup>3</sup>; the Memoir does not doubt reflect both enjoyment and some irritation at the disciple's unpredictable character. It discloses something of the author's and of Gabriele's idiosyncracies and human limitations. In short, it offers a perceptive lifesize outline or sketch of both Master and Pupil, with their peculiar susceptibilities and with, at least, some of their 'warts'.

My personal recollection of the prevailing mood at the 1947 Salzburg Seminar in American Studies in Leopoldskron Castle, when I look back at that eye-opening experience, are quite different from Mario's. They do not conjure up a bleak and glum landscape but are still imbued with some of the excitement, of that unique dawn of hope, effort, expectation and desire, after the horrors of the last war.

I trust, on balance, that Praz's piece deserves to be regarded as a valuable personal statement, in the tenth anniversary of his death. Mario's love of fun and his delighted curiosity for bizarre situations once more sparkled while he was lying on his deathbed in the Rome nursing home 'Ars Medica'. After wilyly regretting that, owing to the misplacement of the drip's needle, instead of his blood being augmented, it had been split and lost, he conjured up to my wonder Gabriele and himself cheerfully romping together under the showers of Leopoldskron bathrooms, during that lean summer of 1947, in *The Heart of Europe*<sup>4</sup>. We have certainly no grounds to hang our heads in regret, rebuke or resentment over this brief memoir.

In the absence of a full collection of Praz's correspondence only his letters to Bruno Migliorini and to Emilio Cecchi have so far been published<sup>5</sup>, it was pleasant surprise to read in a recent issue of *Nuova Antologia* (July-September 1990) a revealing letter of his from Manchester, on October 3rd, 1934 to Leone Ginzburg (Natalia's first husband). Both of them were then contributors to the distinguished literary journal 'La Cultura'. Non-Italian readers need perhaps be reminded that, a Russian born Jew and Italian citizen. Ginzburg was an original scholar and a heroic antifascist fighter against Mussolini's dictatorship, who died in the Rome jail of Regina Coeli in March 1944. Praz's letter displays both his intellectual clear-sightedness and his ethical indifferentism with regard to both Fascism and Zionism.

*Rome, 1991*

#### Notes

1. Oddly enough, the London *Times* failed to record, in its obituary of March 26 1982, the "honorary degree" in Letters that Cambridge University conferred upon Praz in June 1957.
2. R.L. Stevenson, *Letters* (ed. S. Colvin, 1912) p. 434: letter to A.C. Baxter, September 1894.
3. Praz's comments on Gabriele's *Il Dramma Elisabettiano*, in 'Belfagor' 1963, and on his 'encomiabile versione completa' of Shakespeare's works, preceded by an 'ottima introduzione generale' (*Cronache Letterarie Angloassoni*, vol. III, Roma 1964), cannot be construed as disparaging or damning with faint praise.
4. See F.O. Matthiessen's account of the Salzburg Seminar and his sympathetic remarks on Gabriele in his Journal *From the Heart of Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948).
5. *M. Praz, Lettere a Bruno Migliorini*, a cura di Lidia Pacini Migliorini (Firenze 1983), *Carteggio Cecchi-Praz*, a cura di Francesca Bianca Crucitti Ullrich. Prefazione di Giovanni Macchia, (Milano, 1985).

# GABRIELE BALDINI DISCEPOLO E AMICO

MARIO PRAZ

Quando Vittorio Gabrieli è venuto a chiedermi di collaborare alla *Miscellanea* in memoria di Gabriele Baldini mi son sentito un po' perplesso, non per l'accettazione che è stata subito spontanea, ma pel tema da trattare. I contributi eruditi non s'improvvisano, e in questo caso mi si chiedeva un sollecito adempimento della promessa, e d'altronde ristampare in questo volume uno scritto già uscito nella stampa periodica non era desiderabile, sebbene il padre di Gabriele, Antonio, fosse solito dichiarare che nulla era stato inedito quanto il già pubblicato, e fidando in questa massima, mi confidava il figlio, bene spesso quel gran letterato aveva applicato di suoi scritti *repetita iuvant*. Però la mia voce era stata assente alla commemorazione di Gabriele, e me n'era rimasto un segreto rammarico; e l'unica giustificazione che sapevo dare il quel non essermi fatto avanti, era che di Gabriele avevo tante cose da dire, specialmente, sulla sua personalità, ma la sua scomparsa era troppo recente perché il carattere allegro di certe rimembranze non dovesse parere peggio che fuori posta a quella cerimonia. Ma ora è passato del tempo, e il giudizio sull'uomo non mi pare debba ancora rispettare quelle pudiche reticenze d'occasione, o assumere di necessità un tono solenne.

Diciam pure dunque che la cosa principale di Gabriele non erano i suoi pur degnissimi e spesso brillanti titoli di studio, ma la sua vitalità che si manifestava soprattutto nella conversazione, 'a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy'. Se Sterne non disdegnò adottare come pseudonimo il nome del buffone di Amleto, non sarà, spero, irriverente applicarlo a Gabriele in grazia del suo spirito arguto e fantastico. Ma non era Yorick la figura shakesperiana a cui egli affettava racciostarsi, bensì Falstaff, alla cui carriera fisiologica la propria risultò curiosamente parallela, dalla gioventù ('Quando ero paggio dei duca di Norfolk, ero sottile, sottile . . .') alla maturità corpulenta come una figura di guadente del Jordaens. Chi l'ha conosciuto soltanto in questo periodo adulto non può immaginare quanto fosse grazioso, diciam pure leggiadro, il



giovinetto che Antonio Baldini me presentò nella sede della 'Nuova Antologia' al mio insediamento nella cattedra d'inglese a Roma nel 1934. Sembrava un giovinetto un po' timido (qualche volta la parola stentava come se fosse affetto da lieve balbuzie), eppure straordinariamente propenso a familiarizzarsi, ad addomesticarsi e ad abbandonarsi come d'un giovane felino. Quando, molto più tardi, divenne assiduo di casa Croce, a una delle cui figlie aspirava a sposarsi (è stato che le simpatie di Gabriele si posavano sempre su figlie di uomini illustri, o donne di doti intellettuali superiori all'ordinario, una predilezione che potrebbe definirsi un umanesimo sentimentale, una gentile efflorescenza del culto per gli uomini illustri), trovandosi un giorno a complimentare con fioriti riboboli il gatto di casa Croce, il filosofo spazientito tagliò corto dicendo: 'Ma insomma non è che un gatto'. Qualcuno avrebbe potuto reagire in simili termini alla magnifica fuga di variazioni barocche che Richard Crashaw intessé sulla bolla di sapone: 'Ma insomma non è che una bolla di sapone';

Il gusto dell'amplificazione era innato in Gabriele e fu forse responsabile anche della metamorfosi del proprio aspetto fisico, come fu responsabile di quello che, accanto a pregi di chiarezza, mi pare il principale difetto della sua sudattissima versione di tutto il teatro di Shakespeare, in cui la condensazione dell'originale viene spesso disciolta nella perifrasi e nella chiosa. Ho detto sudatissima: m'è rimasta infatti l'immagine della stanza in cui vi lavorava in un giorno d'estate nella sua casa di Campo Marzio. Scamicciato, accaldato, corpulento, tra carte e libri si sbracciava come emulando Balzac alle prese con la *Comédie humaine*; i bagliori del solleone parevano vampate d'un falò in cui quell'improvvisato cuoco e carnefice regolava a fuoco lento il girarrosto in cui era infilato il cigno dell'Avon, ungendolo di tanto con la foglia d'alloro intinta di grasso.

Questo è certo un'immagine iperbolica, ma in carattere col personaggio. Se ce n'è di iperboli nelle *Rondini dell'Orfeo*! Per esempio nelle pagine in cui parla di me e della mia biblioteca. Ammetto che le mie lezioni non erano molto frequentate all'epoca in cui noi professori eravamo baroni, ma per Baldini: 'Non aveva, allora, molti allievi. Ma questo è un modo di dire. In realtà non ne aveva quasi nessuno . . . Non mancavano lezioni – all'aprirsi della primavera – in cui non se ne trovava neppure uno, oppure quell'uno

ero io, ed altre in cui, oltre me, c'era soltanto Vittorio Gabrieli'. Quanto alla libreria del mio appartamento, descrive più o meno esattamente il mobile, ma parlando del contenuto, a quello vero sostituisce una rapsodia di quanto di più ghiotto dovrebbe costituire una biblioteca modello di letteratura inglese. Comunque di questa biblioteca divenne presto un *aficionado*: 'Quell'arco, quell'alcova sono stati il Pechenino e il Bignami del mio destino accademico'. E non saprei dire di quanto minore fosse la sua predilezione per la cucina della Teresa, invitandolo io non di rado a condividere i miei pasti. Fu davanti all'alcova della biblioteca che Gabriele fece i primi passi nello studio delle lettere inglesi. Incerti passi, che una volta incespicarono clamorosamente quando mi lesse una sua versione dal Poe (autore che allora gli stava a cuore), in cui la frase 'Beware a becoming carriage' figurava come: 'Statti attento a una carrozza che ti viene addosso'. Da questa carrozza investito e non dell'abilitazione di traduttore, Gabriele per qualche tempo non si fece vedere.

Ma questi erano i tempi in cui Gabriele sarebbe potuto entrare in casa mia dall'uscio socchiuso, tanto era snello. Quando tornò in uniforme dal Sud, alla fine della guerra, mi pareva ancora talmente un bel giovanotto che, avendomi chiesto Leonor Fini, che allora abitava a Palazzo Altieri, di presentarle qualcuno dei baldi giovani che tornavano a Roma liberata, pensai a lui. Non ero presente quando Gabriele si recò da lei, ma evidentemente non aveva incontrato i gusti della pittrice. E non le piaceva Baldini per quello che allora era un difettuzzo, una pennellata fuori posto come quella che le damigelle di corte si dice mettersero per burla quando imbellettavano la regina Elisabetta, e cioè sul naso. Ma allora non era che un timido affacciarsi della concubina di Titone antico al 'balco d'oriente'; più tardi, con l'età, quell'aurorale pennellata doveva farsi più intensa, e tutto il personaggio doveva trasformarsi in qualcosa di ricco e di strano, con l'aggiunta della barba, dapprima usata come espediente per nascondere una *Mensur* provocata da un incidente d'automobile in Inghilterra, e poi conservata col risultato di metamorfosare l'efebo d'un tempo in una figura corposa e coloratissima di Jordaens. Chi l'ha conosciuto così non riuscirebbe mai a ricostruire il paggio del duca di Norfolk. A un certo punto poi subentrò l'influsso di un filologo ben più grande anche per la sprezzatura nei modi e nel vestire, che rasentava la stravaganza,

Giorgio Pasquali. In un mio scritto del 1955 ('Avventure di sette ore', poi ripubblicato nella *Casa della vita*) detti questi ritratto, o meglio schizzo, di Gabriele, incontrato in quei giorni di primavera in Via di Propaganda Fide: 'Così eran venute le dodici e finora non avevo fatto che perder tempo, e non c'è nulla che m'indisponga quanto il perder tempo. Ma il mio giovane amico, che ha una corporatura considerevole per la sua età, e un viso un po' arrubinato dai gusti che ha in comune con Falstaff, mi disse in quel punto una certa frase. S'era in Via di Propaganda Fide, quasi all'imbocco di Piazza di Spagna che s'apriva al sole primaverile, e si vedevano le azalee dei primi gradini della scala, che tutta n'era ornata in quei giorni. Mi disse: 'Perché ti agiti tanto? Non è bello seguitare a discorrere così al sole, senza preoccuparsi del tempo che passa?'

Non sorprenda il momento di Belacqua ('O frate, l'andar su che porta?') in un uomo per altro verso attivissimo, d'un'attività talora febbrile o meglio fabbrile: la sua fatica di traduttore di tutto Shakespeare lo prova. Nulla detestava Gabriele quanto l'agitarsi in un'attesa, il nervosismo delle partenze. Fu questa fondamentale differenza dei nostri caratteri che ci fece sentire, più a lui che a me, un senso di distacco, quasi d'insofferenza di vivere accanto durante il nostro soggiorno a Città del Messico nell'estate del 1965, quando entrambi ci recammo in Australia a far conferenze, io presso le università australiane, lui per la Dante Alighieri. Se qualcuno che aveva promesso di venire tardava, se s'avvicinava l'ora d'una partenza, se si presentava insomma una di quelle circostanze atte a mettere in agitazione un temperamento apprensivo come il mio, io davo segni d'impazienza e ripetevo frasi come: 'Va a finire che se l'è dimenticato!', o guardavo l'orologio; Gabriele s'indisponeva, canzonava, s'irritava non meno di me, ma per altro verso. Poi lui aveva l'abitudine della siesta, io no. Di ritorno da una gita a Tula e a San Martin Tepotzotlan, alle tre e mezzo, io volevo profittare per vedere un museo, lui voleva recarsi in albergo a far la pennichella, e siccome ci accompagnava in automobile il direttore della Banca Commerciale di Città del Messico, fratello di Elsa Morante, la volontà di Gabriele prevalse, e io fui controvoiglia costretto a perdere un paio d'ore in albergo. Quando riuscimmo alle sei, dissipò il mio cattivo umore raccontandomi certe barzellette di Mazzacurati su fittizi nomi giapponesi. Ma la sera al ristorante Sep di nuovo i nostri gusti erano in conflitto. Io mi contentavo

della birra, lui volle una bottiglia di Beaujolais. Ora i vini francesi sono carissimi al Messico. L'equivalente di quella bottiglia (ottanta pesos) in moneta italiana era quattromila lire. Il cameriere, vedendo che il nostro aspetto era piuttosto dimesso, fece considerare in spagnolo che la bottiglia era molto cara. Gabriele insistette. Il cameriere fece venire il proprietario del locale che ripeté l'avvertimento. Ma non c'era verso '*Pido Beaujolais!*'

Era il suo debole, e ne ebbi la dimostrazione pittoresca a Tahiti, nostra seconda tappa. Gabriele non cenava al ristorante dell'albergo, gli sembravano soldi male spesi. Ma ogni sera si recava a Papete, a due chilometri di distanza, di solito a piedi perché il mezzo pubblico era inesistente o molto raro, e si comperava la sua bella bottiglia di vino. Cenava da solo nella sua stanza con una scatola di sardinee quel suo tesoro di nettare. Alle dieci emergeva alle prime battute delle danze locali eseguite al lume delle torce a beneficio dei turisti. Era sempre lucidissimo, e gustava la musica selvaggia e inebriante. Purtroppo era lucidissimo; se da questi eccessi avesse ricavato non solo euforia, ma qualche ammonimento, forse a quest'ora sarebbe ancora tra noi. Alla fine del nostro soggiorno d'una settimana mi mostrò allineate nello scaffale della stanza da bagno una duplice o triplice fila di bottiglie vuote: quasi un quadro di Morandi.

La sua impazienza per certe mie goffaggini arrivò al punto che a Bora, mentre davo prova della mia assoluta incapacità nell'aprire la porta della mia stanza, o meglio cabina, nel rustico albergo Noa Noa che ci ospitava, lui, facendo scattare il congegno con la massima facilità, mi disse come un padre avrebbe detto a un figlio tonto: 'Ma proprio sei nato ieri!'

E qui debbo dire che, discepolo e amico, Gabriele mi fu anche maestro. Se non imparai da lui ad apprezzare le sottigliezze dalla musica, la colpa è della mia considerevole durezza d'orecchio. Ma fece tutto il possibile. Accanto alla vocazione di filologo, e più forte di essa, egli aveva quella di musicista. 'Il sogno dell'autore, da giovane, era di scrivere delle opere liriche nello stile Bellini Verdi Wagner e Strauss', si legge alla fine di *Selva e torrente*. Ne ha lasciato testimonianza nel postumo libro su Verdi, ma di musica era intessuta la sua conversazione, voglio dire che la musica formava una sottile trama d'oro che permeava il suo discorso come in certi tappeti cinesi. Aveva voce ben intonata e nei momenti d'euforia il canto gli veniva naturale.

A Salisburgo, al Seminario americano a Leopoldskron nel 1947, ambiente internazionale piuttosto plumbeo e, almeno per quella che fu la mia esperienza, melanconico – è probabile che ciò dipendesse dal vitto scadente e insufficiente, data la difficoltà di vettovagliamento – Baldini metteva una nota gaia canticchiando (e una volta anche cantando a una serata musicale) arie delle *Nozze di Figaro*, specialmente: ‘Non più andrai farfallone amoroso’, che F.O. Matthiessen dichiarò *very delightful*, pur aggiungendo che aveva poco a che fare con Mozart. Declamò anche, un po’ melodrammaticamente, a una serata di lettura di poesie di vari paesi, il canto di Francesca – ma doveva poi, in altro ambiente, eclissare questa sua *performance* con una lettura e spiegazione dello stesso testo impersonando un presunto professore inglese, con adeguata pronuncia e un’irresistibile impuntatura su ‘scolorocci’.

Non che mancassero spunti comici a Salisburgo. Per esempio il nome di una studentessa finnica, Halme, come lo pronunziava lei a fior di labbra, che pareva un sospiro, un evanescente ‘Iaia’, che Baldini imitava con caricaturale perfezione. O la declamazione d’una poesia patriottica cecoslovacca da parte di Jan Stern, l’*Inno alla mia patria di Hora*. Stern era un spilungone con un muso come un pugno chiuso e un ciuffo di capelli, ai quali si portava continuamente la mano per grattarsi il capo. Leggeva, come dice Matthiessen nel suo *From the Heart of Europe* (1948), in *booming tones*, con tale cozzo di suoni che se ne fossero usciti di tali da bocca d’uomo d’oggi, nessuno avrebbe riso ammirandoli come e Baldini in una risata così scandalosa che uno studente ‘nuove consonanze’, ma che allora facero scoppiare, uno spagnolo presente se la prese con la mia sfacciataggine e per poco non successe uno scandolo. Se in quel punto avesse crocidato dal cornicione del portico quel gracchio che fece sentire la sua voce un po’ più tardi, la nostra risata sarebbe stata ancor più clamorosa.

Nel libro del Matthiessen si parla di Baldini come studioso, ma non se ne traccia un profilo aderente come quello di Vittorio Gabrieli; preoccupato in quegli anni di questioni politiche e di altre tristi faccende personali (si doveva suicidare l’anno seguente) Matthiessen non sembra in quel libro possedere alcunché del *sense of humour* che indubbiamente un inglese non avrebbe mancato di metterci. Un’altra occasione di risa era offerta da una certa Miss Matilda, una bionda che poteva ricordare la Saskia di Rembrandt,

non fosse pei denti gialli e cavallini: aveva un patrigno grande di Spagna e assumeva volentieri atteggiamenti snobistici: quando costei si sedeva su dei gradini, lo spettacolo di ciò che si vedeva dietro la sottana alzata sopra le gambe non coperte d'indumenti intimi era una delle poche distrazioni offerte da quel falansterio.

Una volta Baldini dovette accompagnare il vecchio Otto Klemperer all'ultimo piano del castello; il vecchio dall'adunco profilo di diavolo gli strappò di mano la bottiglia di birra che Gabriele si era accaparrata in una delle periodiche distribuzioni di quella rara bevanda, poi volle essere accompagnato al gabinetto, lì si chiuse dentro, e non riusciva più a venir fuori, sicchè si mise a scuotere violentemente la porta risvegliando chi intorno dormiva a quell'ora (era l'una di notte). Per quella notte (essendo tardi per tornare alla sua casa presso Hellbrunn) aveva accettato l'ospitalità di Leopoldskron e divideva la stanza con Matthiessen, ma invece di dormire di mise a passeggiare avanti e indietro, poi alle cinque di mattina partì sbattendo la porta in modo da bloccare la serratura, e più tardi Vittorio Gabrieli, scavalcando una finestra del corridoio, riuscì a entrare nella camera di Matthiessen e a liberarlo.

Fra Baldini e Vittorio s'era a dar nomignoli ai vari ospiti del Seminar: uno che aveva il labbro leprino era battezzato Tromba Infocata, uno svedese era Occhi di Sonno. Con Gabriele assistetti alla rappresentazione di *Bastian and Bastione* al Teatro delle marionette, di *Dantons Tod*, e di *Arabella* di Strauss, ma a quante serate al Teatro dell'Opera di Roma ho ascoltato i commenti musicali di lui, che spingeva la sua cortesia fino a venirmi a prendere a riportare a casa in automobile, e a procurare i biglietti in piccionaia! C'era in Gabriele un lato umano e affettuoso, che mi si rivelò soprattutto nella nostra sosta a Tahiti. Non passava giorno che non scrivesse una lunga lettera a Natalia, e son sicuro che la più parte del tempo pensava a lei. L'aveva incontrata a Venezia anni prima a un convegno culturale, e ancora vedo la coppia – s'erano affiatati subito – che scendeva dal vaporetto, Natalia così somigliante a un ritratto di Modigliani! E quando ho letto *Selva e torrente*, che Gabriele scrisse poche settimane prima di morire, ho creduto di veder confermato quanto avevo sempre sospettato, cioè che quel suo aspetto divertente, cordiale, di 'farfallone', che abitualmente mostrava, fosse non una maschera, ma soltanto un lato di lui, e che l'euforia fosse a volte forzata per soffocare un

segreto cruccio, ch  certo, sapendo quanto il suo animo anelasse al ruolo di padre, la sua frustrazione dovette essere pi  che cocente. 'La recitata ma pertinente socievolezza con cui eludeva la sua continuata tristezza', ha scritto Giorgio Manganelli, forse forzando una nota che certo era ricorrente in Gabriele. Io credo che la sua anima fosse su due piani, e che la sua allegria non fosse 'recitata', troppa vitalit  soprizzava dal suo discorso per lasciar adito a un sospetto d'insincerit ; ma approssimandosi la fine, il lato di lui pi  profondo si decant  e ne nacque quella fantasia elegante ma triste, quella divagazione sull'aldil  che potrebbe collocarsi nel secolo di Mozart e di Watteau. Scrive degli animali inventati dai poeti: 'Gli animali che non hanno mai calcato il suolo di nessun mondo ma hanno preso vita solo nella fantasia dei creatori di miti'. Ma anche Gabriele era, in qualche modo, un animale fantastico. Un immaginifico che s'era inventato filologo. Ma lui ha calcato il suolo col passo lieve dell'Indifferente del quadro di Watteau.





# SOME DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COURTESY MANUAL AFTER CASTIGLIONE

JOHN WOODHOUSE

No one working on courtesy manuals can be unaware of the difficulties in defining what such treatises were. Alongside specifically didactic manuals there flourished ironic accounts of life at court, sociological studies of class structure in the period after 1500, and other treatises which are no more than satires on social-climbing. Nevertheless those works, too, were read by the upwardly-mobile, hopeful of gleaning from them information on how to behave (or not to behave) in order to achieve self-promotion. The popularity of Ariosto's *Satire*, bizarrely considered by 1611 in England as an almanac, may be seen as typical of such a desire to learn from example and error, as well as to find wry amusement in another's predicament.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Barclay's translation of Pius II's (1444) *De curialium miseriis* was an equally popular symptom throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> As provincial courts in Italy became concentrated in fewer major cities, and as natural forces in the great European courts favoured a centripetal tendency restricting the numbers of 'genuine' courtiers, minor noble houses, particularly in England (and in London), became mini-courts, often unconscious parodies of their formerly great predecessors. Courtly and courtesy manuals became simply hand-books for social, and thus economic and political, advancement.

Ironically, the only manual not to be accepted by critics as a practical handbook is Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* (1528), the forerunner of them all. I believe that it is important to show that his work is something more than an idealization of a minor Italian court or a series of nostalgic reminiscences or an autobiographical portrait; such views trivialize his fine achievement and take away from his work the dignity it deserves. The political disasters which struck Italy after 1499 and the efforts of Castiglione to overcome those disasters – both personal and national – contrast strongly with what for his successors were easier times, under more

stable regimes, concerned with the trivial qualifications needed to assert one's personality or fashionability. In the pages which follow I have tried implicitly and directly to point the contrast between Castiglione's pioneering achievement by putting into relief the lesser and perhaps more down-to-earth compilers of advice manuals who followed him.

Saba da Castiglione, a distant relative of the Count Baldesar, was a rather more acerbic critic of courts than his more famous namesake; Saba's *Ricordi* posit a more ascetic solution to the problem of the sensitive individual who did not enjoy the necessary support of princely patronage. Yet Saba seems to have had similar ideas on the disastrous effect of foreign invasions which changed for ever the political and social aspect of the Italian peninsula during the final years of the fifteenth century. In particular Saba refers his readers to the catastrophic invasion, as he saw it, of Charles VIII, and regretfully notes the passing of the greatest diplomat of the time:

Se il Magnifico Lorenzo fosse sopra visso, Carlo di Vandomo, Re di Francia, non sarebbe mai passato nella misera Italia, la quale infelice passata la rivolve tutta sottosopra et rovinolla di sorte che la rovina ancora non tocca il fondo.<sup>3</sup>

One of Lorenzo's own great contemporaries, Matteo Mario Boiardo, had foretold the end of the comfortable feudal world which, as a newly fledged member of the nobility, Boiardo considered his caste had the possibility of enjoying again after the winter of the Middle Ages. But the idyll was truncated by the invasion of Charles VIII, pressing a French claim to Naples, and more permanently for the author of the *Innamorato* by an early death shortly after writing the final verse of his epic in which he witnessed that French invasion:

(...) questi Galli, che non gran valore Vengon per disertar non so che loco Però vi lascio in questo vano amore (...)<sup>4</sup>.

Francesco Guicciardini, a man who had witnessed Italy's prosperous independence, also looked back with nostalgia at the period before the French invasions, and attached much weight to the 1494 invasion, though he clearly saw 1490 as his *annus mirabilis*, and, like Saba, considered the death of Lorenzo as a great

turning point in the fortunes of Tuscany and Italy:

Morte acerba a lui per l'età, perchè morì non finiti ancora 44 anni; acerba alla patria, la quale, per la riputazione e prudenza sua e per lo ingegno attissimo a tutte le cose onorate e eccellenti, fioriva maravigliosamente di ricchezze e di tutti quegli beni e ornamenti da' quali suole essere nelle cose umane la lunga pace accompagnata<sup>5</sup>.

Fifteenth-century Italy had known fierce internecine struggles both within and between city-states; to the realist, nostalgic regret was hardly a justifiable sentiment. Yet we know that Guicciardini, for one, was nothing if not realistic. But there was an over-riding consideration which made him and others express themselves in such terms, for those regrets and nostalgia were largely the result of the unprecedented twin French incursions in 1494 (Charles VIII) and 1499 (Louis XII). It was the beginning of three centuries of foreign domination and of warring contention inside the peninsula. More particularly the great powers, like colonial rulers throughout history, favoured more stable political regimes in the formerly belligerent city-states, and wished to foster dynastic succession amongst their clients.

Baldesar Castiglione had lived through the upheavals brought about during the French invasions, indeed had been constrained by his diplomatic duties to attend with his liege lord, Federico Gonzaga, at the humiliating parade to welcome the French King into Milan in 1499. The contrast between what he had known of the Sforza court before the French invasion and its subsequent reduction to what he called 'drinking booths and the stench of dung'<sup>6</sup>, must have left a deep impression on the nineteen-year-old courtier. That same year his father had died, at the age of forty-one, leaving his son in charge of the family. What must have become clear to Castiglione was that the old order had disappeared for ever. Nostalgia might be legitimate for the ageing historian, the comic epicist, or the Arcadian lyricist, but Castiglione saw that a tough new profession was being created because of the new concentration upon dynastic succession. For as long as clients had needed patronage, courtiers of some description had existed, and Castiglione had said as much in the unpublished preface of his earlier drafts of his *Libro del Cortegiano*. In previous centuries, accomplished courtiers had themselves been able to become great

princes by force of arms, or personality, or sometimes by their ingratiating sycophancy, and that possibility had been aided by the uncertainty and fragility of despotic rule in individual city states and communes. Such a great family as the Visconti just failed, under Giangaleazzo's leadership, to unite Italy in 1402 by a subtle blend of diplomacy, marriage ties and force of arms. Yet they took so little thought for dynastic succession that after Giangaleazzo's sudden death the kingdom was divided between his two contentious sons. Divided it weakened, to be saved by the offspring of the peasant upstart Sforza Attendolo, whose descendant, Ludovico Sforza, Castiglione's first patron, was driven out of Milan when the French took over the city in that fateful year 1499.

Typical of all imperial powers, before and after them, the French, and later the Spanish and the Austrians preferred to rule a tranquil group of territories, untroubled by the possibility of upstarts and usurpers, who might wish to assert their individuality and seize power, as had been the case with the impressive series of despots described by Jacob Burckhardt. After 1499, then, dynastic succession ensured that tranquil (if sometimes inept) rulers were permanently in place in their colonies or satellites. The fierce competition which had allowed powerful individuals to come to the fore during the preceding centuries now passed to their adviser-courtiers, prototypes of the *éminences grises* of the next century. It was Castiglione's prescience which allowed him to see the importance of such new men, and this explains his remarks about the recent innovation in that court service and his creation of a new word to signify such service, such a new profession, *cortegiania*:

Non è forse mai per lo addietro, se non da non molto tempo in qua, fattasi tra gli uomini professione di questa Cortegiania, per dire così, e riduttasi quasi in arte e disciplina.<sup>7</sup>

Yet Castiglione eliminated those remarks from his definitive edition. They would have run counter, I believe, to his other great theory, the ideal of *disinvoltura*, casual grace – that for the potential courtier (or social climber) all words and actions should be clothed in casualness. So the overall message, that this was a handbook for rising courtiers, had to be gathered by perusal of the volume as a whole. But during the quarter century in which

Castiglione witnessed the French invasion, foresaw the consequences for his class and wrote his *Book of the Courtier*, his potential audience had grown to embrace not only the dispossessed nobility, but also the nouveaux riches and even the underclass of their lowlier clients. The need to conform to 'superior' or more traditional norms of behaviour gradually came to absorb energies which might otherwise be occupied in more immediately tangible or material advancement. And whereas previous leaders acted according to positive impulses, Castiglione's successors consistently urge the negative avoidance of any behaviour through which the courtier might risk loss of face.

Almost without exception court manuals advise their potential pupils to avoid the wretchedness of the courts, and that rule applied to private as well as to public advice. One of Castiglione's younger contemporaries, Paolo Rosello finds two bleak similes to describe the condition of courtiers; both have remarkably modern connotations. The first, more relevant to climates north of Malta, compared courtiers to victims of hypothermia, 'più sono dal freddo occupati tanto meno sentono la morte che più se gli avvicina'. The second is a botanical image, which some might say makes Montale's *Agave* seem cheerful by comparison:

Una miserabile natura d'alberi, che nascono nel mare Persiano, i quali roduti dal sale par che siano derelitti, e appigliandosi con le radici ne' scogli, danno vista di esser sterili, ma tornando il mare, resistono a l'onde che li battono fieramente, anzi li cuoprono tutti, la onde si manifesta che sono con l'asprezza de l'acque nudriti<sup>8</sup>.

And yet we know that other dignified and cultivated men vied with each other to obtain a position at court. Outside the area of patronage which courts certainly afforded, life was indeed bleak, boring and often dangerous. And while Rosello and his peers complained at the humiliations they had to undergo it must be remembered that their chances of surviving and flourishing were probably higher under a stable dynasty, however totalitarian, than they might have been under the more ephemeral and bloodthirsty régimes of preceding times.

Dante had supported the ideal of a Universal Ruler, who, having all and desiring nothing, could exert sufficient control to check the avarice of men, and prevent the kind of disruptive struggles which were tearing Italy apart. Yet during such a period of political

chaos and anarchy, Dante had found some sort of tranquillity at the Della Scala court at Padua. And a slightly less illustrious contemporary of his, Marsilio da Padova found a similar haven at the French court of Philip the Fair. In his *Defensor pacis*, composed there after 1300, Marsilio summed up well the notion of *civitas* in its sense of an urban civilization where a tranquil environment was imposed by a powerful peacemaker. There are similar pleas for peace from courtiers such as Torquato Tasso, whose life had been anything but tranquil, and who comments to his friend Maurizio Cattaneo in 1592:

La pace è la tranquillità de l'ordine, e il far la pace è tranquillar l'ordine. E se l'ordine è sommo bene ed intrinseco de l'universo, per conseguenza il far la pace è una causa della sua perfezione e però tiene il supremo luogo fra l'opere di coloro che governano il mondo, ed assimiglia il pacificatore a Dio<sup>9</sup>.

At the opening of Castiglione's *Cortegiano*, there is a clear reflection of the civilizing influence of courts, and an implication that by 1500 they might have taken over the civilizing role of cities too often divided by internecine struggle and stasis. I refer to the eulogy of the Montefeltro court at the opening of the first Book, where Castiglione alludes to the richness of the accoutrements and the fine achievements of Federico da Montefeltro in founding such a splendid institution, as a fitting physical setting for his own virtues of humanity, justice, liberality and fortitude:<sup>10</sup>

Questo, tra l'altre cose sue lodevoli, nell' aspero sito d'Urbino edificò un palazzo, secondo la opinione di molti, il più bello che in tutta Italia si ritrovi; e d'ogni oportuna cosa sì ben lo fornì, che non un palazzo, ma una città in forma de palazzo esser pareva. (I, ii)

We know that Castiglione's choice of the word *città* was deliberate, because it is possible to check on the rejected alternatives in the earlier *redazioni* published in Ghino Ghinassi's splendid edition. There we find 'non ad un palagio ma a dieci sarebbe stato bastante' and 'non ad un palagio ma ad un regno'.<sup>11</sup> That concentration in the definitive edition on urbane embellishments rather than the mere size or power of the court, helps to emphasize Castiglione's interest in the civil or civilized aspects of life which inside court society were more available than elsewhere. The relative quality

of civilization at these centres is also illustrated by Castiglione's personal efforts to obtain employment at particularly congenial courts such as Urbino<sup>12</sup>. So, however much court writers before and after Castiglione might warn against it, for security, as well as for its potential for civilized living, a career at court was worth the cost and effort. There were also good possibilities that service at court might be recompensed with richer material rewards, 'His owne profit is chiefest and superior; the Princes service, the lesser and inferior'. That was Lorenzo Ducci's summing up in his Anglo-Italian manual published in London in 1607, and the means to that end are also bluntly stated:

It appeareth then that the ends or scopes that the *Courtier* hath are three, that is, his proper interest, and this is that which chiefly he endeavoureth: next the *favour of the Prince* as the cause of his first end: and then the *service of the Prince* as the efficient cause of that favour<sup>13</sup>.

More settled regimes encouraged steadier social progress as intellectual merit was rewarded and individuals were enabled to filter through the various classes in an upward direction. Vincenzo Borghini's surveys of Florentine noble families uncovered attitudes typical of the new developments, and his remarks upon the need felt particularly by semi-noble or nouveaux riches families to discover and flaunt their allegedly venerable origins help our understanding here. Thus the coincidence of a sixteenth-century family name with the name of a demonstrably ancient family from centuries beforehand, may induce the upstart family to simply take over the more ancient family's coat of arms:

Pigliano l'Armi già fatte, e si pagoneggiano, e dicono con quella buona donna: i miei antichi feciero, miei passati dissero, e' miei consorti si trovarono, che hanno a fare tanto con loro quanto col Prete Ianni.<sup>14</sup>

The background to such remarks is filled in by Scipione Ammirato's description of the necessary acceptance by the truly ancient and noble families of the patronage of their now political superiors, in his particular case the Medici house in Florence<sup>15</sup>.

In England the nobility had long been forced into such stoic acceptance of royal patronage (or royal indifference), but by the mid-1500s English chroniclers were providing clear instances of

the century's preoccupation with class struggle and class mobility. In 1555 the anonymous *Institucion of a Gentleman*<sup>16</sup> defined three main categories of decent society (other crude sociological treatises, such as William Harrison's surveys<sup>17</sup>, extended their analyses to encompass the soldiery, the poor and so on). The *Institucion's* definitions ranged from the traditional nobility, which had 'gentle manners and noble conditions', to the decadent nobility, which despite its venerability had 'corrupt and ungentle manners', and finally the worthy and energetic social climber without noble ancestry, the *upstart*, which the anonymous author seems desirous of using in a complimentary sense, while admitting that it had a pejorative ring for some contemporaries. But he does invent a fourth category, the 'unworthy worshipful', upstarts who had made money in deceitful ways, 'for commying to the touche stone they will perfectly appere of what corrupt metall they be grounded. These be the right upstartes and not those whyche clyme to honour by worthiness'.

It seemed that in Italy, after 1500, the times became ever more propitious for such social mobility. The nouveaux riches and the recently elevated were prime audiences for the manuals of courtesy and social climbing which followed the publication of the *Cortegiano* in 1528. There were other dramatic examples of such rapid social promotion. Thus Girolamo Garimberto, in his *Della fortuna* refers to the plebs who may be exalted:

Egli è pur strana cosa, a dir il vero, il veder una moltitudine di gente barbara dal Tinello d'un povero Cardinale, quarant'anni combattuto dalla fame, e dalle pentole e dalla striglia in un momento esser tirata nelle gran sale e pompose camere Papali, e certi affamati e affumicati cortigianelli che pur hieri per debiti fuggivano dinanzi a i Sbirri, hoggi vestiti di rosato e con le camiscie sopra la guarnaccia in mezzo d'una turba di villani rivestiti, lor parenti, facendo il Signore e il Monsignore per Roma, non degnar alcuno e comandar a tutti<sup>18</sup>.

Those remarks may be a reflection of the peculiarly Italian situation where a change in the Papacy brought with it more often than elsewhere a change in the fortunes of the Pope's provincial acolytes. In less feudal regimes, too, growing prosperity from trade created a similar revolution in personal fortunes. In Britain, Henry



St John writes to Lord Orrey of financial investments in mercantile enterprises creating 'a new sort of property' which he fears is 'equal to the terra firma of our island', and which had removed power from the old nobility, 'In the meantime those men are become their masters who formerly would with joy have become their servants'<sup>19</sup>.

Saba da Castiglione reserves some of his more sarcastic remarks for the social climbing habits of his time:

Non lasciarò di dire che noi italiani semo molto obligati alla natione spagnuola, perché avanti lo advento di essa in Italia, tutti eravamo messeri e madonne, hora semo divenuti Signori e Signore e donni e donne (...); io vorrei più tosto essere stato un buon messere di quei tempi che un tristo Signore di questi<sup>20</sup>.

And another contemporary of Saba's, Bartolomeo Arnigio gives his detailed observations of social climbing, which he regrets, encourages the pestilence of selfish ambition, over-estimation of one's own merits, boasting, pride and a desire for pompous and specious ostentation. He notes how petty officials and tax-farmers ape their more illustrious superiors, and has to smile when he recalls how these village magistrates come home swollen with pride, as if they had been Roman pro-Consuls or Dictators. 'Essi subito che sono giunti a casa (cotanto s'insuperbiscono) s'arrogano il titolo di magnifico'<sup>21</sup>.

The *arrivisti* were always present – so much is obvious from such testimonies, and Aristophanes, Martial and Juvenal suffice to show what a truism that is, if any further evidence were needed. But there is no doubt that the type of *arrivista* was also changing. It could be argued that Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* could not practically teach anything because it was aimed at a readership which already knew most of what it contained. That is not entirely accurate, of course, because Castiglione was also pointing to the best way of using courtly attributes and indicating at the same time a stoic ideal allied to the Aristotelian Golden Mean. Yet his volume would seem inappropriate for the rising new men requiring speedy advice on how to avoid social blunders and how to ingratiate themselves with their superiors. That need was soon supplied by such writers as Pelegro de' Grimaldi. From the very title of his book it is clear that he is unconcerned with the cloak of *disinvoltura*,

which had added elegance and subtlety to Castiglione's work. It will be recalled that Castiglione had deliberately excised from his definitive edition the concept of courtly manual, Pelegro makes a virtue of declaring his purpose openly, '*Discorsi nei quali si ragiona compiutamente di quanto far debbono i Gentilhuomini ne' servigi de' lor Signori, per acquistarsi la grazia loro*'<sup>22</sup>.

Pelegro de' Grimaldi's manual for his courtly contemporaries was just one among a spate of advice books which followed the publication of Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*. Pelegro's requirement for the writer to particularize meant in effect that social climbers had to be warned against minor faux pas of behaviour. In a society where it was essential not to offend a patron, there was a natural tendency to provide negative admonitions, rather than positively to acquire rather intangible graces (the courtier could and would cultivate his own particular strengths); it was also much easier to give such negative advice. The other manual of social behaviour which came out of Italy to rival Castiglione in its popularity in England, was Giovanni Della Casa's *Galateo*. Certainly some of the down-to-earth details which Pelegro advocated could be easily found in Della Casa's pages:

Non è dicevol costume, quando ad alcuno vien veduto per via, come occorre alle volte, cosa stomachevole, il rivolgersi a' compagni e mostrarla loro. E molto meno il porgere altrui a fiutare alcuna cosa puzzolente, come alcuni sogliono fare con grandissima istanza, pure accostandocela al naso e dicendo: deh, sentite di grazia come questo pute.<sup>23</sup>

The many minor irritations which must have plagued Della Casa's diplomatic career crop up in his brilliant, if grumpy, little treatise as a series of avoidable gnat-bites, expressed in the form of negative warnings against such ungracious practices. There were eight different English translations or bowdlerizations of the *Galateo* before the twentieth century; indeed the most recent translators allege that theirs is the first accurate and authentic version in English<sup>24</sup>. It was certainly true that in the version of Nathaniel Walker (1663) there were many new admonitions added to bring the advice into the seventeenth century, and there were many curious images from the surgeon's trade in order to demonstrate certain acts of subtle cunning. Perhaps even more significant is the title of Walker's version, *The refin'd courtier, or, A correction of*

*several indecencies crept into civil conversation*, the implication in the subtitle being that those negatives must be eliminated, or, as Walker might have put it, excised.<sup>25</sup>

In Richard Grave's paraphrase of the *Galateo* (1774) there was ample room for the translator to add minor cautionary tales of his own, though they may have sprung from an original idea by Della Casa. Thus Della Casa had advised against blatantly and publicly picking one's teeth; Graves can go further in his warnings not to indulge in such anti-social behaviour.

I remember a country gentleman, not long since, who could write himself *Armiger* (as Justice Shallow says), that at a public ordinary, borrowed a tooth-pick of a stranger, who sat next him; and having made use of it, wiped it clean, and (without the least sense of anything indelicate in the affair) thankfully returned it to the owner<sup>26</sup>.

In a more serious tone the private admonitions of Niccolò Strozzi<sup>27</sup> are crammed on every page with negatives: 'Non giurate mai quando volete affermare una cosa' (p. 167), 'Non introducete buffoni o gente simile avanti al Principe' (p. 168), 'Andate circospetto in portare altri al favore' (p. 169), 'Non vogliate parer savio nel correggere il Principe' (*ibid.*), 'Fuggite l'esser, il portatore delle male nuove' (p. 172), 'Non pigliate regali' (p. 183). Here are the precursors of the little volume simply entitled *Don't*, the American preface of which begins by stating 'It so happens that most of the rules of society are prohibitory in character'.<sup>28</sup>

The negative side of courtly advice characterized the work of Antonio De Guevara, for over a decade adviser and confessor to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. De Guevara's manual<sup>29</sup>, published in the decade immediately following Castiglione's *Cortegiano* set a negative tone which was imitated widely. His advice to the potential courtier was never fully to reveal to his superior whatever thoughts, possessions, desires, knowledge or powers he might have. Consistently De Guevara paints a gloomy picture of courts and a blissful one of domestic life in the gentleman's country estate where he is his own master. Yet noblemen who have built magnificent palaces away from their masters' palaces rarely if ever go there to enjoy their possessions, such is the perverse attraction which courts illogically have for their foolish and unfortunate denizens. De Guevara also regrets a moral

decline in courts. Times were not what they were:

Veggiamo sempre che gli vitiosi e maligni sono quelli che acquistano più terre e più favore degl'altri e gli virtuosi sono scacciati e rifiutati (*Ibid.* p. 192).

But who were the *virtuosi*? And what was *virtù*? When Tasso can state that the greatest virtue is deceit (or feigning) it is evident that a review of traditional values and virtues is called for<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps part of the answer can be found in another *libro del cortigiano*, that written by Agostino Nifo some thirty years after Castiglione's death. For Nifo 'la virtù cortigiana è una certa virtù particolare mediante la quale l'huomo diviene cortigiano'<sup>31</sup>. This kind of *virtù* is more akin to virtuosity, the ability, that is, to make use of one's talents, circumstances, the weaknesses of one's fellow-courtiers, the foibles of one's patron, in order to achieve self-promotion. If on the one hand practicality and negativity had begun to characterize behaviour manuals, the more positive if less serious side of Castiglione's advice also begins to surface in the guise of these new *virtù*. It may be recalled that Castiglione criticized as *leggerezze e vanità* all the minor qualities and abilities enjoined during the first three books of his *Cortegiano*, more worthy indeed, he said, of reproach than of praise if carried out for their own sake. His superior purpose implied using them in order to impress and convince a patron (who might thus be influenced to better political decisions). Here were the means to create his *institutor del principe*, the prototype confidant-adviser.

If Castiglione reckoned that such frivolities were futile as ends in themselves, there were others among his contemporaries who reckoned that trivial accomplishments might have practical value. Francesco Guicciardini confesses that as a young man he used to make fun of such *leggiadrie* (playing an instrument, dancing, singing and so forth)<sup>32</sup>. Experience had taught him that such qualifications might be useful, not least because 'lo abondare di tutti gli intrattenimenti apre la via a' favori de' principi'. Agostino Nifo has a similar view. 'Quegli che desidera d'acquistar grazia appo il suo Re metta ogni sua forza e ingegno in somiglianti giochi'<sup>33</sup>. The subtlety, casualness and elegance which fill Castiglione's major work required perhaps a more leisurely epoch. Pelegro de' Grimaldi complained that a whole life-time was necessary for a courtier to achieve Castiglione's ends, and time for Pelegro's customers was

a precious commodity<sup>34</sup>. Negative admonitions were a quick method of avoiding the worst excesses of social error; social graces might be acquired often enough by emphasising the trivial attributes mentioned in the first three Books of Castiglione's volume. Indeed if we had the time here to take as titles or headings the topics from those earlier sections of the *Cortegiano*, it would be easy to match them to a whole series of treatises which apparently expand each of Castiglione's topics. Such headings as dancing, singing, playing an instrument, hunting, wrestling, story-telling, love-making, feminine skills and a dozen others, all form the subject of minor manuals specializing (in an apparently more practical way) in such skills, developed for their own sake<sup>35</sup>. These were Castiglione's particular *virtù*, as we have seen, the particular qualities which kept the courtier in favour and ever present at court, the most important political arena which Castiglione knew.

In an earlier age *virtù* might also have implied strength or particular artistic and intellectual skills, such as those which enabled Sforza Attendolo or Federico da Montefeltro or Leonbattista Alberti or Michelangelo or Leonardo to develop their talents as *uomini universali* in their individual fields. For Machiavelli in particular, *virtù* implied the skills of Sforza or Federico, the military and diplomatic strengths which were to be looked for in his (by now anachronistic) search for a *condottiero* who might go beyond even those great leaders of previous centuries and rescue Italy. For Castiglione's successors *virtù* inevitably came to mean trivial skills which ensured, not the perfection of the individual but his potential for adulation as he attended his prince. Such ambitions were present, I am sure in Castiglione, though he may have had more scruples than his successors, but his *disinvoltura* was much more effective than their *dissimulazione*. And if we consider the thousands of advice manuals written and published after Castiglione's death, we shall find that few, if any, combine his wisdom, subtlety and elegance. None of them could be said to be idealistic, none represent the portrait of the perfect courtier. On the contrary most counsel dissimulation, adulation and self-advancement in an undisguised and unashamed manner. In easier times the cultivation of *leggiadrie* for their own sake, and the derivation of such trivia from an alleged source in the *Cortegiano* demean its author. At a time of personal and national tragedy

Castiglione devised a system for survival and a professional ladder for the *éminence grise* of the future. He wrote about his solution to the problem of personal and national disaster with Christian stoicism and universally, in a way that allowed his reader to meet crisis with serenity. And in the political context of the years following the sack of Rome in 1527, at a time when as *courtly* advice his words might prove less relevant than they would have done in Urbino in 1507, the sensitive and intelligent reader may be seen to have a goal which was independent of courtly success.

### Notes

1. Significant, if misleading is the English title of the satires, which date originally from 1517 – 1524, *Ariostos seven planets governing Italie* or *His satyrs in seven famous discourses*, newly corrected (London, 1611).
2. Available in Alexander Barclay, *Certayn Egloges* (London, 1530). The original text of the *De curialium miseriis* (dating from 1444) is published in a modern edition by W.P. Mustard (Baltimore, 1928).
3. Saba da Castiglione, *Ricordi* (Venezia, 1554), p. 30v, a judgement elaborated further by him at p. 32. Guido La Rocca in his eulogy of Castiglione is strangely harsh on his fellow-countrymen in claiming that the disasters were 'difetto nostro di senno politico', *Commemorazione di Baldassare Castiglione* (Mantova, 1978), p. 26.
4. Matteo Maria Boiardo, *Orlando innamorato*, a cura di Aldo Scaglione (Torino, 1963), III, ix, 26.
5. Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, a cura di Costantino Panigada (Bari, 1929), (5 voll.), Vol. I, p. 5.
6. B. Castiglione, *Lettere*, a cura di Guido La Rocca (Milano, 1978), p. 5. (Padova, 1766), (2 voll.) Vol. I, p. 193.
8. Paolo Rosello, *Due dialoghi* (Venezia, 1549), p. 17v and p. 18.
9. Torquato Tasso, *Lettere*, a cura di Cesare Guasti (Firenze, 1854), (5 voll.), Vol. V, p. 128.
10. I shall quote from B. Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortegiano*, a cura di Bruno Maier (Torino, 1964) using his traditional Book and chapter references.
11. B. Castiglione, *La seconda redazione del Cortegiano*, a cura di Ghino Ghinassi (Firenze, 1968), p. 5.
12. Cecil Clough has investigated the careers of the various courtiers after the death of Castiglione's favourite patron Guidubaldo da Montefeltro; see his 'Francis I and the Courtiers of Castiglione's *Courtier*', *European Studies Review*, vol. 8, 1978, pp. 23 – 70, especially p. 39.
13. Lorenzo Ducci, *Ars aulica*, or *The courtier's art* (London, 1607), pp. 64 – 5.
14. *Discorso di Monsignore D. Vincenzio Borghini intorno al modo di far gli alberi delle famiglie nobili fiorentine* (Firenze, 1602), Seconda edizione a cura di Domenico Moreni (Firenze, 1821), pp. 8 – 9.
15. Scipione Ammirato, *Storia delle nobili famiglie fiorentine*, a cura di S. Ammirato il Giovane (Firenze, 1615); the view is expressed in the *Dedica* (no page numbers).

16. *The institution of a gentleman* (London, 1555).
17. William Harrison, *Description of England*, edited by F.J. Furnivall (London, 1877), part I, p. 105.
18. Girolamo Garimberto, *Della fortuna* (Venezia, 1550), p. 23v.
19. Henry St John, manuscript in Bodleian Library, Clarendon mss 109 (1660).
20. Saba da Castiglione, *Ricordi*, *cit.*, p. 61.
21. Bartolomeo Arnigio, *Diece veglia* (Brescia, 1576 – 7), p. 450.
22. Pelegro de' Grimaldi Robbio, *Discorsi* (Genova, 1543). I shall quote from the Genoese edition of 1585.
23. Giovanni Della Casa, *Il Galateo*, a cura di Giovanni Tinivella (Milano, 1954), Capo III (pp. 155 – 6).
24. *Galateo*, translated with introduction and notes by Konrad Eisenbichler and Kenneth R. Bartlett (Ottawa, 1990), p. xxiv.
25. *The refin'd courtier*, translated by Nathaniel Walker (London, 1663).
26. *Galateo*, or *A treatise on politeness and delicacy of manners*, translated by Richard Graves (London, 1774), p. xiii.
27. Niccolò di Tommaso di Simone Strozzi, *Avertimenti necessarij per i cortigiani*, edited in John Woodhouse, 'La cortegiana di Niccolò Strozzi', *Studi secenteschi*, vol. xxiii, 1982, pp. 141 – 193.
28. *Don't: A Manual of Mistakes and Improprieties more or less prevalent in Conduct and Speech*, an anonymous treatise without date, published originally by Field and Tuer, Leadenhalle Press. I mention this nineteenth-century curiosity, reprinted by Pryor publications, Whitstable, because of its current popularity in Britain.
29. Antonio De Guevara, *Aviso di favoriti* (Valladolid, 1539); I quote from the Italian translation (Venezia, 1562); references here are to p. 50v and p. 105.
30. Tasso's *Malpiglio* includes the well-known statement that his book is more appropriate than is Castiglione's at the current time, 'in cui l'infinger è una de le maggior virtù'; in Torquato Tasso, *Opere*, a cura di Bruno Maier (Milano, 1963 – 65), (5 voll. ), Vol. V, p. 49.
31. Agostino Nifo, *Del libro del cortigiano* (Genova, 1560), p. 30.
32. Francesco Guicciardini, *I ricordi*, a cura di R.R. Spongano (Firenze, 1951), p. 191. Castiglione's adverse criticism comes at IV, iv of his *Cortegiano*.
33. Agostino Nifo, *Del libro del cortigiano*, *cit.*, p. 23.
34. Pelegro de' Grimaldi Robbio, *Discorsi*, *cit.*, p. 7, 'Appena che tutta l'età dell'huomo intera, intera bastar vi possa, sì che sarebbe da pensar prima della bara e del sepolcro che di porsi a' servigi di alcuna corte'.
35. There is ample evidence for this apparent generalization in the splendid catalogue of such treatises compiled by Virgil A. Heltzel, *A check list of Courtesy Books in the Newberry Library* (Chicago, 1942). I wish to record here my thanks to the Newberry Library for the Fellowship which enabled me to read many manuals not available elsewhere.

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# DISGUISE AND RECOGNITION IN RENAISSANCE COMEDY.

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The relationship between the Elizabethan stage and the Italian theatre of the 16th century has attracted a great deal of scholarly investigation, but with scanty results. English plays of this period are so manifestly Italianate – Italian stage settings, characters' names, allusions are so frequent that we are bound to suspect Italian origins. Yet despite the intensive and ingenious labours of source-hunters the direct, proven contribution of Italian to English theatre in this period is extremely slim. Only a handful of Italian plays can be shown convincingly to have been known in Elizabethan England, and the vast majority of the apparent derivations have proved to be indirect (via translations and adaptations, mostly narrative) or from common sources (generally classical) or so tenuous as to be of negligible significance<sup>1</sup>.

I have thought it worthwhile therefore to explore one significant theatrical device which clearly originates in classical literature, re-emerges in Renaissance Italy and subsequently becomes widespread in comedy all over Europe – that is disguise. It is a subject which scholars have begun to take more seriously in recent years in respect of individual authors, notably Shakespeare (the Japanese seem to have made a corner in this particular market), but I am not aware of any comparative studies of the matter.

I shall consider disguise in its primary sense as the adoption of dress, speech or conduct designed deliberately to deceive others as to one's identity, while recognising that this definition does not do justice to the complexity of disguise in Renaissance theatre. Muriel Bradbrook prefers to define it as 'the substitution or metamorphosis of dramatic identity, whereby one character sustains two roles'<sup>2</sup>. I find this definition illuminating but nonetheless restrictive. Others use 'disguise' to embrace deception concerning feelings and intentions and not necessarily identity – which I take to be an extension of the term, richly exploited in the 17th century, but preferably considered as distinct from the primary meaning. Another approach brackets identity



deception with innocent mistakes of identity considering them as cases of conscious and unconscious disguise, as in a recent comprehensive study by Georges Forestier of French classical theatre, and it is true that many of the consequences that follow on the stage from mistaken identity are similar for the two types<sup>3</sup>.

The prominence of both forms of disguise would seem to be connected with the key role assigned to 'recognition' in Aristotelian theory and further developed by Renaissance theorists who broadly accepted Aristotle's analysis of 'reversal' (*peripeteia*) and 'recognition' or 'discovery' (*anagnorisis*) in tragedy<sup>4</sup>. 'Reversal' was seen as 'a change from one state of affairs to its opposite', and 'recognition' as 'a change from ignorance to knowledge' – the most effective form of discovery being one that is accompanied by reversals. Aristotle goes on to speak of recognition as though identity is the prime predicate of *anagnorisis*, giving as examples Oedipus, Iphigenia and Orestes. Aristotle's theories of comedy are of course the subject of debate but if, as has been argued, the *Tractatus Coislinianus* is close to the master's thought, then he considered deception concerning identity to be one of the principal sources of laughter – the examples he gives of this, from the *Frogs*, are Xanthius' disguise as Heracles ('assimilation to the better') and Dionysus' disguise as Xanthius ('assimilation to the worse'). Aristotle does briefly allow that recognition may embrace inanimate objects and actions, although it seems that he was thinking of such objects and actions as enable us to discover identity<sup>5</sup>.

The early discussions of recognition are thus strongly slanted towards recognition of identity but the Renaissance commentators develop the hints provided by Aristotle and extend the definition of recognition to the discovery of matters other than identity, thus opening the door for a much wider range of plots where the intrigue is unravelled through the discovery of basic truths about character, and later scholars interpret the discovery of identity as potentially coinciding with the return of the aberrant character to his or her authentic self<sup>6</sup>.

Already in Aristotle human ignorance is set against divine knowledge, and the struggle of individuals to overcome their ignorance against their recognition of divine fore-knowledge and control. And in comedy, where men and women are confronted with obstacles to their happiness, their success in overcoming these

will depend for the necessary reversal either on forces beyond their control (the intervention of the gods) or on their own efforts. In both cases deception and disguise turn out to be crucial tools, for the misfortunes of mortals are explained as arising from the unseen manipulations of the gods, whose trickery and deceits must be matched by human ingenuity. Ignorance of identity may arise from either source and the happy outcome will depend on revelations made either by individuals who have manipulated their fellow-men to achieve the results they want, or by the gods who withhold vital information from mortal men and women, and only reveal it at a late stage by means of the arrival and identification of long-lost relatives.

The two options open to the playwright can be seen to reflect the characteristic Renaissance concern with man's ability to manage his own affairs, and were seen in this light by dramatists in Italy and in England. Indeed this interpretation of disguise and the consequences which flowed from it seem to be one of the significant contributions of Italian playwrights to the European theatre and is one of the main topics which I should like to discuss in this paper. Machiavelli's debate on the conflicting claims of *virtù* and *fortuna* are at the root of this. Can a man by bold and resolute (and if necessary deceitful) action decide the course of his life, or is he always subject to the capricious hand of fortune? In the *Principe* the scales are evenly weighted but in Machiavelli's comedies the emphasis is very much on the side of the mortals. *La Mandragola* (Florence, 1519–20) shows us the young Callimaco scheming to seduce the wife of the elderly Messer Nicia, carrying off his disguise and deceptions successfully and winning the lady. All that Callimaco attempts comes off – there is no need for divine intervention or happy revelations of identity. His own wit and cunning are enough – not only for him to get into the lady's bed, but to talk her out of exposing him once he is there (he uses in fact the brutal tactic of one of Boccaccio's lovers in insisting not on his devotion but on his power to humiliate her publicly). And the success of the various disguises is such that nothing is left for the author in the obligatory fifth act but to mull over the triumph and savour the future.

Machiavelli's other comedy, the *Clizia* shows a similar approach. Father and son are here in conflict over the same girl, and the young

scheme of bedding the father with a male servant disguised as the bride works perfectly, so that youthful love triumphs over senile lust. It is true of course that Machiavelli does little more here than translate Plautus's *Casina*, but his choice of this particular play is significant (Plautus's tricksters often find their tricks back-firing on them). Revealing too are his revisions of the Latin text: he brings on to the stage the son (who doesn't appear in Plautus) and gives a prominent role to the young man whose enterprise and determination are suitably rewarded.

In Ariosto's comedies – which are more or less contemporary with Machiavelli's – the boot is on the other foot: disguise and deception seldom achieve their aims. In *I Suppositi* (1509) and *Il Negromante* (1520) the disguises fail and the plots are only resolved by means of chance revelations of identity. *La Lena* (1528) has no disguises or identity revelations but the schemers only succeed by sheer good luck and the planned disguise in *La Cassaria* (1508) goes badly wrong, leaving the servant to lament:

Come la mutabil fortuna ha sozopra il tutto riversato! (IV, 8)

and again:

O ria fortuna, come stai per opporti alli disegni nostri  
apparecchiata sempre!

(IV, 1)

– common enough complaint in the *Orlando Furioso*, where men and women are seldom masters of their fate.

A successful disguiser moreover requires a victim, and if disguise and other forms of deception show the value of enterprise and ingenuity, they also underline man's vulnerability to deception and fraud. The ridiculing of foolish old men and braggart captains comes of course from Roman comedy, and Renaissance playwrights added other victims, such as pedants and clerics. Machiavelli's clever Callimaco gulls the credulous Messer Nicia. Amorous old men who ought to know better are regularly outwitted by young rivals in disguise – Giordano Bruno's Bonifacio in *Il Candelaio* (1582) is a prime example. The play is effectively a protracted 'beffa' of the old man, who is a victim of multiple disguise – that of his wife who dresses as his girl-friend, of the servants who masquerade as policemen, and the disguise he himself is persuaded to adopt and in which he is trapped and harried mercilessly. Gullibility therefore is the target of many of these Italian comedies which often strain

credibility with the credulity of the victims. The more gullible the victims the nearer to farce we get. Writers aiming at a more serious comedy, such as Ariosto, were no longer content with the conventional dupes of the Roman stage. The wily servant Corbolo in *La Lena* explains his difficulty in attempting to contrive a scheme to help his young master:

Ma che farò, che con un vecchio credulo  
non ho a far, qual a suo modo Terenzio  
o Plauto suoi Cremete o Simon fingere? (III, 1)

And indeed in this play, where Ariosto comes closest to portraying a real-life ambiguity of sexual relations worthy of Shakespeare, here disguise is abandoned altogether, as though the playwright was conscious of the artificial and theatrical nature the device was in danger of assuming.

There is another sense too in which Italian Renaissance playwrights added their own interpretation of classical comedy. Where chance or Fortune seems to come to the rescue of the embattled protagonists the outcome is now often explained, not as the result of some spiteful and deceitful behaviour on the part of the gods, but in Christian terms: it was God's will or Providence that matters should end as they did. The disguised servant in *I Suppositi* rails against fortune – his contest with the elderly rival of his master is like a game of cards in which luck constantly changes, but ultimately, they conclude, it was all ordered in heaven, because

.. una minima foglia non credo che quaggiú senza la superna  
voluntà si muova. (V, 8)

In Grazzini's *I Parentadi* (1582) the 'strange way' in which the despairing father finds his children is attributed first to Fortune, but then to Providence:

Sempre sia laudato messer Domenedio che per sua misericordia non  
abbandona mai chi si fida in lui. (V,6)

The most explicit example of this is to be found in Arentino's *Talanta* where the father is re-united with his long-lost children after a tangle of disguises and unconscious identity mistakes. He concludes:

Non è fato, non è destino, non è sorte, non è caso, non è fortuna quella che ci solleva, quella che ci abassa, quella che ci perturba, quella che ci consola e quella che ci disperava; ma volontà, giustizia, clemenza, ordine e determinazione divina; nè altro mi paiono gli influssi celesti che instrumenti i quali esequiscono i cenni di Dio. (V, 1)<sup>8</sup>

If we turn to the Elizabethan and Jacobean disguise comedies we find a similar treatment of identity deception, conscious and unconscious. There is often indeed a subtle underlay of tension between the forces of human endeavour and external control. The disguise of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* seems to exemplify a totally successful manipulation of his subordinates by a clever ruler; with his friar's habit Vincentio is able not merely to spy on the conduct of his deputy but to bring him and the wicked Lucio to justice. Indeed the uncovering of the Duke's disguise at the end seems to the assembled courtiers like the descent of a *deus ex machina*. And Angelo marvels

When I perceive your Grace, like power divine  
Hath look'd upon my passes. . . (V, 1)

Yet if the Duke's disguise gives him the semblance of an all-seeing god we must remember that it was his very weakness as a ruler that led him to adopt it – his success could be short-lived. So too with another disguised Duke, the ousted Altofronto in Marston's *Malcontent*, who uses his disguise to spy out the minds of his rivals and contrive their defeat. Yet clever and effective as he is, in the Machiavellian style, he cannot rely on his own efforts. In the background is the powerful Duke of Florence, and the people whose sympathies can change. And Altofronto acknowledges this in the language we have seen in the Italian playwrights. After his triumphs he declares:

. . . Who doubts of Providence  
That sees this change? A hearty faith to all!  
He needs must rise who can no lower fall;  
For still impetuous vicissitude  
Touseth the world. (IV, 5)

In the pastoral, as in John Lyly's *Gallathea* the contest between fortune and human endeavour takes the form of a clash between the mortals and the gods. The attempt of the fathers of Gallathea and Phillida to disguise their daughters as boys in order to save

them from being sacrificed to Neptune is shown as a futile attempt to thwart Destiny. The gods cannot be deceived in this way, and they too are capable of deception. So Neptune dresses himself as a shepherd, and Cupid too puts on disguises (as in Tasso's *Aminta*) to assert his power over the disguised girls and make them fall in love with each other. Here the gods are clearly in control and they determine the outcome – Neptune will transform one of the girls into a man. In *Mother Bombie* on the other hand Lyly uses an Italianate intrigue in which the mortals are deceiving each other; Candius and Livia trick their parents into consenting to their marriage in the belief that they are witnessing the union of a different couple. The young lovers here seem to be controlling their own destiny, but what of Mother Bombie? – who acts like an oracle and is able to predict the outcome and indeed to influence it (she is responsible for the servant Vicinia revealing the true identity of the young lovers at the end). Mother Bombie seems designed to provide that very ambiguity concerning human endeavour and a mysterious Providence which we have seen anticipated in Italian comedy.<sup>9</sup>

There is not time here to pursue this further, but I conclude this section of my paper briefly with the observation that the English stage follows Italian precedent in exploiting disguise partially to exemplify the contest between human ingenuity and divine order: in deceiving each other men do no more than repeat the deceptions to which they are constantly exposed by an inscrutable Providence.

A second function of disguise, and one that helps to explain its prominence in Renaissance theatre, lies in its illumination not just of man's contest with his destiny but of woman's contest with man. Cross-sexual dressing accounts for a high proportion of the disguise comedies in Italy and England in this period, and the female page as she is known (that is the young woman who disguises herself as a page and takes service with her unsuspecting beloved) becomes a stock character in both theatres. Charles Lamb, writing to Wordsworth about the progress he and his sister were making on their *Tales from Shakespeare* commented:

Mary is just stuck fast in *All's Well that Ends Well*. She complains at having to set forth so many female characters in boys' clothes. She begins to think Shakespeare must have wanted – imagination!<sup>10</sup>

Victor Freeburg in his *Disguise Plots in Elisabethan Drama* notes some hundreds of examples of cross-sexual disguise, the large majority being women dressed as men and particularly as 'pages'.<sup>11</sup> I don't think that anyone has counted them for Italy but I am sure there are just as many.

The earliest dramatic example is thought to be Bibbiena's *La Calandra*, first performed in Urbino in 1513. Here twins, male and female, cause endless confusion when the girl dresses as a boy and is mistaken for her brother. It is a clever variant on Plautus' *Menechmi* where the twins were both male. The introduction of an active and scheming female on the stage was an important modification of the Roman comic tradition, which allowed women only a minor, mainly off-stage role in the action, and reflected of course the wish to adjust the Roman conventions to modern Italian customs. Already Boccaccio had provided examples of enterprising women adopting disguise and managing their own destinies, and the romances furnished other precedents with their female warriors whose sex was not apparent beneath their armour<sup>12</sup>. There are similar examples in medieval English literature, notably in the ballads.

The earliest dramatic exploitations of the motif are Italian however, and already in Italy by the mid-16th century cross-sexual disguise has become a cliché in comedy. It was not of course a purely literary phenomenon. In the troubled times of the foreign invasions of Italy there was a great deal of confusion arising from the splitting of families – children were lost, identities concealed and fabricated. For a woman, male dress must have afforded some protection, particularly when travelling. Cross-dressing was certainly a cause for concern in 17th century England – James I ordered the London clergy to condemn from the pulpit the practice of women dressing mannishly in the streets: Deuteronomy had expressly forbidden it and politicians saw it as socially disruptive. Cross-dressing was not therefore confined to the theatre, although there of course it was endemic with boys playing women's parts and then pretending to be boys again.<sup>13</sup>

This was also a time of renewed interest among intellectuals and courtiers in the position of women in society and a debate about the relative merits of the sexes. The theoretical literature is vast, as can be seen from Ruth Kelso's survey, *Doctrine for the Lady*

of the Renaissance (Urbana, 1950). What is interesting here is the intrusion of this debate into the theatre by means of cross-sexual disguise, which highlights the social differentiation of the sexes. We are familiar with this in Shakespearean comedy, but Shakespeare had a substantial heritage of Italian precedents. Fulvia in *La Calandra* glories in the freedom she has managed to acquire by putting on men's clothes:

Io che già senza compagnia a gran pena de camera uscita non sarei, or da amor spinta, vestita da uomo me ne vo sola. Ma se quella era timida servitu, questa è generosa libertà. (III, 7)<sup>14</sup>

And when Santilla has to revert to her female dress she is downcast:

Oh infelice sesso femminilo, che non pur alle opere, ma ancora ai pensieri sottoposto sei. Dovendo femina mostrarmi, non sol far ma pensar cosa non so che riuscir mi possa.

In Luca Contile's *Cesarea Gonzaga* (Milan, 1550) a father keeps his daughter dressed as a man so that she can study and become 'una de le prime meraviglie dell'età sua'. How else can she be properly educated in a male-dominated society?

O che bel mondo sarebbe se le virtù de la donna non fossero da la tirannia del huomo impedita!<sup>15</sup>

This function of disguise persists throughout the 16th century and is as frequent in Elizabethan and Jacobean comedy as it had been in earlier Italian. In Ben Jonson's *Epicene* (1609) Morose is lured into marrying a 'silent woman' (really a man in disguise) only to find that he has tied himself to a devil incarnate when Epicene joins a band of female Collegians who fill his house with their riotous behaviour. Middleton and Dekker's *Roaring Girl* (1611) exploits a contemporary real-life case of cross-dressing, a certain Moll Firth who aroused widespread indignation with her allegedly libidinous behaviour. But Dekker's play challenges the notion that cross-dressing was tantamount to prostitution and turns Moll into a heroic champion of female rights. She uses her freedom of dress to free her tongue and teach the womanising Laxton a lesson:

*Laxton:* What dost mean, Moll?

*Moll:* To teach thy base thoughts manners: th'art one of those  
That thinks each woman thy fond flexible whore  
If she but cast a liberall eye upon thee . . .

I scorne to prostitute myself to a man,

I that can prostitute a man to me.

(III, 1)<sup>16</sup>



Dekker did not of course need to be steeped in Italian comedy to write this: Moll is as English as Paul's Cross, where she was charged, but the technique, that is the coupling of disguise with feminist comment, has its origin in early Cinquecento Italy and spreads from there all over Europe. The *mujer esquiva*, or woman who refuses to marry, is a Spanish equivalent of Moll, who like her has carried the emancipated heroine of Italian comedy a stage further. Moll wears male clothes to assert herself, but declares her cross-dressing openly; and Lope de Vega's *Moza de Cantaro* (1625) goes further still when she adopts male conduct and prerogatives *without* disguise or change of dress and defies society by taking it on herself to avenge an insult to her father which normally only a man would have undertaken.<sup>17</sup>

However, Renaissance comedy is not a vehicle of rampant feminism and some modern critics have protested that most of these plays amount only the most perfunctory of challenges to a patriarchal society. It was in the nature of comedy to end in reconciliation and forgiveness. The aim of these disguised women is not normally to subvert society but to get the man they want, marry him and, probably, subside into domestic bliss. Most of them are far from confident in their disguise: Ersilia, the female page in Andrea Calmo's *Travaglia* (Venice, 1557), only puts on men's clothes with great diffidence:

Io mi pongo a grandissimo risco, e fo in questo mio amore  
piú presto opera da valoroso soldato, che da timida fanciulla. (v, 8)

And 'timida fanciulla' is how many of these heroines could be described. John Lyly's Phillida is a comparable English example. The poor girl protests at her father's proposal to disguise her as a boy:

For then I must keepe companie with boyes and commit follies  
unseemelie for my sexe; or keepe company with girles and be  
thought more wanton than becommeth me. Besides I shall be  
ashamed  
of my long hose and short coate and so unwarelie blabbe out  
something by blushing at everything. (I, 3)<sup>18</sup>

Shakespeare of course exploits these situations for fine comic effect with heroines who try to sustain male roles but faint at the sight of blood or tremble when a sword is drawn. Indeed the spotlight

has been directed on the disguised female by Shakespearean scholars who have searched for precedents for his romantic comedies and discovered the comparative poverty and tedium of so much 16th century Italian comedy. If we leave out of account a handful of plays, nearly all of them dating from the first half of the century, we shall find a trying succession of stereotypes in the Italian treatment of cross-sexual disguise.

One might take as examples the productions of a highly successful mid-16th century playwright, the Florentine Giovan Maria Cecchi, whose plays almost unfailingly are constructed around disguises, particularly between the sexes. Disguise here has become a fashionable ornament, often introduced quite gratuitously and without any of the social or psychological nuances of a Bibbiena, Machiavelli or Ariosto. It serves little other function than to complicate the action: the disguised women often are not seen on the stage, and the confrontation of the disguisers with their victims are merely reported in pallid narratives. The two disguised girls in Cecchi's *Pellegrina* (1567) have no positive stance. One never appears on stage, and the other has almost nothing to say except how uncomfortable she is in her tight men's clothes. The only prolonged appearance of a disguised character is that of a bogus father who lamely beats a hasty retreat when the genuine father arrives – rather than let us see the fun as he attempts to brazen it out as any decent bogus father in Roman comedy would do.

The contrast with what Shakespeare makes of these conventional devices could hardly be greater. There are seven girl-boy disguises in his comedies, all cleverly differentiated: Julia (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*), Portia, Nerissa and Jessica (*The Merchant of Venice*), Rosalind (*Twelfth Night*), Viola (*As You Like It*), and Imogen (*Cymbeline*), and a good deal of feminist criticism has appeared over the past few decades suggesting that Shakespeare 'in sympathy with the feminist attitudes of his time was exploring . . . the whole question of masculinity and femininity' (Hyland) in what Wilson Knight once called an 'age of sexual ambiguity'.<sup>19</sup> Sexual stereotyping is indeed frequently questioned in the comedies: the disguised females, like their Italian predecessors, comment frankly on the freedom they enjoy in male dress:

Now go we in content  
To liberty and not to banishment

says Celia in *As You Like It*. Rosalind is enabled by her disguise both to appreciate what the world looks like to a man and to speak freely what she thinks about the social conventions governing relations between the men and women. In this guise she seems as critical of her own sex as of the male:

I could find it in my heart to disgrace a man's apparel and to cry like a woman . . . (II, 4)

Dost thou think, though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition? (III, 2)

Yet even here her cries seem as much a comment on male posturing as on female timidity:

. . . in my heart  
– Lie there what hidden women's fear there will –  
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside  
As many other mannish cowards have  
That no outface it with their semblance. (I, 3)

In *Twelfth Night* Viola too is a frequently reluctant heroine and seems to find her disguise as much a constraint as a help:

Disguise I see thou art a wickedness  
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.  
How easy is it for the proper false  
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!  
Alas our frailty is the cause, not we!  
For such as we are made of, such we be.

and she is soon helplessly out of control of the situation she has engineered:

O Time, thou must untangle this, not I;  
It is too hard a knot for me to untie. (II, 2)

Disguise in these comedies serves to underline women's strengths but also their frailties – as of course it does the men's. For though the men are not in women's clothes, their posturing and role-playing are evident nonetheless. Orlando is a 'fancy-monger' playing at being in love: he 'abuses our young plants with carving "Rosalind" on their barks, hangs odes upon hawthorns and elegies on brambles' (*AYLI* III, 2). And the Duke in *Twelfth Night* is no better: 'How does he love me?' asks Olivia, to which Viola mockingly replies:

With adorations, with fertile tears  
With groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire. (I, 5)

I do not know of any comparable passage in earlier Italian comedy, but those familiar with the *Orlando Furioso* will recognise the affinity of Shakespeare's ironical treatment of conventional love-making with Ariosto's.

So the masquerade serves a serious purpose: to test love, both in the disguised and in their victims. In the most common scenario the female page patiently teases her errant lover out of his misguided affection for another woman, and then at the crucial moment reveals her identity allowing him to recognise not just her features but her loyalty and devotion. 'Recognition' here has a more subtle meaning. Dozens of Italian plays use this formula, although none so deftly as Shakespeare does. When in the final act his ladies throw off their disguises it is not only the men who are enlightened – they themselves seem to have resolved their doubts and tensions. Auden writes of the 'self-knowledge' which Shakespeare's characters acquire as a result of their experiences during the action. These young lovers are not 'all of a piece', mere functions of an intrigue, as in so many comic stereotypes. They are self-questioning, open to change and development, and have 'a residue of inner life' which their disguises allow them to play out and resolve. Rosalind and Orlando 'find each other out'. When Rosalind discovers that her lover is in the forest, there for the meeting, she laments her disguise:

Alas the day! What shall I do with my doublet and hose?(III, 2)  
'Take it off!' some-one suggests the audience might have chanted, but she still has a job to do to test the fancy-monger Orlando's affection, to deromanticise their passion for each other and see if it is solid. Rosalind's, Viola's and Imogen's disguises signal a loss of self in order to discover self and to win another; concealment and exposure of identity, disguise and recognition, acquire a deeper meaning.

But how much of this is new? There are indeed shadowings of the psychological realism and character development of Shakespearean comedy in some of the best Italian plays, particularly in the early 16th century, before the rot set in. Flamminio, the fickle lover in *Gli Ingannati*, is progressively won over by his female page who is cleverly portrayed in her dual roles, male and female – she manipulates Flamminio quite shrewdly but suffers agonies in the process.<sup>20</sup> We also find an impressive presentation,

the anonymous *Veneixiana* (probably dating from the late 1530s), where the changing relationship between a man and two women is the focus of attention; and in Ariosto's *La Lena* the ambiguity of the relationship between the ageing bawd Lena, her mean and elderly lover and her complaisant husband is far ahead of its time. But significantly neither *La Lena* nor *La Veneixiana* employ disguise, which seems to equate in Italian comedy with intrigue and artifice. Character is almost universally a function of plot on the 16th century Italian stage, and the Plautine models are extended but seldom deepened. Disguise and other forms of deception serve mainly, as in Plautus, to help young men overcome the obstacles that society puts between them and their loved ones. Once the lover has got into the lady's house, the game is won. It is normally taken for granted that the girl is waiting open-armed for any male bold and clever enough to scale the walls (or dress as a servant, female relative, etc.) – and the psychological relationship between the two is rarely explored. There is, I think, considerable justification for the charge that Italian comedy declines into a set of stereotypes as the century progresses, and disguise becomes one of the most tedious clichés in the theatre. The intrigue becomes increasingly complex with two, three and four pairs of lovers involved in actions that are almost impossible to follow.

The master of these clever constructs is the scientist and mathematician Della Porta, some of whose intrigues read as though elaborated by a computer<sup>21</sup>: Cintia, in the play of that name, is disguised as a man and is in love with Erasto who is pursuing Amasio, the latter disguised as a woman, who loves Lidia, who is pursuing Cintia, who, you remember, is disguised as a man. But, as we saw earlier, the disguised women may not appear on the stage or appear only briefly, and that fundamental of good stage disguise, the single character with a double role, is lacking. How far this is explained by the difficulty of finding actors to undertake the difficult parts, or by moralising pressures against sexual ambiguity on the stage I do not know, but the fact remains that the promise of the early 16th century Italian comedies was never fulfilled and it was left to French, Spanish and English playwrights to develop that early potential.

It was literary theory, which tended to overshadow creative writing in Italy from the middle of the century and exerted a strong

influence abroad. This is not however particularly relevant to disguise, which is rarely mentioned in the theoretical literature of the period, despite the continued prominence and indeed development of the device north of the Alps. Here disguise is a stepping stone to a particularly fruitful subject, the gap between appearances and reality and the illusory nature of the world of the senses – a favourite Baroque theme, which I hardly need to elaborate. In Molière's *Amphitryon*, for example, the disguises adopted by the gods create a world of illusion in which a man can no longer be sure of his own identity. In Tirso de Molina's *Marta la Piadosa* the protagonist, in order to avoid marrying a man she does not love, succeeds in creating a false picture of herself without any change of dress. In *Every Man in His Humour* Brainworm undertakes a series of disguises, largely out of a sheer sense of fun, which create a world where no-one is sure of the truth: Kately fears, unnecessarily that his wife is betraying him, while Dame Knightly thinks her husband is deceiving her; Cob is suspicious of his wife and Knowall thinks his son is deceiving him . . . and so on. *Much Ado About Nothing* is another subtle exploration of the illusory world of mortal men and women – a series of 'misapprehension, misprisions, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and misapplications' deriving both from the formal disguise of a maid as her mistress and also from the false information mischievously put about by Beatrice's and Benedick's friends.<sup>22</sup>

The progress made by several generations of playwrights in the exploitation of disguise is clear in this example, the disguise sub-plot in *Much Ado* being a derivation from Ariosto's Ginevra and Ariodante story in the *Furioso* (via a series of intermediaries, French and English). Ariosto presents a romantic tale where the identity deception is enough to endanger the princess's life and the 'discovery' produces a happy ending. But even here the deception is built into a series of episodes illustrating the effect of passion in disordering the senses and making men and women susceptible of confusion and even madness: the *Furioso* examines with considerable subtlety the confused relations between men and women apparently in love and probes their relations much as Shakespeare does in his romantic comedies. And Ariosto is not alone in his concern to distinguish between the true and the false in human relations – see Machiavelli's pointed comments in

the *Prince* that 'molti si sono immaginati repubbliche e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti esser in vero' (XV, 1); and at the same time Castiglione was probing the complex role of appearances in court life, where the courtier may dance with a commoner provided he is masked, even if everyone knows who it is beneath the mask (*Cortegiano*, II, 11). The potential of this subject for dramatic exploitation is already apparent in some of the early 16th century Italian comedies: in *Gl'Ingannati* for example, so called because 'poche persone intervengono nella favola che, nel compimento non si trovano ingannate' (Prologue), and deceived not just by spurious identity but by lack of understanding: Lelia in her male clothes seems to be acting like a tart whereas she is truly faithful to Flamminio, while the apparently chaste and modest Isabella, for ever at her prayers, is really a very forward and capricious young woman. The seeds of the Baroque theatre are already germinating in Italian minds early in the Cinquecento.

It is a long century between the first Italian comedies and Shakespeare and the Italian theatre seems to have got lost along the way. Indeed, to use the disguise metaphor, comedy in Italy was rather like some creature in an evolutionary process that wouldn't shed its winter camouflage when everyone else had moved into spring costume. Others learned what to do with disguise and survived. The Italians adapted in their own inimitable way and came up of course with something different – *commedia dell'arte* and opera – both reeking with disguise! But that is another subject.

## Notes

1. For a useful review see Gabriele Baldini, 'Teatro classico e teatro elisabettiano' in *Il Teatro classico nel '500* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 1971), pp. 149–59. See also the standard works: Mary Augusta Scott, *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian* (Boston and New York, 1916); R. Warwick Bond, *Early Plays from the Italian* (Oxford, 1911).

2. M.C. Bradbrook, 'Shakespeare and the use of disguise in Elizabethan Drama', *Essays in Criticism* 2 (1952) 159–68.

3. See Georges Forestier, *Esthétique de l'identité dans le théâtre français (1550–1680). Le déguisement et ses avatars* (Geneva, 1988).

4. For a valuable discussion of the evolution of critical theory concerning recognition see Terence Cave, *Recognitions: A Study in Poetics* (Oxford, 1988).
5. See Richard Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy* (London, 1984), pp. 35, 191 – 4 etc.
6. See the commentaries on Aristotle by Robortello (Florence, 1548) p. 113; Castelvetro (Basle, 1576) pp. 244 – 6; Piccolomini (Venice, 1575) pp. 240 – 1 – discussed by Cave pp. 63 – 77.
7. Quotations from Ludovico Ariosto, *Opere Minori*, ed. C. Segre (Milan, 1954).
8. Quotations from Pietro Aretino, *Teatro*, ed. G. Petrocchi (Verona, 1971).
9. See G.K. Hunter, *John Lyly*, (London, 1962), p. 223.
10. Quoted by Alfred Ayer in his Introduction to his edition of *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb. (London, 1881).
11. V.O. Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama* (New York, 1915).
12. See e.g. *Decameron*, II, 3, 9; III, 9.
13. There is a considerable literature on cross-dressing. See e.g. Shirley F. Stanton, 'Female Transvestism in Renaissance Comedy', *Iowa State Journal of Research*, 56 (1981) 78 – 89; S. Clark, 'Hic mulier, haec vir – the controversy over masculine women', *Studies in Philology*, 82 (1985) 157 – 83; Jean E. Howard, 'Cross-dressing, the theatre and gender struggle in Early Modern England', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988) 418 – 440.
14. Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, *La Calandra* ed. G. Padoan (Padova, 1985).
15. Op. cit. Milan, 1550, II, 5.
16. *The Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge, 1958), Vol. III.
17. See Melveena McKendrick, *Women and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*. (Cambridge, 1974); Carmen Bravo-Villasante, *La Mujer vestida de hombre en el teatro espanol (siglos 16 – 17)* (Madrid, 1955).
18. John Lyly, *Complete Works*, ed. R. W. Bond, 3 vols., (Oxford, 1967), II, 436.
19. See e.g. M. Jamieson, 'Shakespeare's celibate stage: the problem of accommodation to the boy-actor' in *Papers Mainly Shakespearean*, ed. G.I. Duthie (Edinburgh, 1964), pp. 21 – 39; Peter Hyland, 'Shakespeare's disguised heroines: disguise in the romantic comedies', *Ariel*, 9 (1978) 23 – 39; R. Kimbrough, 'Androgyny seen through Shakespeare's disguise', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Spring 1982, 17 – 33; Jean E. Howard cit; Karen Newman, *Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Comic Character* (New York, 1985).
20. Karen Newman is explicit on this point: '*Gl'Ingannati* does not present characters equal in depth and interest to those of Shakespeare's mature comedies, but it does provide a model for the way in which the Italian dramatists linked mistaken identity plots with themes of forgiveness and self-knowledge to represent character development'.
21. See G. Della Porta *Commedie*, ed V. Spampanato, 2 vols., (Bari 1910). For the dating see Louise George Clubb, *G. Della Porta, Dramatist* (Princeton, 1965), p. 63.
22. A.P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns* (London, 1966) p. 77.

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# ASTROLOGY AND 'LE VICE ANGLAIS'

VITTORIO GABRIELI

In an "Appendix" to *Romantic Agony (La Carne, la Morte e il Diavolo nella letteratura romantica*, Firenze 1930) Mario Praz discussed "Swinburne e 'le vice anglais'", ie records of sexual flagellation chiefly in XIX century French and English literature. Though marginally referring to Thomas Shadwell's comedy *Il Virtuoso*<sup>1</sup> and to Otway's *Venice Preserved*<sup>2</sup> for earlier instances of masochistic behaviour in Restoration drama, our Master of *Quellenforschung* and analyst of Anglo-Italian cultural cross-fertilisation does not appear to have come across, or if he did, to have made capital of, the unusual evidence of a peculiar form of that allegedly typical English perversion, in the work of the Renaissance humanist Giovanni Pico della Mirandola.

I regret never to have drawn Praz's attention to such evidence in a striking page of Pico's *Disputationum Astrologorum Libri XII* (in *Opera Omnia*, Basel 1601, p. 350). My lamented Master would very likely have treasured it, at least as witty addendum or footnote to his "Appendix". To the best of my knowledge, among Pico's English near-contemporaries only Sir Thomas More who translated his *Life* by Gian Francesco Pico seems to have borrowed, or echoed without quoting him, a detail in the text I am going to translate from the Latin original: that concerned with the bizarre gastronomic taste of pregnant women for earth and coal.<sup>5</sup>

Pico prefaces the case of flagellomania in question by criticizing the astrologers' belief in the influence of stars upon man's body and even his physical anomalies and mental: "I should like to ask them why a pregnant woman eats more willingly earth and coal than the choicest food". He concludes that the cause of such morbid appetites is to be sought not in heaven but in the our bodies' "temperatura", or natural disposition ("temperamento", in E. Garin's Italian translation). \* Pico then proceeds to recall the case of erotic flagellation in an old acquaintance of his:

"I have known a man, still living, of extraordinary, and unheard of lecherousness, who is never roused to sexual activity unless he

He is so obsessed by this enormity, yearns so eagerly for savage blows that he upbraids the flogger if she does not perform quickly enough. He is never fully satisfied unless blood if she does not perform quickly enough. He is never fully satisfied unless blood spurts out and the whip cuts more cruelly the innocent limbs of the pernicious man. The wretch always implores this boon with fervent prayers from the woman he submits to and he holds forth the whip which has previously hardened by dipping it in vinegar for this service, and supplicatingly demands to be lashed by the prostitute. His excitement grows higher as she beats him more violently, and he seeks pleasure and pain at the same time: a unique case of a man who finds physical enjoyment among torments. This man, who is not in other respects an utterly bad lot, broods upon and hates his disease and freely confessed this vice to me, given our familiarity over many past years. As I repeatedly inquired the cause of such an unusual disease, he answered: I took this habit since childhood. And when I questioned him again about the cause of his habit, he said he had been brought up together with very corrupt boys<sup>6</sup>, who had agreed upon this practice of flogging as a reward for selling by infamous reciprocity their personal modesty. I did not suppress this episode, although offensive to educated ears, in order to provide the evidence of the power of habit in such inclinations, and lest we immediately accuse heaven as if these could not have any earthly cause. Indeed, should an Astrologer hear of this case, he would say that Venus was condemned in the birth of that man and perhaps flogged by the contrary or otherwise threatening beams of Mars'.

Needless to remind readers of Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*, that the learned Don Ferrante, a type of seventeenth century 'true believer' in astrology took no precaution against the contagion caught the plague and died, 'prendendosela con le stelle': "like a hero of Metastasio, blaming the stars" (ch. 37 *The Betrothed*, trans. by Archibald Colquhoun, Everyman's Library 999).

## Notes

1. Shadwell, *The Virtuoso*, ed. Marjorie Hope Nicolson & David S. Rodes, (London, 1966).
2. Otway, *Venice Preserved*, ed. James Sutherland, in *Restoration Plays*, (Oxford University Press 1977).
3. Pater, *The Renaissance Studies in Art and Poetry*, (London, 1873).
4. Aubrey, *Brief Lives*, ed. O. Lawson Dick (London 1950), p. 97.
5. More conjures up the alleged predilection both in *Utopia* (1516): "Non aliter ac mulieres gravidae picem et sevum, corrupto gusto, melle mellitius arbitrantur" (The Scholar Press Limited, Leeds, 1966, p. 56v) and in *The Four Last Things* where he contrasts spiritual pleasures with the "infected taste" of man's preference for earthy ones: "like as a sick men feeleth no sweetness in sugar and some women with child have such fond lust that they had liefer eat tar than treacle and rather pitch than marmalade, and some whole people love tallow better than butter, and Iceland loveth no butter till it be long barreled, so we carnal people, having our taste infected by the sickness of sin and filthy custom of fleshy lust, find so great liking in the vile and stinking delectation of freshly delight that we list not once prove what manner of sweatness good and virtuous folk feel and perceive in spiritual pleasure" *English Works*, ed. E. W. Campbell (London 1927 – 31), 2 vols, p. 462. See E. Garin, ed. *Disputations adversus astrologiam divinatricem*, vol. 2 of Pico's Works, national edition (Firenze 1946), p. 52.

\* Ego vero ab illis quaesierim cur pregnans mulier terram comedat libentius, et carbones quar exquisitum omne genus eduliorum? Et si monstrifici desiderij, non astrum, sed foetum causam invenerint. Admonebo causam pariter eorum quae demirantur, in corporis temperatura potius quam in coelo esse quaerendam . . ." "Vivit adhuc homo mihi notus prodigosae libidinis et inauditae. Nam ad Venerem numquam accenditur nisi vapulet, et tamen scelus id ita cogitat, saevientes ita plagas desiderat ut increpet verberantem si cum eo lentius egerit, had compos plene voti, nisi eruperit sanguis et innocentis artus hominis nocentissimi violentior scutica deseruerit. Efflagitat ille miser hanc operam summis precibus ab ea semper foemina quam adivit, praebetque flagellum, pridie sibi ad id officij aceti infusione duratum, et supplex a meretrice verberari postulat, a qua quanto caeditur durius, eo ferventius incalescit, et pari passu ad voluptatem doloremque contendit, unus inventus homo, qui corporeas delicias inter cruciatum inveniat. Is cum non alioquin pessimus sit, morbum suum agnoscit et odit, quoniamque mihi familiaris multis jam retro annis, quid pateretur libere patefecit. A quo diligenter tam insolitae pestis causam cum sciscitarer, a puero, inquit, sic assuevi. Et me rursus consuetudinis causam interrogante, educatum se cum pueris scelestissimis, inter quos convenissent hac caedendi licentia quasi pretio quodam, mutuuum sibi vendere flagitiosa alternatione pudorem. Hoc ego factum licet grave auribus liberalibus ideo non suppressi, ut cognosceremus evidentia ipsa quantum illis affectibus valeat consuetudo, ne quasi cuasam habere terrenam nullam possint, coelum statim accusemus. Nam id quidem Astrologus si audiat, damnatam dicet fuisse Venerem in hominis genitura, et adversis fortasse, aut alio modo minantibus radijs Martis flagellatam".

Liber Tertius, caput XXVII

6. In Shadwell's *Virtuoso*, act III, II, 65, 70 Snarl confesses to have been initiated to the practice of erotic flagellation in the Westminster School: "I was so us'd to't at Westminster School I could never leave it off since"; "I love castigation mightily". In *Venice Preserved* (III, 1.70 ff.), the important Venetian Senator, Antonio, a caricature of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, is shown raring to be spat at, kicked and whipped by the Greek courtesan Aquilina.

# GIOVANNI TORRIANO

## IL PRIMO INSEGNANTE DI INGLESE IN ITALIA

SERGIO ROSSI

Fra i numerosi italiani che nel secondo Cinquecento e il primo Seicento passarono buona parte della loro vita in Inghilterra, Giovanni Torriano non ha ancora trovato uno studioso disposto a ricostruirne la biografia e a valutarne l'opera. Un compito che invece è stato affrontato con successo per parecchi altri personaggi come, per esempio, Pietro Bizzarri, Petruccio Ubaldini, Giovanni Florio, i due Gentili, Jacobo Aconcio.

Le cause di questo parziale silenzio sono, a mio giudizio, diverse. Innanzitutto il Torriano non si identifica con emigrati dalla personalità di un Bernardino Ochino o di un Pietro Martire, i quali si imposero nel periodo più intenso delle controversie religiose e di queste furono anche protagonisti; e nemmeno presenta le caratteristiche degli italiani di una successiva generazione di esuli che ebbe in John Florio l'esponente più in vista. Torriano, al contrario, agisce in un'età nella quale, con la salita al trono degli Stuart, si definisce un nuovo contesto politico.

Un'altra causa, non trascurabile, trae origine dalla scarsa o pressoché inesistente documentazione su questa figura che non compare nei documenti ufficiali inglesi e italiani, non è ricordata dai contemporanei, per cui unica fonte per abbozzarne una biografia restano le dichiarazioni sparse nei suoi numerosi testi compilati per l'insegnamento dell'italiano e dell'inglese.

Infine, e questa credo sia la causa determinante, il Torriano si dichiara allievo di John Florio, e a torto fu considerato solo un imitatore del suo fortunato predecessore. Per dare un volto a questa figura ci si deve quindi limitare ad avanzare delle ipotesi, la prima delle quali riguarda l'origine della sua famiglia.

Frances Yates, la quale ritiene che i Torriano giungessero a Londra nel 1620<sup>1</sup>, ricorda pure che Michelangelo Florio, padre del più famoso John, durante il periodo trascorso come pastore della comunità riformata di Soglio, in Valtellina, fu amico di un altro riformato, Geronimo Torriani da Crema, il quale scrisse la presentazione dell'*Apologia* del Florio stesso<sup>2</sup>. Se questi è un

antenato del nostro autore, e sono molte le probabilità che lo sia, il sodalizio fra le due famiglie risalirebbe ad epoca ben precedente l'incontro londinese.

Dal 1620 al 1639 di Giovanni Torriano non ci sono tracce. Certamente si dedicò all'insegnamento dell'italiano come confermano le prime pubblicazioni che portano il suo nome. Nel 1643 tornò in Italia secondo quanto si legge in *Piazza Universale* al dialogo 43: "la prima volta che venni in Italia, era sedente Papa Urbano 8° buona memoria, nel vintesimo anno del suo Pontificato".

Le visite dovettero continuare anche negli anni seguenti, specie intorno al 1656, come si deduce dalla presentazione del dizionario inglese-italiano<sup>3</sup>. Questi viaggi in Italia coincidono con la crisi della monarchia e con l'avvento di Cromwell; infatti una serie di affermazioni sparse nei suoi manuali indicano un Torriano legato al re e al mondo cattolico romano. A questo periodo risale anche l'esperienza fatta a Roma come insegnante di inglese. Durante i soggiorni italiani inoltre deve essere stato in contatto con ambienti vaticani; lo testimonia la traduzione di uno scritto dell'ambasciatore francese a Roma (*A New Relation of Rome*, 1664) nella quale il Torriano è in grado di elencare tutti i nomi degli 'Officers and Domesticks' del papa che mancano nell'originale<sup>4</sup>. Tornato in Inghilterra egli inizia una nuova fase della sua attività poichè, dopo la Restaurazione, sviluppò contatti con la corte e non a caso la raccolta di proverbi italiani, *Piazza Universale*, è dedicata al sovrano.

Per almeno due generazioni, dunque, Giovanni Torriano fu insegnante di italiano a Londra e, per breve tempo, di inglese in Italia; scrisse diversi manuali, raccolte di proverbi e compilò anche il primo dizionario Inglese-Italiano. Con ogni probabilità egli stampava a sue spese i propri volumi, come già altri docenti prima di lui, e li vendeva direttamente al pubblico: le opere maggiori infatti erano poste in vendita nella sua bottega, "at the Signe of the Bell in St. Pauls Church-Yard", compresa l'ultima pubblicazione, *The Italian Revived* (1673), nella quale ci informa che nel grande incendio di Londra andò distrutta la sua bottega e quindi anche la maggior parte dei libri utilizzati per l'insegnamento dell'italiano con una evidente perdita finanziaria dalla quale non dovette più risollevarsi<sup>5</sup>.

Torriano, malgrado l'età avanzata, reagì alla disgrazia, forse tentò la fortuna in Toscana senza successo e dovette infine riaprire la bottega di libri come par di capire dal seguente dialogo, il IX di *The Italian Revived*:

F(orestiero) Che insegna fa questa bottega? non fa l'Aquila Spartita?

I(taliano) Fà la Campana

F. Sì eh? Non si conosce per niente.

I. È ormai disfatta e guasta dal tempo, ma ciò vuol dir niente, l'importanza è, che la bottega è ben inviata, e dove c'è buon vino non ci va frasca.

L'ultimo riferimento al Torriano appare nella nuova edizione del vocabolario, del 1687, curata da Giovanni Davisio, nome italianizzato di John Davies, il quale avverte che il Torriano fu "an Italian, sometime Professor of the Italian Tongue in London".

Queste sono le poche notizie che si possono elencare e dalle quali si può dedurre che egli fu insegnante di prestigio della nostra lingua e accettando i metodi utilizzati dai suoi predecessori, seppe rinnovarsi e adattarsi alle nuove esigenze che ormai i tempi imponevano anche ai docenti.

In realtà anche l'insegnamento linguistico delle generazioni precedenti aveva subito una continua evoluzione e rispecchiava il mutare di situazioni politiche e culturali. Lo si verifica già intorno alla prima metà del Cinquecento. L'insegnamento in questo periodo ebbe carattere tutorio, come nel caso di Michelangelo Florio nei riguardi della sfortunata Jane Gray, della quale fu anche l'appassionato apologeta, o di Giovan Battista Castiglioni, maestro della giovane Elisabetta, alla quale fu vicino anche nei momenti più drammatici della sua vita.

Una didattica più regolare si sviluppò allorché in Inghilterra giunse una nuova generazione di profughi destinata, per ragioni di opportunità, ad estraniarsi dalla controversia religiosa. Molto spesso essi si dedicarono all'insegnamento linguistico con notevole successo, poichè le lingue erano diventate una necessità per quegli studenti che intendevano ampliare la loro preparazione al di fuori dei curricula universitari e talvolta venivano accompagnati all'università da un 'tutor' straniero (per esempio lo fu John Florio per Emmanuel Barnes studente al Magdalen College di Oxford). Le lingue moderne, francese e italiano in particolare, divennero

necessarie per chi voleva seguire la carriera diplomatica e facevano anche parte, ormai, del bagaglio culturale del cortigiano come dei letterati nonché, per ragioni pratiche, della classe mercantile.

L'impegno degli insegnanti di fronte alle esigenze degli allievi fu di offrire una guida sotto forma di semplici regole e di manuali che facilitassero l'apprendimento e si differenziassero dalle prime rudimentali nozioni apparse, per esempio, in *Opusculum plane divinum* di John Clerk (1547). Essi si preoccupavano di restare aggiornati sui problemi della lingua italiana e lo confermano le grammatiche che circolavano in Inghilterra.

Michelangelo Florio scrisse per la sua reale allieva le *Regole de la Lingua Thoscana*, testo conservatoci manoscritto e stampato solo di recente<sup>6</sup>, nel quale presenta l'italiano seguendo una concezione purista e asserendo che: "il parlar thoscano più di qualunque altro . . . è il più bello e il più leggiadro; e senza menda". Solo più tardi si schierò dalla parte di Ludovico Castelvetro nella disputa contro Annibal Caro e il Bembo. Una posizione 'purista' era pure stata presa da William Thomas, che compilò *The Principle Rules of the Italian Grammar* (1550) sulla falsariga delle opere di Alberto Accursio e di Francesco Alunno<sup>7</sup>.

In questo periodo circolava manoscritta anche la *Grammatica de la Lingua Italiana* che Alessandro Citolini aveva portato con sé rifugiandosi a Londra e che intendeva pubblicare e dedicare a Christopher Hatton. Infine una ulteriore testimonianza dell'attualità dello studio della lingua italiana è data dalla traduzione fatta da Henry Grantham, *An Italian Grammer written in Latin by Scipio Lentulo, a Neapolitane: and turned in English* (1575).

Tali testi, solo due dei quali a stampa, erano destinati all'insegnamento di uno o di pochi allievi. Chi diede una impostazione di scuola regolare per gruppi di alunni desiderosi di apprendere le lingue fu il rifugiato ugonotto Claudius Holyband, il quale aprì una scuola di lingue assai costosa e frequentata dai figli della ricca borghesia che trovavano nel suo insegnamento una preoccupazione morale congeniale ai loro principi. Egli ricalcava, applicandola ad una lingua moderna, la didattica suggerita da Juan Vives in *Exercitatio Linguae Latinae* (1538) che solo in una fase molto avanzata dava una serie di precetti "for the learned in the Latin tongue". Il Vives insisteva molto sulla figura del docente da considerarsi quasi un padre nei confronti dei giovani allievi e così

pure fece Holyband come si deduce anche dai titoli di almeno due dei suoi testi: *The French Schoolmaster* e *The Italian Schoolmaster* (1583) ove è evidente anche l'intento di seguire la linea del riformato Roger Ascham.

Se Holyband, del quale non si sa più nulla dopo il 1593, interpretò un metodo di insegnamento consono ad una ben definibile dimensione politico-religiosa, con l'affermarsi di nuovi insegnanti, quasi tutti italiani, il metodo e gli scopi della loro attività cambiarono. Essi intendevano proporre al 'barbaro' inglese le finzze della civiltà italiana e si muovevano quindi non più nell'ambito puramente morale ma in quello più ampio di proporsi come mediatori di cultura, e chi meglio interpretò questo momento fu John Florio.

L'impostazione del suo metodo si differenzia da quello di Holyband: i suoi allievi non erano i figli di una borghesia mercantile che intendevano apprendere l'uso pratico della lingua e frequentare una scuola, bensì dei nobili, dei cortigiani ai quali offriva un insegnamento elitario fondato sulla lingua italiana dei grandi scrittori. La sua prima pubblicazione perciò, del 1578, non fu uno 'schoolmaster', bensì *Florio his firste Fruites; which yeelde familiar speech merie Proverbs, wittie Sentences, and golden sayngs*. Dal titolo si comprende che egli non si rivolgeva agli 'unlearned' ma a persone importanti come il dedicatario Robert Dudley, 'Roberto Dudleo, Nobil Conte di Licestra' già allievo di suo padre.

Si tratta di dialoghi che riflettono la fase finale dell'apprendimento linguistico e conservano solo in parte l'impronta morale propria di altri manuali. Essi dimostrano con quanta abilità il Florio sappia interpretare la temperie culturale del momento, offrendo dialoghi di chiaro stile eufuistico ed imitando la lezione di nobiltà insegnata dallo spagnolo Guevara: inoltre la vivacità dei dialoghi è animata anche da una scelta abbondante di proverbi, circa trecento, tra i quali mi limiterò a citare il ben noto:

Venetia, chi non ti vede, non ti pretia,  
ma chi ti vede ben gli costa.

Che egli fosse attento alla realtà che lo circondava lo conferma il secondo manuale, *Florios Second Frutes* (1591) ove la sopravvivenza di certo linguaggio eufuistico si arricchisce di terminologia barocca già nella lettera introduttiva: "I have for these frutes ransackt and rifled all the gardens of fame throughout Italie



(and there are the Hesperidies) if translated they do prosper as they flourished upon their native stock, or eate them & they will be sweete, or set them & they will adorne your orchards''<sup>8</sup>.

I *Second Frutes* rendono testimonianza dell'Inghilterra del tempo, della vita londinese in particolare, degli usi e dei costumi spesso visti attraverso l'ottica della cultura italiana. Non a caso nei personaggi e nei dialoghi si rileggono le battute del teatro italiano del Cinquecento; i nomi degli interlocutori ricordano quelli di italiani presenti a Londra (Ubalдини, Bruno, Castelvetro) e i dialoghi, a saperli interpretare, sono ricchi di informazioni sulla cronaca londinese contemporanea<sup>9</sup>. Grazie agli sforzi del Florio l'italiano fu inteso come una essenziale componente della preparazione della persona colta ed ebbe la consacrazione più alta nella stampa del vocabolario *A World of Wordes* del 1598, ma ben più completo nell'edizione del 1611, opera che precedette la prima pubblicazione della Crusca e sancì il successo del suo autore quale insegnante di corte.

Al di là di ogni giudizio sul Florio come personaggio, che non sempre appare limpido, resta la sua fede nella superiorità della cultura italiana, e quindi della lingua, come la manifestazione più alta della civiltà dopo quella classica, convinzione che influenzò anche altri insegnanti a Londra suoi contemporanei come Jacopo Castelvetro e soprattutto Benvenuto Italiano. Fu insomma il gran sacerdote della civiltà italiana in Inghilterra e a lui fecero riferimento, fra l'altro e in maniera diversa, personaggi come il Sidney, il Bruno e lo stesso Shakespeare. Una tale concezione molto personalizzata non poteva sopravvivergli poichè non era adeguata ai tempi che si evolvevano rapidamente verso una nuova dimensione politica. Di ciò si rese conto appunto il suo ideale erede Giovanni Torriano.

Allorchè Giovanni Torriano giunse a Londra, Florio controllava ancora l'insegnamento dell'italiano ma stava per finire l'età di Giacomo I che l'aveva visto protagonista a corte tramite la regina Anna, sua allieva, spentasi nel 1619. Torriano cercò di continuare a insegnare secondo il metodo elitario del maestro usando principalmente, quali sussidi a stampa, manuali di conversazione e raccolte di proverbi destinati ad offrire agli allievi più progrediti le finezze della lingua italiana. Per una ventina d'anni egli agì nell'ambito di questo indirizzo e dovette avere a disposizione anche

il materiale linguistico lasciato dal Florio. E non ne fa mistero. Nel suo *New and Easie Directions for the attaining of the Thuscan Tongue*, del 1639, raccomanda nell'introduzione, per lo studio dell'italiano, il dizionario del Florio, e ancora "I commend unto you Florio's First and Second Fruits: for they are well stored with dialogues and proverbs". Il Torriano dovette essere anche l'esecutore testamentario del maestro poichè, nel corso degli anni, pubblicò una nuova edizione del vocabolario assai ampliata (1569) e forse, in *The Italian Tutor* (1640), utilizzò, almeno in parte, materiale del suo predecessore, in particolare quei dialoghi che Florio indicava nel testamento come "my tenn dialogues in Italian and English"<sup>10</sup>.

Già in questi primi lavori si avverte che il Torriano, pur essendo convinto dell'insostituibile primato dell'italiano, riconosce che non è più la sola lingua della diplomazia e dei rapporti internazionali nei quali da tempo era stato soppiantato dal francese; egli perciò accetta il compromesso di dedicarsi anche alle classi mercantili emergenti che i suoi predecessori italiani avevano trascurato. Lo si legge nelle dediche delle diverse parti di *The Italian Tutor*, e poi in altre pubblicazioni, le quali alternativamente vengono dedicate a nobili protettori o a importanti mercanti responsabili delle compagnie che commerciano con l'oriente. Per esempio, dedicatari del *Tutor* sono la contessa Elisabetta di Kent e poi Henry Garaway, Lord Mayor di Londra e Governour "of the right worshipfull and ancient companies of merchants trading into the Levant". Lo stesso dicasi per le opere successive; il vocabolario è dedicato a "Andrea Riccard, Governatore dell'Honoratissima Compagnia de' Signori Negotianti di Turchia in Londra", ma quando darà alle stampe il suo volume più importante, *Piazza Universale di Proverbi Italiani*, allora il dedicatario sarà il "Potentissimo et invintissimo monarca, Carlo Secondo".

Questi due momenti si intuiscono anche nell'articolazione del suo insegnamento ove si avverte un senso di condiscendente superiorità verso gli allievi a proposito di pronuncia: "because that your Englishmen are most deficient therein: I speake as far as concerns our language, though they be guilty of ill pronouncing the Latine"<sup>11</sup>. Nel titolo completo di *The Italian Tutor* annuncia che il volume è integrato "With an Alphabet of primitive and originall Italian words, underivable from the Latin", nella

presentazione dello stesso volume avverte di aver incluso una grammatica italiana molto semplice, “easie enough to be understood even by those that have not the Latin language”.

Una simile alternanza appare anche nelle dediche dei suoi volumi nelle quali si coglie un doppio registro linguistico: piano, lineare, espositivo se la pubblicazione è destinata ai mercanti della compagnia del Levante, come nel caso del *Vocabolario* (1659) ove si legge in prefazione: “When the rarities of Italy (that Paradise of Art and Nature, that Academy and Garden of the World) do daily call so many of the English Nation, and Forraigner, from all parts into it, when its excellent Books do travell into all Nations and find Universal Esteem; and when all Merchants that traffique into the Levant, must Trade by that Language, it would be superfluous for me by a Studied Discourse to invite any of the Learning thereof: And the use of a Dictionary, in order to its attaining, is so obvious to all understandings, that it would be impertinent to demonstrate its necessity”. Ma nel 1666, allorché stampa quello che egli ritiene giustamente il suo lavoro più impegnativo, *Piazza Universale*, e che a suo modo di vedere, raccogliendo un largo numero di proverbi italiani, esprime il livello massimo dell’apprendimento linguistico, usa un linguaggio assai più elaborato. Rivolgendosi ai membri della Royal Society, definiti “Ruscelli chiarissimi di così alto Sorgente, e Membri degnissimi di cotanto Capo”, (il re), li invita a dare “una occhiata gratiosa” al suo lavoro poichè “vi troueranno dentro varie Mescolanze d’Erbe e Fiori del nostro Giardino Italia, colte, cappate, pulite et accomodate alla meglio che si è potuto, et Io a guisa di Humil Giardiniero, ne dò loro saggio.”

Il Torriano dunque agisce in un mondo che è diverso da quello dei suoi predecessori ed è influenzato anche dall’esperienza fatta in Italia. Tuttavia egli doveva avere anche altre ambizioni e non è da escludere che la permanenza italiana avesse anche uno scopo politico, sebbene non di primo piano. In questo caso non sarebbe stato un’eccezione poichè talvolta italiani emigrati venivano utilizzati come informatori o latori di messaggi specie in virtù delle loro conoscenze linguistiche. Diventavano talvolta diplomatici occasionali come Orazio Pallavicino, talaltra partecipavano regolarmente alla vita politica, come Francesco Biondi, il più delle volte però restavano a livello di semplici informatori come Jacopo Castelvetro e lo stesso John Florio. Probabilmente il compito di

Giovanni Torriano fu quello di favorire un avvicinamento fra la chiesa cattolica e la corona inglese, come conseguenza del nuovo clima politico inaugurato dagli Stuart. Negli scritti del Torriano par di cogliere questo nuovo stato di cose. Egli dà prova, come si è detto, di conoscere benissimo Roma, di essere al corrente dell'organizzazione del Vaticano e, condizione assai importante, si propone come insegnante di inglese a quegli italiani che avessero aspirazioni politiche o che volessero entrare in contatto col mondo inglese e dovessero perciò conoscere la lingua almeno nelle sue linee essenziali. Da un punto di vista storico ciò segna una notevole evoluzione poichè per la prima volta all'inglese, lingua tanto incomprensibile ad uno straniero per la pronuncia e l'ortografia, si riconosce una parità scientifica con i maggiori idiomi europei.

Con tali premesse il suo impegno di insegnante di inglese in Italia ebbe probabilmente forma tutoria presso famiglie che gli offrivano ospitalità. Conosciamo, per esempio, il nome del suo allievo più importante, Carlo Francesco Guadagni<sup>12</sup>, membro di una casata fiorentina che aveva forti interessi economici a Londra. Al Guadagni dedica la seconda parte del vocabolario Inglese-Italiano "never before published", e gli insegna inglese per alcuni mesi a Roma con buoni risultati. L'allievo si sarebbe dimostrato "sempre curiosissimo di possederla (la lingua inglese) a maggior segno, se non nell'atto pratico a discorso, almeno nella lettura et intendimento, trovandola alla giornata una lingua copiosissima e concettosa assai; et tanto maggiormente quanto che, da certi anni in quà si scorge che s'è addimesticata più che mai colla lingua Latina, Italiana e Francese"<sup>13</sup>. Siamo ben lontani dalle sprezzanti considerazioni che circa mezzo secolo prima faceva il Florio definendo l'inglese un ibrido di latino, greco, italiano, francese, tedesco, per cui, tolte le parole derivate da queste lingue, ben poco restava di originale<sup>14</sup>. Eppure, malgrado queste affermazioni, il pensiero del Torriano sull'utilità dell'inglese è ancora restrittivo e lo conferma la presentazione del dizionario nella quale par di capire che, mentre la parte italiana-inglese è rivolta alle persone colte che intendono comprendere gli autori, la parte inglese-italiana è un dizionario pratico adatto più ai mercanti che agli uomini di cultura.

In realtà i vocaboli inglesi che egli elenca non si scostano da quelli che egli utilizzò in altre occasioni: mancano i termini più complessi della retorica, ma il volume risponde ugualmente alle esigenze di

un completo apprendimento linguistico. Inoltre, la sezione inglese-italiana ben si inserisce in un particolare momento dell'evoluzione dell'inglese che vede da una parte il suo affermarsi verso una pari dignità scientifica con le altre lingue neolatine e dall'altra la pubblicazione di dizionari nei quali l'inglese è il punto di riferimento iniziale e non è più visto in funzione di altri idiomi. Sotto questo aspetto il testo originale del Torriano ha parecchi punti di contatto con il *Lexicon Tetraglotton* di James Howell, dizionario plurilingue stampato nello stesso anno (1659), sia nella definizione della funzione dei proverbi, sia nell'elencazione dei vocaboli inglesi che nei due testi non si differenziano molto: si registrano omissioni di termini nell'uno o nell'altro, ma non aggiunte di nuovi vocaboli. I due dizionari hanno in comune anche l'impostazione linguistica e, nei punti nei quali Howell definisce l'italiano, egli ripete quanto sostiene il Torriano, in particolare l'affermazione, assai diffusa, "Lingua toscana in bocca romana".

La data del rientro del Torriano in Inghilterra non è sicura, forse il 1656, comunque coincide con l'età di Cromwell e questo lascia intendere che se a Roma svolse una qualsiasi funzione politica, questa non doveva essere di grande rilievo se poté ritornare indisturbato. A Cromwell non allude mai nei suoi scritti e nemmeno al periodo repubblicano, mentre ci sono frequenti riferimenti positivi al mondo cattolico. Per esempio, nella presentazione di *Piazza Universale*, avverte che ha escluso i proverbi "gli più Osceni et Profani, che sono contra li buoni costumi, et contra la Santa Catolica Fede". Dall'Italia il Torriano ritorna ancor più convinto della priorità di un insegnamento linguistico fondato sull'apprendimento dei proverbi e sull'uso di dialoghi non familiari ma più impegnati. "I may safely say, that without a competent understanding of the Proverbial Phrases, (be the language what it will) there can be no drolling, or understanding of any merry, witty, facetious discourse, whether by word of mouth, or coucht in writing, as is seen in most Romances and Plays which abound with Similitudes and Methaphors", scrive nella presentazione di *The Second Alphabet* (1662). Sarà ancora più esplicito in *Piazza Universale* (1662) affermando che "it hath ever been granted, that the Language and Genius of a Nation is lock'd up in its Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases."

Simili teorie possono essere oggi messe in discussione, ma aprono tuttavia un discorso sul significato che l'opera di questi insegnanti, e quindi anche di Giovanni Torriano, ebbe nell'evolversi della lingua

italiana. La parte grammaticale, intesa come introduzione all'italiano, non li preoccupa molto. Per esempio il Florio, lo abbiamo detto, si affida al testo manoscritto del Citolini, e il Torriano a sua volta utilizza il Florio ed entrambi accettano, secondo il Migliorini<sup>15</sup>, gli espedienti ortofonici adottati dal Citolini che a sua volta li trae dal *Polito* di Claudio Tolomei. Per sua stessa ammissione Torriano adatta *De particulis Italicae Orationis* di Lorenzo Franciosino per *New and Easy Directions*. Quando però decidono di raccogliere proverbi e vocaboli per le opere di maggior impegno essi avvertono di essere su un terreno nuovo, di anticipare anche i lessicografi italiani loro contemporanei. Ne è conscio il Torriano presentando *The Second Alphabet* nell'introdurre il quale rammenta che egli segue un metodo ben più completo di quello usato dai predecessori poichè, oltre a raccogliarli, egli commenta ogni proverbio, cosa che né il Monosini, nè Orlando Pescetti e tanto meno il Florio avevano fatto.

Del pari orgogliosi, il Florio e il Torriano, sono a proposito del vocabolario; il Torriano, soprattutto, che nell'aggiornare the *World of Words* del Florio ha utilizzato tutti gli "approved dictionaries" partendo dalla Crusca, dal Politi per giungere ai francesi come Antoine Oudin e l'immancabile Cotgrave. Perchè questi insegnanti, ma Torriano più di tutti, devono affrontare il problema dell'italiano come lingua da insegnare a degli stranieri e non sulla quale teorizzare. Essi sono a contatto con realtà linguistiche multiple dalle caratteristiche peculiari, non codificate dal latino, e devono esaminare l'italiano da una angolazione comparata. Ciò spiega come il Florio, a differenza della Crusca, introduca nel suo vocabolario i termini scientifici, nautici, delle arti e dei mestieri, e così pure il Torriano nel rifacimento, e soprattutto nella parte autonoma inglese-italiana; non poteva essere diversamente poichè ai loro allievi dovevano offrire la lingua nella sua completezza e non lo discussioni circa il prevalere di una teoria sull'altra che coinvolgevano invece i linguisti italiani. Di una loro componente originale si può infine parlare a proposito dei manuali di conversazione che essi preparavano per gli allievi.

I manuali, si sa, vengono intesi come lo strumento più completo per l'apprendimento linguistico e non sono proposti quali fredde esercitazioni accademiche, bensì come documenti della realtà quotidiana nella quale vive lo studente; di conseguenza si adeguano,

col procedere del tempo, all'evoluzione di questa realtà. Il Torriano scrisse dialoghi durante tutto l'arco della sua attività; il loro pregio maggiore è appunto di essere testimonianza di tutta un'età e della sua esperienza italiana. Essi aprono una serie di rapide panoramiche del mondo secentesco romano e dei numerosi personaggi e figure che animano una città come Roma la quale, al tempo del soggiorno del Torriano, era "centro politico e diplomatico . . . del popolo cattolico . . . anche centro di notizie . . . e centro linguistico di grande importanza, in quanto i cortigiani si spogliano delle loro peculiarità linguistiche locali accostandosi ai Toscani, e lo stesso fanno a Roma i Toscani medesimi"<sup>16</sup>. Nei dialoghi troviamo appunto uno spaccato romano animato da ogni genere di personaggi minori tra cui i quantari, gli immancabili locandieri, i vetturini, i barbieri. Il mondo romano è interpretato con ancor maggior simpatia in pubblicazioni successive, per esempio in *Fabrica Nova di Dialoghi Italiani* (1666), anche in questo caso si possono cogliere echi del momento politico che attraversava il regno di Carlo II, le cui simpatie verso il cattolicesimo erano note. Di qui una serie di dialoghi in linea con tale tendenza miranti a ricreare per il lettore inglese lo spirito della Roma barocca nella quale un gentiluomo straniero si trovava a suo agio e non doveva vivere sotto falso nome come nell'età Tudor. Il nuovo spirito è già nel primo dialogo dove un inglese colloquia col cardinale rappresentante il suo paese a proposito di un problema giuridico. Anche gli altri dialoghi risentono di una impostazione ove il nuovo clima politico è sottolineato dalla reverenza con la quale si allude alla gerarchia ecclesiastica e a tutte le istituzioni della Roma papale. Persino alcuni aspetti caratteristici della vita italiana, come il carnevale ed il mondo delle 'cantatrici', fortemente criticati dai viaggiatori inglesi del passato, vengono qui accettati senza riserve. Il dialogo 37 (*Il Forastiere discorre con un Religioso Romano*) fa addirittura da introduzione ai riti cattolici; nel dialogo 36 (*Un Forastiere discorre con un comediante romano*), si ha la conferma, fra l'altro, della passione del Torriano per il teatro che egli considera una delle forme più complete per l'apprendimento linguistico.

Che il Torriano si adegua ogni volta ad una realtà nuova vien confermato anche nell'ultima raccolta di dialoghi di cui si ha notizia, inclusa in *The Italian Revived* e intitolata *Choice Italian Dialogue* del 1673. In alcuni si parla ancora di un forestiero che si muove

per Roma, ma la città non è più esaltata come in precedenza, anzi in alcuni punti, benchè si esprima rispetto per la giustizia papale, il tono può apparire anche alquanto polemico, come nel dialogo della dogana dove si allude ai controlli dei libri che il viaggiatore porta con sè. Ma la novità di questi dialoghi risiede soprattutto nel fatto che essi possono essere letti, per così dire, in parallelo con i libri di viaggio che circolavano sempre più numerosi: i consigli e i suggerimenti che questi davano sul modo di viaggiare sono riproposti nei dialoghi la cui utilità per il viaggiatore in giro per l'Italia è più che evidente. Il sottotitolo di *The Italian Revived* infatti definisce il contenuto "most useful for such as desire the Speaking part, and intend to travel into Italy, or the Levant". Scompaiono pertanto le conversazioni sul carnevale o sul teatro e ai popolani in genere, si sostituiscono i maestri di lingua italiana o i maestri di musica che insegnano al visitatore a suonare la tiorba o la chitarra. Vi si trova pure la conversazione con un pittore che fa ritratti a turisti di rango e il pensiero corre subito a quello che sarà il mondo di Pompeo Batoni. Gli argomenti, i personaggi, l'atmosfera dei dialoghi sono adeguati alla nuova concezione che si è sviluppata attorno al 'tour' ben lontana da quella, per esempio, dell'età di Sidney. I viaggiatori inglesi in contatto con le culture europee non si sentono più in una condizione di soggezione di fronte ad esse. I dialoghi riflettono dunque le teorie dei manuali di viaggio senza cadere tuttavia nell'eccessivo atteggiamento nazionalistico che anima, per esempio, *Instructions for Foreign Travels* (1658) di James Howell, ma si accostano piuttosto all'atteggiamento comprensivo del ben noto *The Voyage of Italy* di Lassels (1682).

Un'altra notevole innovazione si coglie infine in un ultimo gruppo di dialoghi, sempre incluso in *The Italian Revived*, dove viene rovesciata la posizione tradizionale degli interlocutori: qui è un italiano che si reca a Londra per perfezionare la sua conoscenza dell'inglese e viene in contatto con un londinese che ha appreso l'italiano in Toscana. Questa è anche l'occasione per descrivere la nuova Londra sorta dopo il grande incendio "per ordine particolare del Signor Dottor Christopher Wren soprintendente di tutti i palazzi, Ville o altre Fabriche di Sua Maesta', è Persona segnalatissima nell'Architettura, et si tratta che in termine di sett'anni sarà fornita"<sup>17</sup>. Il 'tour' non è quindi più inteso per inglesi in giro per l'Europa ma anche per italiani in viaggio lungo



l'Inghilterra il che è decisamente una grande novità nella storia della letteratura di viaggi. In queste pagine si legge perciò di un nuovo modo di accostare l'insegnamento: resta la preoccupazione di presentare la civiltà italiana ad uno straniero che si esprime in una lingua incomprensibile, ma c'è pure l'intento di far conoscere il mondo inglese ad un allievo italiano il quale, scrive il Torriano:

s'imparerà a poco a poco ad intendere i loro Autori, i quali sono di fecondissimo e felicissimo ingegno et spirito, et di grandissimo Grido, sia nella prosa, sia nella Poesia, massimo nella Drammatica, dove il Teatro campeggia, quanto in alcun altro luogo al Mondo. Insomma la Lingua Inglese è hoggi giorno una lingua copiosissima, fiorita, et concettosa, et degna che il Forastiero ci metta studio et applicatione ad impararla et possederla come si deve, almeno per intendere le loro Comedie, et Tragedie stupendissime<sup>18</sup>.

Con Giovanni Torriano si completa la parabola dell'insegnamento dell'italiano in Inghilterra, che naturalmente continuerà nel Settecento e nell'Ottocento ma con altre premesse. C'è una continuità ed una logica nei numerosi scritti che egli adattò, pubblicò e ristampò a più riprese. Essi ci confermano che egli si sforzò di mantenere l'insegnamento al livello raggiunto dal Florio e dobbiamo alla sua intraprendenza e alla sua attività se l'italiano continuò in Inghilterra per buona parte del secolo XVII ad essere considerato fra le lingue moderne più importanti, e a contrastare il francese che ormai dominava a corte. Perchè lo studio dell'italiano non fu una moda che si risolse nell'ambito di un insegnamento scolastico, ma investì tutta la cultura inglese. Fu qualcosa di vivo e di attuale per quasi un secolo. Al Torriano va infine il merito di esser riuscito a recepire la potenzialità della lingua inglese che andava delineandosi accanto all'affermazione politica del paese. Non a caso egli fu interprete della nuova realtà linguistica legata all'inglese e con lui incomincia pure la lenta ma progressiva penetrazione di questa lingua in Italia.

## Notes

1. F.A. Yates, 'An Italian in Restoration England', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, VI, 1934, p. 220.
2. F.A. Yates, *John Florio* (Cambridge 1936), Ch. 1, 'Florio's Father'.

3. 'All'III. mo Sig. Carlo Francesco Guadagni Nobile Fiorentino. Apponto nel licentiararmi che feci da S.S. III. ma in Roma saranno hormai tre anni per venire a questa volta, a posta per attender al Vocabolario precedente, se ben m'arricordo lei mi raccomandò e non senza qualche premura la composizione d'un Vocabolario inglese et Italiano . . .' *A Dictionary English-Italian*, (London 1659).
4. Il Torriano doveva conoscere anche lo spagnolo come conferma la seguente traduzione: *A Speech, or Complaint, Lately made by the Spanish Embassadour to his Majestie at Oxford. . . Translated out of Spanish, in Oxford, By S. r Torriano, an Italian*; (London 1643).
5. 'Had not the late dismal Fire destroyed all the Printed books which concern the Italian, as to Grammar or Dictionary, (the Book-Trade in General having suffered irreparable loss, above any other whatsoever), and I my self in particular being involved in the same Fate, as it is well known to many, made a considerable sufferer; there would have been no need for one while of more Books of that nature; but for want of them, the Italian declining, and almost expiring, I thought it necessary to revive it in time' *The Italian Revived* (London 1673), 'Preface to the Reader'
6. G. Pellegrini, 'Michelangelo Florio e le sue Regole de la Lingua Thoscana', *Studi di Filologia Italiana* (Firenze 1954), a. XII, pp. 77 - 204.
7. S. Rossi, 'Un italianista nel Cinquecento inglese: William Thomas' *Aevum* XL, 1966, III - IV, pp. 281 - 314.
8. *Florios Second Frutes* (London 1591), 'The Epistle Dedicatory', A3.
9. Valga per tutti al Capitolo Settimo dei *Second Frutes* l'allusione al maestro d'arme Vincenzo Saviolo che teneva scuola a Londra. (cfr. S. Rossi, 'Vincentio Saviolo his Practice (1595): A problem of Authorship' in *England and the Continental Renaissance* (London 1990), pp. 165 - 175).
10. Yates, cit. Ch. XIV, 'Torriano and Florio's Manuscripts'.
11. *New and Easie Directions* (London 1639), To the Reader.
12. Chi sia questo allievo non è chiaro. L'unico membro della famiglia Guadagni in età per apprendere l'inglese dovrebbe essere Carlo Francesco, nato il 22 aprile 1635, e morto il 25 settembre 1669 (cfr. Luigi Passerini Orsini de Rilli, *Genealogia e Storia della Famiglia Guadagni* (Firenze 1873) p. 145). Si sa anche di un cardinale Giovanni Andrea Guadagni presente a Roma in quegli anni, che potrebbe intendersi come l'interlocutore del primo dialogo di *Fabrica Nova* (1666), ma resta solo una ipotesi. Che un membro della famiglia Guadagni fosse destinato ad apprendere l'inglese non deve stupire poichè i Guadagni avevano intensi rapporti commerciali con Londra. Lo conferma la corrispondenza Salvetti che indica: "i signori Guadagni . . . come quelli che per lo più hanno il grosso de negozij delli Inglesi" (Ms. Additional 27. 962 G (I) f. 32 Lettera del Salvetti al Cioli 4 novembre 1633).
13. *A Dictionary*, cit., 'Epistola dedicatoria'.
14. *Florio his First Frutes* (London 1578), Cap. 27, 'Ragionamenti sopra Dottrina et Filosofia'.
15. Bruno Migliorini, *Storia della Lingua Italiana* (Firenze 1961), p. 353.
16. Migliorini, cit. p. 407.
17. *The Italian Revived*, (1673), Dialogo I, 'Un Italiano discorre con un Inglese convivante, incirca Londra nova.'
18. *A Dictionary*, cit.

# GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BIONDI: AN ITALIAN HISTORIAN OF THE WARS OF THE ROSES

DIANELLA SAVOIA

'Vive e vivrà in eternità de' secoli il suo nome nelle stampe italiane.' This is the solemn conclusion of Giovanni Francesco Biondi's earliest biography included in *Le glorie degli Incogniti, o vero gli uomini illustri dell'accademia de' Signori Incogniti di Venezia*.<sup>1</sup> The book is the commemoration of the deceased members of the 'Accademia degli Incogniti', to which Biondi belonged and in which were gathered some of the most important representatives of Italian literature and culture in the first half of the XVIIth century. At that time Biondi was already famous all over Europe for a very successful trilogy of romances (*L'Eromena*, *La Donzella Desterrada* and *Il Coralbo*) published in Venice between 1624 and 1632, reprinted many times, and soon translated into English; the first romance, *L'Eromena*, was also translated into French and German.<sup>2</sup> But the optimistic prediction about the survival of his renown did not prove true. In the XVIIIth century he is already practically unknown and no mention of his name is to be found either in Giovanni Maria Mazzucchelli's *Scrittori d'Italia*,<sup>3</sup> or in Girolamo Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana*.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this has little or nothing to do with Biondi's intrinsic qualities as a writer, but it is rather to be sought in his being considered a 'heretic', since he had left the Catholic for the Reformed Church. An indirect confirmation is the fact that this important event in his life is completely ignored in *Le glorie degli Incogniti*.

In order to find the first revaluation of his literary production we must wait until the end of the XIXth century, when Adolfo Albertazzi devoted to Biondi's romances some pages of his *Romanzieri e romanzi del Cinquecento e del Seicento*.<sup>5</sup> Thanks also to Benedetto Croce's appreciation,<sup>6</sup> Biondi has nowadays acquired an assured place among the Italian prose-writers of the XVIIth century, as a representative of, and an innovator in the genre of the chivalric romance, into which he introduces certain more

realistic traits. Yet it is not on Biondi the romance-writer, but on Biondi the historian of the Wars of the Roses that I intend to concentrate my attention. The reason for my choice is twofold. First, since Biondi's *Istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra* is even less known and less studied than his narrative production, it still offers the reader the possibility of moving on unexplored ground and of confronting something new. Second, Biondi's historical work, no less than his romances, seems to me an original product of the particular kind of Anglo-Italian cultural relation represented by Biondi's personality and experience. In this regard, incidentally, I shall add that interesting points could also be made if one studied his romances, comparing them not only with Ambrosio Marini's *Calleandro* or Francesco Loredano's *Dianea*, but also with Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and above all with John Barclay's *roman à clef*, *Argenis*. To go back to my topic, I shall briefly remind you of the main stages of Biondi's adventurous life, leading, so to speak, to the publication of his *Istoria*, in order to give a more precise idea of the cultural background from which the work originated.<sup>7</sup>

Born in 1572 at Lesina (today called Hvar), an island off the coast of Dalmatia, Biondi spent his youth and early maturity between Venice and Padua, where he studied, taking a degree in law, and where he met, among others, Galileo Galilei, Paolo Sarpi, Marc'Antonio De Dominis and the English ambassador Sir Henry Wotton. Mainly through his close friends Sarpi and De Dominis, he approached the Reformed doctrines and, partly as a reaction to the conflict between Venice and the Papacy, he became a Protestant. This decision determined all the rest of his existence. For some time he devoted himself to the introduction of the Reformed religion in the Venetian Republic. Then he entered Wotton's service, and when the ambassador left Venice, Biondi followed him to London, where he finally settled in 1612. He was employed on various diplomatic missions in Europe and gained James I's confidence. In 1622, the King knighted him and made him gentleman of the privy chamber. He devoted the last twenty years of his life to writing fiction and history, and he died in 1644 at Aubonne, in Switzerland, where he had moved four years before, when London was no longer a safe place for a faithful royal supporter.

The *Istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra tra le due case di Lancastro, e Iorc* was published in three volumes in Venice, by Giovan Pietro Pinelli, between 1637 and 1644. It was translated into English, while partly still in manuscript, by Henry Cary, Earl of Monmouth, and published in London with the title *An History of the Civill Warres of England, betweene the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke*.<sup>8</sup> The work is dedicated to Charles I. It is the first history of England written by an Italian, in Italian. Biondi's more famous predecessor, Polydore Vergil, had used Latin for his *Historia Anglica*, therefore, as Biondi points out, he had addressed 'only the learned', while Biondi has intended 'to make it for all men'. The comparison with Polydore Vergil also includes the observation that the *Historia Anglica* gives 'succinct' information, so that the new work will add 'many things to the much which [...] was by him omitted'.<sup>9</sup>

This is also a consequence of the different subject-matter treated by the two historians: unlike Polydore Vergil, Biondi does not write the whole history of Great Britain but only of a well defined period: from the accession of Richard II (1377) to the death of Henry VII (1509), that is to say the crucial period of the Wars of the Roses which, in Biondi's opinion, 'will shew [...] what evil effects states divided within themselves doe produce'.<sup>10</sup> The choice of the subject is then mainly explained by England's difficult historical conditions: by showing in its past history how 'violent changes draw after them slaughter, misery and destruction',<sup>11</sup> Biondi hopes to remove the threat of an imminent, second civil war. And the decision to concentrate on this particular historical moment also has an indirect laudatory purpose: during that period, the English nation proved very brave, because, in those critical years more than ever, 'nature took from them the apprehension of death, the only thing which makes men base and cowards'.<sup>12</sup> It is not difficult to find here the echo of a main theme in Shakespeare's historical plays. That Biondi wrote a history of England is also and chiefly a tribute to his adoptive country and to the monarchy that had been so generous towards the Italian expatriate.

Biondi's historical interests have their origin in his experience as a diplomat, and in his education. His attitude towards history is certainly that of a humanist, in its acceptance of Cicero's definition of 'historia magistra vitae'. In this respect he can be

considered Polydore Vergil's disciple. He actually explains and develops Cicero's classic definition, proving that history, as the only source of true knowledge, is also the safest way to happiness. Moving from the premise that 'adventures, though casual, happen not but by way of Analogy to what hath already happened',<sup>13</sup> he infers that only the knowledge of what is past (that is to say history) enables us to understand the present, and since there is no happiness without such understanding and knowledge, then history is an infallible means to reach happiness. This sort of syllogism indirectly reveals the rational mind of this amateur, but well educated historian, who is never satisfied with the mere description of facts, but always tries to understand their causes and to interpret their meaning. He illustrates this aspect of his historical approach with an original baroque image:

bare story seemed to me to be like a naked body, which exposed to the injury of ayre, groweth infirme, and being seene by others is ashamed.<sup>14</sup>

This is clear evidence also of his literary tastes: the romance-writer in him always joins and influences the historian. This is a point that I shall reconsider later on.

Some of the most attractive elements to be met with in his *Istoria* are the many sharp-witted judgements prompted by different circumstances and considerations. A typical example is the definition he gives of the English government, coining a new word for the occasion. He calls it an 'aristodemocraticall' monarchy, and the explanation he supplies of the term is both an objective analysis and an appreciation of some distinctive traits of the English nation. 'The Kings of England – he says – walke in the eclyptique line of their government, ruled by two just counterpoises: regall authority, which makes them be obeyed; and the laws',<sup>15</sup> which prevent them from falling from power to oppression. Thanks to such balance,

[the English people] are not taxed or oppressed [...]. And whereas the Country people in other parts walke bare foot and bare legged, with tattered cloathes and leane lookes; heere well cloathed and well liking, they in substance are, and in apparell seeme to be honourable and wealthy Citizens.<sup>16</sup>

Such observations combine political insight and direct experience, but he is also ready to express a moral opinion. After describing

the prosperous condition of the English country people, he continues:

But it is plainely seene by them that men are weary of well doing. For ignorant of other mens miseries [...] they thinke themselves miserable, whilst in comparison of as many as I know, they are the happiest nation in the world.<sup>17</sup>

Another remarkable passage where Biondi's Anglo-Italian cultural background accounts for an original portrait of a much-discussed English king is the comparison between Richard III and Cesare Borgia, suggesting the former to be a better model for Machiavelli's prince:

Had he who wrote the booke *De Principe* met with this subject, he would have quit Duke Valentine, and taken this man for the patterne of his tyrant. Not that the difference between them was great, but for that that was, was in the most essential points. Valentines vices, if they were not more execrable, yet were they more dishonest. Richards were more execrable, but more secure. And though both were bad beyond belief, yet Richard by the death of a few [...] made himselfe a King; where Valentine by the death of very many could [not] keepe his owne Principality.<sup>18</sup>

A question arises from such remarks: how far does Biondi accept and share Machiavelli's political ideas? He has apparently learnt a lesson from the Florentine historian, since as an introduction to his own historical analysis, almost *malgré lui*, he states that:

the world being what it [...] was, and what it will be to the end, humbleness and meeknesse ought only to be accounted amongst individuall virtues [...]. The praise of mansuetude in one or a few, is not incompatible with valour, but in a whole nation it is as much to be blamed as it is the occasion of harme. For vertue or vice are not judged by Morall or Theologicall termes, but by the good or bad effects which from thence may ensue.<sup>19</sup>

According to this principle he judges the disastrous reign of Henry VI who, instead of valour and inflexibility of purpose, possessed only piety and good intentions. Henry is thus to be considered a good man, but not a good king, for, as Biondi repeats,

there is difference betweene the vertues of private Men and of Princes, what is sometime to be prayed in the one, is to be blamed in the other.<sup>20</sup>

Yet simply to conclude that Biondi is a Machiavelian would definitely be incorrect. While his historical objectivity compels him to recognize the truth of certain Machiavelian theories, he also believes in man's unconditional love for virtue and hate for vice; he considers moral, as well as economic, qualities the columns of public life; and he condemns the so-called reason of state which besmears all governments 'with blemishes blacker than is the blackest Coale, never to be washed off but by the Water of Oblivion.'<sup>21</sup> The metaphor is here not only a stylistic embellishment but also a means to emphasize the statement. He even tries to reconcile the requirements of a government with those of salvation, pushing the argument to the extreme: if the two things were incompatible, all princes, in order to be good rulers, should damn their souls, which is against Christianity and against nature.<sup>22</sup> After all, then, Biondi's political thought is firmly founded on his moral convictions in spite of some inevitable concessions to Machiavelli's doctrines, well known to his Italian and also to his English readers.

A closer investigation of Biondi's historical method reveals that he is scrupulous in collecting and examining as many sources as he can obtain. A list of the English and Scottish historians that he names and quotes includes: Edward Hall, Richard Grafton, Thomas Walsingham, Raphael Holinshed, John Stow, John Speed, George Buchanan and Hector Boethius; to whom we should add the French François de Belleforest, Philippe de Commynes, Enguerrand de Monstrelet, Robert Gauguin, Nicole Gilles, and the Italians Paolo Emilio, Paolo Giovio, Francesco Guicciardini, Onofrio Panvinio, besides Machiavelli and Polydore Vergil, to mention only the most important.

His attitude towards his sources is not exactly that of a professional historian, in the sense that he does not pre-select them. Rather he uses them all, and whenever he finds them holding different opinions about the same problem, he carefully submits their versions to his readers' attention, discussing them and giving his own interpretation. Such a method is the main concern of Biondi the historian. The form in which the historical material is presented, on the other hand, is entirely determined by his experience and gifts as man-of-letters. At this regard, one should remember that his first work also, *L'Eromena*, is a *roman à clef*, inspired by the



real adventures of James I's daughter, Elizabeth, and Frederick V, Elector Palatine. It is thus a combination of romance and history. Likewise, in the best pages of his *Istoria*, real historical characters, protagonists in precise historical events, are treated rather as if they were the ideal heroes of epic and romantic adventures.

A good example of how Biondi, at his best, combines rich historical documentation, critical sense and remarkable narrative qualities is his reconstruction of Richard II's death. The event is introduced as 'the last Scene of [Richard's] sad tragedy' and it opens with the king being 'tost from post to pillar',<sup>23</sup> that is to say being forced to move from the Tower to a castle in Kent, and from there to Pomfret, so that the confusion and mystery surrounding his person might conceal the true cause of his death. Biondi then gives the three most common hypotheses. Two of them are briefly mentioned: that Richard starved himself to death after the failure of the conspiracy against Henry, and that he was, *vice versa*, killed by being deliberately starved and otherwise made to suffer. The third hypothesis, on the contrary, is related at length. It is that given in the description of Richard's death by Raphael Holinshed, among other historians,<sup>24</sup> and used also by Shakespeare, and by Samuel Daniel in his poem *The Civil Wars*.

It is important here to stress Biondi's ability in understanding and exploiting the dramatic potentialities of the story, which he reconstructs in all its different phases. From the moment when Henry confesses to his friends his fear at the thought that Richard is still alive, and complains that no one is ready to deliver him from his care, to Peter Exton's decision to grant Henry's veiled request, and his arrival at Pomfret, with eight armed men, to kill Richard. The tragedy reaches its climax in the violent scene in Richard's prison: the king, like an epic hero, bravely fights against his nine assailers and kills four of them before being overcome. Partly by altering Holinshed's version, where the attention keeps moving from Richard to Exton and the other murderers, Biondi makes the king the only protagonist of the scene. This he achieves also through a linguistic device. In the Italian version, Richard is the sole subject of all the sentences. Exton's action in sitting in Richard's chair is briefly mentioned in parentheses, and the fatal blow with which he kills the king is described with a passive verb: 'Ricardo [...] fu da lui con un gran colpo disteso à terra'.<sup>25</sup> In the English this

becomes: 'Exton with a great blow fell [*sic*] him to the ground',<sup>26</sup> so that the emphasis on Richard is partly lost. While Holinshed's tale stops with the king's sudden death and Exton's pang of conscience, Biondi's interest in the chief actor in the tragedy accounts for an addition to the tale. He refers the last words that, according to another source, Richard uttered before dying. They have nothing in common with Shakespeare's well-known passage, but they insert Richard's destiny in a wider historical background, comparing it with Edward II's similar doom and interpreting it as a foreboding of what awaits Henry's successors.<sup>27</sup>

Biondi's account of the event also includes a fourth, completely different version which, recorded only by some Scottish historians, perfectly meets the romance-writer's requirements. Now Richard becomes a romance hero who escapes from prison with the connivance of his keepers, and repairs to Scotland where, disguised as a poor servant, he earns his living working for a noble family. One day his true identity is discovered, and he is brought to court where Robert III receives him with all the honours due to a king. Then, in the best romantic tradition, weary of the world, he spends the last years of his life in the service of God.<sup>28</sup>

Having thus well satisfied his own and his readers' narrative tastes, Biondi resumes his critical mantle to discuss these varying accounts. He dismisses the hypothesis of self-starvation as unconvincing, since Richard loved life too well if, rather than lose it, he had given up freedom and kingdom. The idea that he was starved to death seems on the contrary in conflict with Henry's nature, which, says Biondi, 'was no wayes wicked';<sup>29</sup> and it is also unlikely that Exton killed him, for Henry would have never asked someone else's help in such a culpable action. As for the Scottish version, it is considered groundless for various reasons: no mention of it can be found in any English record; Richard's escape would have been exploited by the Scottish and the French governments; and finally the king would have repaired to France, to his wife and father-in-law, rather than to Scotland. Biondi then gives his own simple solution: Richard died in the way that most pleased Henry, but no man ever knew how. The uncertainty surrounding the true circumstances of Richard's death is interpreted as the means by which Henry defended himself against the suspicion of having ordered the execution.<sup>30</sup>

In Biondi's attitude towards the two kings there are no traces of the strong pro-Lancastrian bias typical, for instance, of John Gower's *Chronica Tripertita*, or of the anonymous poem *Richard the Redeless*. There is no influence either from the very friendly feeling towards the dead king to be found in *La Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richard Deux Roy d'Angleterre* or in Jean Créton's *Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre Richard*. At the same time, Biondi no longer accepts the medieval theory of the fall of princes or the image of the wheel of fortune, used for Richard's picture in *The Mirror for Magistrates*. On the contrary, he considers the rights and wrongs of the two kings with sympathetic impartiality. He recognizes Richard's crimes but never judges him vicious, and he attributes his failure mainly to his bad counsellors. On the other hand, while admiring Henry's temperance and modesty, he never forgets that Henry was a usurper, and that he acted as a criminal in compassing Richard's death. In this respect also, then, Biondi has perfectly learnt Polydore Vergil's lesson: his attitude is objective and detached, and he always tries to judge men and events with unsentimental impartiality.

It will be clear from what I have said that the *Istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra* deserves more attention than it has received, for several reasons. As the first history of England in Italian, it is an interesting document of a particular form of Anglo-Italian cultural relation and its author proves to be a well-read, moderate, but also sagacious interpreter of important historical events. Its chief claim, however, is that in Biondi's work, Clio has not yet lost her throne. History here still belongs to the realm of literature and, far from being a cold scientific diagnosis of facts, it can, and does, at any time, become epic, drama or romance.

## Notes

1. Venezia, 1647, p. 243.
2. *L'Eromena* (Venezia, Pinelli, 1624); reprinted in 1628, 1634, 1640; other eds: Camerino, Gioiosa, 1631; Milano, Ghisolfi, 1634; Viterbo, Diotallevi, 1634; Venezia, Giunti, 1653, Venezia, Pezzana, 1664. *La Donzella Desterrada*, (Venezia, Pinelli, 1627); reprinted in 1635, 1640, 1645; other eds: Camerino, Gioiosa, 1632; Bologna, Corvo 1637, 1645; Venezia, Giunti, 1653. *Il Coralbo*, (Venezia, Pinelli, 1632); reprinted in 1635, 1637, 1641, 1655; other eds: Camerino, Gioiosa, 1633; Milano, Ghisolfi, 1633; Viterbo, Diotallevi, 1638, 1643.

*Eromena, Or, Love and Revenge* [...] *Englished by Ja. [mes] Hayward*, (London, Richard Badger, for Robert Allot, 1632). *Donzella Desterrada, Or, The Banish'd Virgin* [...] *Englished by J. [ames] H. [ayward]* (London, T. Cotes for Humphrey Mosley, 1635). *Coralbo. (A New Romance, London, Humphrey Mosley, 1655)* [transl. by Robert Gentili] *L'Eromène* [...] *traduit par Pierre d'Audiguier* (Paris, A. Courbé, 1633), *Eromena: Das ist Liebs-und Heldengedicht* [...] *übersetzt durch ein Mitglied der Hochlöblichen, Fruchtbringenden Gesellschaft, den Unglückseligen (Johann Willhelm Von Stubenberg)* (Nürnberg, 1656).

3. Brescia, 1758 – 1764.

4. Milano, 1772 – 1781.

5. Bologna, 1891, part II, ch. I, pp. 225 – 233.

6. *Nuovi saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Seicento* (Bari, 1931), pp. 31 – 45.

7. For Biondi's biography, see: *Le glorie degli Incogniti*, cit., pp. 241 – 243; R.P. Nicéron, *Mémoires pour servir a l'Histoire des Hommes Illustres dans la République des Lettres*, (Paris, 1737), vol. 37, pp. 391 – 394; S. Gliubich, 'G.F. Biondi', in *Dizionario biografico degli uomini illustri della Dalmazia* (Vienna, 1856), pp. 32 – 35; G. Ferrari Cupilli, *Biografie e necrologie d'illustri e benemeriti dalmati* (Zara, 1874), pp. 11 – 13; A. Bacotich, 'G.F. Biondi da Lesina (1572 – 1644)', *Archivio storico per la Dalmazia*, XIX (1935), pp. 106 – 134; G. Benzoni, 'Giovanni Francesco Biondi: Un avventuroso dalmata del '600', *Archivio veneto*, LXXX (1967), pp. 19 – 37; *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. X, pp. 528 – 531; *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. II, pp. 523 – 524; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, for 1612, 1613, 1615, 1616, 1618, 1623, 1624, 1626, 1628, 1630, 1636.

8. *L'istoria delle guerre civili d'Inghilterra tra le due case di Lancastro, e Iorc. Si descrive in Ricardo II l'origine di esse, il progresso nelle vite dei re susseguenti, cioè di Arrigo IV, V e VI, d'Odoardo IV e V, di Ricardo III e di Arrigo VII nel quale finirono*, vol. II. (Venezia, Pinelli, 1637); vol. III, (Venezia, Pinelli, 1641); vol. III (Venezia, Pinelli, 1644). *An History of the Civill Warres of England, betweene the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke. The originall whereof is set downe in the life of Richard the second; their proceedings, in the lives of Henry the fourth, the fifth, and sixth, Edward the fourth and fifth, Richard the third; and Henry the seventh, in whose dayes they had a happy period*, vol. I (London, by T.H. and I.D. for John Benson, 1641) vol. III, (London, Richard Whitaker, 1646). The translation is quite faithful and I shall quote mainly from it to avoid shifting from English to Italian.

9. Vol. I, 'The Epistle Dedicatorie'.

10. Vol. I, 'The Introduction'.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Vol. I, 'The Epistle Dedicatorie'.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Vol. I, 'The Introduction'.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. Vol. II, Bk viii, p. 114. The omission of 'not' in the English translation is probably a misprint; the Italian reads: 'non seppe conservarsi il Principato', vol. III, Bk viii, p. 66.

19. Vol. I, 'The Introduction'.

20. Vol. I, Bk iv, p.2.

21. Vol. I, Bk iv, p. 14.

22. Vol. II, Bk vi, p. 448 of the Italian version; the passage is omitted in the English translation.
23. Vol. I, Bk ii, p. 55.
24. *Holinsbed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1807), pp. 13 – 14; *Hall's Chronicle; Containing the History of England, during the Reign of Henry the Fourth, and the succeeding Monarchs, to the end of the Reign of Henry the Eighth* (London, 1809), p. 20; *Grafton's Chronicle, or History of England* (London, 1809), vol. I, p. 483; R. Fabyan, *The New Chronicles of England and France*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1811), p. 568; J. Speed, *The Historie of Great Britaine* (London, 1632), p. 750.
25. Vol. I, Bk ii, pp. 116 – 117.
26. Vol. I, Bk ii, p. 55.
27. *Ibid.* I have not found this reference in any of the historical sources presumably used by Biondi.
28. Vol. I, Bk ii, p. 56. Among the Scottish historians who give this version are: H. Boethius, *Scotorum Historiae* (Paris, 1575), Bk XVI, p. 339; G. Buchanan, *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (Edinburgh, 1582), p. 99; Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1879), vol. III, Bk ix, ll. 2001 – 2054.
29. Vol. I, Bk ii, p. 56.
30. Vol. I Bk ii, pp. 55 – 57.

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# THE GRAND TOUR IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

JOHN STOYE

In Lawrence Sterne's famous *Sentimental Journey* it appears that a clergyman from York, in the middle of the Seven Years War, could suddenly rush off to Paris. This is almost correct: the basis of the book may be Sterne's tour on the Continent in 1765 – 6, but it is true that he first crossed the Channel in January 1762, that he was welcomed in the Parisian salons and was able to summon his wife and daughter to join him. The peace treaty was signed in the following year.

I think that there is a theme here for the history of the Grand Tour at an earlier period. It may be difficult to give more than a confused notion of many, and many kinds of, people travelling in several parts of Europe during a period as long as the seventeenth century; but if it were the case that warfare normally obstructs peaceful travel – so that the emergencies of war explain why Sterne could not have crossed the Channel in 1761, as he did in 1762 when there was already an English ambassador in Paris, or why Addison could cross to France in 1699 but could not have done so in 1794, or Milton in 1638 but not in 1628 – it might be possible to set up a few landmarks to guide us in looking at the phenomenon of travel. There were of course landmarks of a different kind. For example, people want to go to particular places for educational or pleasurable reasons; or, they will only travel given sufficient funds, and the availability of roads, inns or landlords, and when there is not too much disorder in the countryside or contagious sickness in the towns. Yet the rhythms of European war and peace, however uneven, during a phase of European history when congresses of diplomats began to produce at intervals whole clusters of peace treaties, determined the movement of travellers.

My proposition is really very simple. It is that with the start of the Thirty Years War in 1618, which then gradually got under way in the 1620's, complemented by the intermittently disturbed state of France – above all south of the Loire until 1630 – and by the

Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-French wars of this decade, with at the same time devastating visitations of bubonic plague in Lyon and the north Italian cities, in Emilia and Tuscany, the conditions effectively interrupted peaceful travel. People stayed at home or, like Lady Arundel starting from Venice in 1622, went home. After that, when conditions improved in France and Italy the travellers reappear and we find them on tour again. They no longer go through Germany to reach the Alps and Italy as they had commonly done during Elizabeth's reign and during the French civil wars. They now go to France again and, while the Thirty Years War continued, they had to go through France to reach Italy. At least for a generation these two conditions shaped the Englishman's touring abroad.

A tour, it must be remembered, is not residence. That is another type of existence, boarding in an academy in order to learn dressage and dancing, living in a university town like Padua or Montpellier or Leyden to study medicine, or living abroad as an exile of some kind. A tour is the experience of moving fairly rapidly from one place to another, looking at the sights from day to day, perhaps noting the details in a diary, struggling with and surmounting problems of choosing a route, an inn, and a meal. So that those who went or were sent abroad in the 1630s, particularly the young men accompanied by governors and tutors went first to *reside*, and then to *tour*. And, for this second purpose they latched on to an itinerary which had already been adopted by English nobles and gentry before 1618. After 1630 France became the country usually chosen as the place of a young man's first residence abroad, either in Paris or the towns of the Loire, and then he considered – when he had mastered enough French – taking a tour of the country. But the itinerary he followed was already laid down for him by the experience of a previous generation before the great interruption of the 1620s. There had been another period of relative tranquillity, when some people still travelled to Italy through Germany, and others to France before thinking of Italy. Among the latter was an important group of young men related to or supervised by that overpowering parent and guardian, Robert Cecil Earl of Salisbury. It is their example which provided the normal precedent for the practice which was followed in the 1630s and thereafter, in carrying out what they already called the 'tour de France'. Thus, like

Viscount Cranborne in 1609, one learnt some French and took one's riding lessons in Paris, and then followed a circuit which involved going down the river Loire as far as Nantes, proceeding to Bordeaux, ascending the Garonne to Toulouse and getting close to the Spanish frontier at Narbonne, before going eastwards to Montpellier, Nimes, Marseilles, Aries, up the Rhone to Lyon, branching off to Geneva, and then back again to Paris; or alternatively, doing this in the reverse direction<sup>1</sup>. That promising young man, Thomas Wentworth, who would become Earl Strafford, performed the same tour in 1612<sup>2</sup>. He kept his diary of his daily journey in English, Cranborne (perhaps with some assistance) wrote one out in French to send to his father. And this would be the tour of France as it was known to travellers in the seventeenth century. It was not, I think, attempted between 1615 and 1630. In addition to the disorders, the French government objected strongly to the English connection with the French Protestants on whom English travellers had so often relied. This was no longer a difficulty after the fall of La Rochelle and the peace-making of 1630.

The tour or 'giro' in Italy was a different matter. It is my impression that an equivalent to the circuit in France was not on offer here to the English traveller before 1630. Passing over the Alps from Germany he had come first to friendly Venetian territory, to Verona and Venice itself, to Vicenza and Padua, with the Gonzaga dukes at Mantua not far off. Or he came over the Mont Cenis and travelled across Lombardy. He could certainly venture further, through papal Bologna and into Tuscany. But with every further step the risk of trouble for your Protestant English seemed greater. There was above all the possible displeasure of the English government if they were reported to be consorting with Catholic churchmen or English Catholics, heightened of course if they went on to Rome itself. The point was drummed home to them by James I's ambassadors in Venice from the moment Sir Henry Wotton first arrived there in 1605. This might be, and was fairly often disregarded: such were the potent attractions of Roman antiquity, combined with the ambivalence of Protestant notions of the papal city, mixing admiration and horror. But fairly short excursions to Rome were the norm, and even to Naples – where of course English merchants and shipping could be found, and further classical



remains, and such wonders of nature as Vesuvius and the well of Pozzuoli. But our travellers then returned northwards as quickly and discreetly as possible. A period of residence in Italy was accordingly enjoyed in Italy by many Englishmen during the reign of James I. There were journeys from one place to another, at least as far as Florence, and less often farther south. When Lord Arundel took a large party on special embassy to Venice in 1614, he and his followers subsequently scattered widely to a number of Italian cities before returning. And Viscount Cranborne – carrying out his father's bidding in 1611 – travelled at speed on a second journey through France, via the Mont Cenis to Turin and then to Venice. It was intended, at least by his father, that he should reside there; but after a touch of illness, the young man insisted on returning immediately homeward across the Brenner. Others did better than that; they stayed longer and went further, like Cranborne's friends Lord Harrington and Sir Thomas Puckering, or Sir William Cavendish who took Thomas Hobbes with him to Rome, or Henry de Vere Earl of Oxford. But there is little sign of a systematic circuit or 'giro' like the tour of France.

This would alter, but after 1630. In the 1620s the routes south became more difficult: men engaged on business, diplomats, art dealers, even artists, would have to put up with the risks, but few others did so. Germany had become impossible; more settled conditions were at best intermittent in the south of France, Savoy and north Italy. Now this sets up the framework within which the touring of the immediate future would be fixed. For in the 1630s there was continued warfare in Germany while tranquillity under Richelieu was imposed in France; but the Huguenots maintained a Protestant element in that country which warmly welcomed the English traveller. And on the other side of the Alps all governments enjoyed good relations with the English monarchy. Among them – and it was a crucial point – the Pope felt bound to look kindly on the Catholic Queen Henrietta Maria, duly sending his envoys or residents to Whitehall. From the reign of Urban VIII onward a prudent Englishman was once again reputed safe in Rome by many more people at home, if not by the multitude of hotter, simpler Protestants. The consequences gradually became clear. The English on their travels could go first to France, and reside for a period long or short. They could perform the tour of France, pretty

well as Cranborne and Wentworth had done, either clockwise or anticlockwise, seeing the same monuments, inscriptions, rivers, places of learning, and fortifications. They could then – bearing in mind the state of upheaval or quiescence in Piedmont during the long period of Franco-Spanish hostility in that region – enter Italy by one of several routes, via Geneva and the Valais or the Mont Cenis, but more commonly by sea from Marseille or Nice en route for Genoa. Then began something like a tour, a ‘giro d’Italia’ in accordance with a rough timetable. The best arrangement, it came to be realised, was to spend the winter in Rome after some brisk sightseeing in Tuscany, and before a journey south to Naples. Then, after Easter, another part of the Italian tour began, via Loreto and Ancona, or more directly via Siena and Florence to Bologna, making every effort to get to Venice in time for the grand festivities of Ascension. After a period of thorough enjoyment in the various cities of Venezia it was time to go, before it got too hot. So the travellers returned north across the Alps to Geneva and to Paris. Such were the itineraries, French and Italian, of the tours which became prime elements in the Englishman’s experience of the Continent by the middle of the seventeenth century.

This remained the case after the Thirty Years War ended in 1648. But the pacification of Germany in the following decade, and generally improved conditions from the Rhine eastwards for much of the time up to 1700, offered an alternative. The routes through Germany were open again, and those regions too – and the towns of the Netherlands – could therefore be visited on the way to Italy. Tourists were not compelled to use such an itinerary, the majority did not, but it was feasible. Indeed the famous guidebook of the Catholic Richard Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy*, first published in 1670, recommended it. The idea had to be weighed against the general prestige of the French language – the French spoken in Tours rather than in Leiden and the Hague – of French manners and accomplishments, and of Paris itself. But the counter attraction of the Dutch and German itinerary to Italy would perforce become stronger when the period began of repeated Anglo-French wars. Paris, the Loire, and the French tour were all put out of reach again, as they had been in 1626 – 30. The flocking of the English home from France in 1666, when Louis XIV joined the Dutch in the Second Dutch War, was a curtain-raiser for similar proceedings

later. A well-documented episode was also the enthusiastic return of the English to Paris after the Nine Years War in 1697; and the same ebb and flow, when hostilities began and ended, occurred right down to 1815.

There will of course be diaries, correspondence and guidebooks which show that other itineraries were attempted. The timetable could be adjusted. Accidents and personal foibles played their part. Nonetheless the Englishman's travel in Europe in fact had to, and did take account of, the obstruction caused by warfare.

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It is very likely that the best time for travel in western Europe during the entire century was between 1679 and 1688. There was political turbulence, true, but a great war between the powers had recently ended with the treaties of Nijmegen. Apart from a single year of campaigning in Belgium and Luxembourg in 1683 – 4 and the French bombardment of Genoa, it was not before the autumn of 1688 that another war began in western Europe. Consequently, English official records during this decade suggest that exceptional numbers of passports were issued to prospective travellers. They have their charm. Think of James Earl of Salisbury and his wife, with Lady Katherine and George Cecil, their children, a physician, 4 woman servants, 12 men servants, 2 coachmen, 2 postillions, 2 grooms, a sumpterman, waggons, a farrier, with two coaches and two waggons, and 34 horses, all setting out to travel to the Continent with a common passport dated 3 August 1682. A slightly more modest grouping had been given a pass on the previous 3 May: it was in favour of Robert Earl of Kingston with Mr Octavian Pulleyn and 6 other named companions, his gentlemen and servants and 8 livery servants to go beyond seas (the normal official phrases). Then on 29 December, still in 1682, a pass was issued for Henry Yelverton, 15th Lord Grey of Ruthin to go to France for his better education, with Octavian Pulleyn his governor and 3 servants<sup>3</sup>.

The somewhat unusual Christian name of Mr. Pulleyn, plus mention of him twice in eight months, attracts attention: was one of the professional tutors or governors (or bear-leaders, before the term was used) who accompanied young gentlemen from England round Europe? If so, can he contribute to our notions of European travel at this period? Looking a little further, it appears that in March 1679 Pulleyn was named on the passport of the Hon. Robert Boyle

who was going abroad; while in February 1687 Lord Grey of Ruthin, for the second time, together with Robert Montague, John Hubbard, Octavian Pulleyn gentleman, and others had authority to pass beyond the seas<sup>4</sup>. In 1691, finally, Charles Mellish esq, and William Ward esq. were to be accompanied by Octavian Pulleyn to Harwich and Holland. On the testimony of the State Papers Domestic he looks like a professional tutor, very busily employed. In this context he may be worthy of pursuit.

On 22 March 1678 Octavian Pulleyn wrote from Bologna to an Englishman then in Venice, John Covel, later the Master of Christ's College Cambridge. He encloses a letter of introduction (in Italian) for Coral to present to a someone named Count Marsigli when he reaches Bologna on his forthcoming journey to Rome. This gentleman will show Covel the points of interest in the town and also introduce him to Malpighi the scientist, a member of 'our' Royal Society. He will provide him with further letters of introduction to intellectual figures – among them 'sig. Abbate Nazzari' – in Rome<sup>5</sup>. Indeed he had previously been helpful to Pulleyn's own party which was now on the point of departure for Milan. In other words, when things went well, visits of this kind to an Italian city were civilising and pleasurable, and someone knowledgeably helpful like Pulleyn helped to smooth the way for other travellers, those he accompanied and those whom he met. However Pulleyn was perhaps exceptional; his unusual name allows us to discover him following a different calling at an earlier stage. A certain Octavian Pulleyn issued bookseller's catalogues in London in 1637 and again in 1657. The latter ran to 100 pages, with a very wide spread: Catholic works, Protestant works; then philosophy, history and medicine; and smaller selections of mathematical, Hebrew, French and Italian works<sup>6</sup>. It further appears that a publisher and bookseller named Octavian Pulleyn I worked from the Rose in St Paul's churchyard from 1630 until he was burnt out in 1666 (when he went to Little Britain for one more year), while a nephew apprentice of his from Leicestershire was Octavian Pulleyn II who set up on his own in 1664. Described as someone who dealt in French books, and as a publisher, 'the nephew did not continue in business after 1670<sup>7</sup>. It is this younger Pulleyn who became the well-travelled gentleman ten years later.

There survive a few more letters from Pulleyn the tutor<sup>8</sup>. He was writing from Siena in June and August 1677, and these show

that the young man then in his charge was a Mr Bulkeley, son of Lord Bulkeley. They had stayed for a short while in Rome, after returning from Naples, and were now waiting for instructions from England about what to do next. Pulleyn pointed out that Bulkeley's friend 'Mr Fox' had been told by 'Sir Stephen' (who must be Sir Stephen Fox, Comptroller of Charles II's household) to remain in Siena for a while and winter in Rome. Bulkeley wanted to do the same, and Pulleyn considered this to be the best course because his charge had done no studying for a twelvemonth. Bulkeley also wished to spend the following winter in Paris. But what was to happen in the year between, after Rome and before Paris? 'If it be designed that we shall see the Emperor's court at Vienna we may see Prague and the Elector of Saxony's (court) and Bavaria, and come to Lyon by the way of Basel. This several of our English gentleman have done with great safety. Mr Robinson, Sir John's son and Mr Pye are gone three weeks to make the same journey from Milan. This journey we may make in the spring if it shall be judged convenient and, making the tour of France by Bordeaux, come to Winter in Paris.' As we may remember, a year later Pulleyn and his party were indeed on the road from Bologna to Milan; but the available sources fail to tell us whether they reached Vienna and Dresden.

Other letters disclose rather more five years later. In 1682 Lord Hatton had recently married Frances Yelverton. Her brother Lord Grey was their ward. Eighteen in 1682, late of Eton, the time had come to send the youth on his travels. But who should look after him while abroad? Pulleyn, certainly, was eager to have the post because his recent patron, the Earl of Kingston, had just died in Dieppe at the very beginning of his foreign tour<sup>9</sup>. Among these who wrote testimonials to Grey's guardians was a certain David Llewelin, another bookseller in St. Paul's churchyard. Pulleyn, he said, was older than Mr Hill (another applicant?) and better acquainted with the languages needed, having been much longer abroad. He was a man 'of very quick parts', and the writer adds cautiously that he had been very well acquainted with him formerly<sup>10</sup>. This confirms the idea that, earlier, this Pulleyn was in the book business; and it should be added that Lord Hatton himself was an eager collector of books and manuscripts. Late in November 1682 Pulleyn was summoned to Lincolnshire. 'having

received your Lordship's kind invitation in order to attend the Lord Grey in his travels'. Their passport entry bears the date 3 December and by the 30th Grey was writing to his sister from Abbeville, on the way to Paris.

Other letters follow, giving a fair idea of what a young gentleman or nobleman and his governor could each expect at this date during a fairly lengthy stay in France and Italy. For one thing there was a tussle between the tutor and his charge. Pulleyn's aim was to get Gray into an Academy, for the sake of discipline and economy. Gray preferred living in private lodgings, and paying private tutors in French, fencing and dancing. At first Pulleyn believed that 'my Lord' would enter 'the Academy' in a week or ten days, but it took two months. Even then Gray spent the afternoons paying visits to Lady Preston and Lady Charlemont and others, while Pulleyn emphasised that the cost of coach-hire in Paris three or four days a week was ruinous. He referred gloomily as well to Grey's fine clothes, like his new blue silk suit. Pulleyn's plea to the Hattons was to press my lord to attend to his French, on the ground that it would compensate for defects in his Latin and Greek. There must have been some anxiety in Lincolnshire about the young man's progress abroad<sup>11</sup>.

Then the scene changes. Residence ended, touring began. Pulleyn, reporting from Blois on 5 September 1683, states that they have recently visited Amboise, Tours, Samour, La Fleche, going down the Loire as far as Nantes. Then they turn up in Venice, Rome, Naples, Loreto and Ancona in the first half of 1684, before hastening back to Paris where another winter was passed<sup>12</sup>. Talk of an excursion to the Netherlands was cut short by news of the death of Charles II. The Lords Grey of Ruthin traditionally assert their right to carry the royal spurs at a king's coronation, and the 15th Lord Grey made good this claim in 1685<sup>13</sup>.

So France and Italy were left behind, it seemed, and one wonders whether Octavian Pulleyn had been doing his best with perhaps limited material. But his correspondence shows occasionally that young Grey and his friends did indeed have the world at their feet for a few golden moments: 'I have taken a very sweet house for my Lord in the best air in Rome, with a garden and in it orange trees and fountains. His Lordship is well pleased, studies and fences in the morn, and in the even takes the air at the Corso and (is) at

night at the Duchess of Bracciano where most of the persons of great quality resort. His Lordship is now in a good method, guilty of no excess or ought but what is very commendable . . . he can spend five or six hours a day in reading with good attention . . . Here hath been a vast number of English this winter but most are now gone for Venice. Lord Northampton, Lord George Howard, Lord Herbert, Sir John Yates, Sir George Rivers, Sir John Gifford, Sir George Prettyman, Mr Morgan of Wales, Mr Beddingfield, Mr Fletcher, Mr Towneley, Mr Stukely . . . with many more besides Mr Austin and Mr Moreton and Lord Exeter's company<sup>14</sup>.' At that stage, therefore, Grey was on the mend and it is plausible for us to surmise that at least some English tourists of his acquaintance profited from the stimulus of their Roman experience. And Mr Pulleyn – who occasionally spent his spare time in the Vatican library looking through manuscripts on John Aubrey's behalf<sup>15</sup> – kept an eye on him.

Gleaning in the sources does not obscure the general setting. Some things had altered between the 1630s and the 1680s. A Protestant tutor's proposals – when Pulleyn attended on Mr Bulkeley – for a winter's stay in the Papal states, to be followed by a trip to Prague and Dresden, and then a tour in the south of France, could not have been combined in this way in 1600, or 1620 or 1640; the terrain open to the traveller now seemed distinctly wider than before. On the other hand, neither Pulleyn nor anyone else foresaw that, while this terrain was extending farther east across Germany, France would be cut off again in the near future. In that context some contemporary books recording other travels of Pulleyn's time, but printed after 1688, deserve notice. Consider, for example, William Acton's *A New Journal of Italy*. His patron, for whom he was tutor or companion, was Edward Harvey of Combe, Surrey, and the dedication relates that Harvey spent two and a half years at one of the best academies of Paris, during the autumn of 1685 crossed over the Mont Cenis, went rapidly to Rome where he spent the winter, performed the normal giro and returned for a month to Paris, and so back to England. He had omitted the tour of France but made amends by spending the following winter in Montpellier. So his was the customary experience, of education in France and a journey as far as Naples and Venice; but when this record of his travels was printed in 1691 Paris was already out of

reach. Or there is the somewhat enigmatic, but observant physician Dr Ellis Veryard who in 1701 issued on *Account of divers Choice Remarks on his Travels*. Reaching Amsterdam on 6 April 1682 he got to as far as Cologne when he says; 'I had design'd to have proceeded on thro' Germany into Italy, but finding here a Gentleman who intended to go by way of Flanders and France, I was easily perswaded to accompany him<sup>16</sup>', and in fact it was only after having completed a tour of France including the Loire, Bordeaux and Marseille that Veryard entered Italy; but that significant change in his original plan would not have been possible a few years later. And then there are William Bromley's *Remarks on the Grande Tour of France and Italy lately performed by a Person of Quality*, which first appeared in 1692. He seems to have left England – no dates are given – in 1687, gone to Paris and then followed the tour of France anti-clockwise as far as Montpellier and Cette. He turned back, into Provence and so to Genoa, Milan and Venice. He was still in Rome when news of the Prince of Wales's birth reached the town in June 1688<sup>17</sup>. Subsequently he returned to Paris but his journal, in its printed form, is extraordinarily taciturn about this last phase of his trip, and possibly it has little to say because he had to get home. Already in February 1689 Bromley was chosen MP for Warwickshire; it was King James II's turn to visit, or revisit, Paris. However, let me not labour further my point about the framework of warfare and peace treaties which our tourists had to accept. A footnote can be added. In 1705 William Bromley had risen to be a leading church Tory in the struggle against Occasional Conformity. The government wanted to keep him out in the election of a new Speaker for the Commons. Both ancient and modern historians, G.M. Trevelyan and Professor Speck, think it worthwhile telling the old story of Harley having Bromley's Travels reprinted, and prefacing it by a mocking and scurrilous list of contents<sup>18</sup>. What can you expect of this man? the entries seem to ask. 'The Author compared with our Saviour, and wants of his height a Hand's breadth by Measure. .', p. 107; 'the Author visits a mad House. .', p. 143; 'The Author kiss'd the Pope's slipper and had his Blessing, though known to be a Protestant . . . p. 149; and, referring to a library: 'the Shelves. . supported by the statues of Arch Hereticks, viz. Luther, Calvin, Cranmer etc. .' p. 60. Harley used the new edition to lobby MPs furiously – *have you seen Mr.*



*B's travels?* he asked them – and Bromley was kept out of the Speakership for a few more years. Perhaps this goes to show that there might still be a residue of danger in making a tour from England to Rome. At least a reputation for kissing the Pope's toe on one's travels was to be avoided, under Anne as under Elizabeth.

## Notes

1. *Hist. MSS. Comm. Hatfield MSS*, 21 (1970), 104 – 113.
2. *Strafford Papers* 30 (Wentworth Woodhouse muniments, Sheffield Public Library)
3. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic (1682)*, vol. 82, pp. 623 – 6. For Salisbury's departure, also K.H.D. Haley, *Shaftesbury* (1968), p. 701.
4. *CSPD (1979 – 80)*, vol. 80, p. 336; *ibid. (1686 – 7)*, vol. 89, p. 448; *ibid. (1691 – 2)*, vol. 94, p. 286
5. BL Additional MS, 22, 910, ff. 153 – 4. L.F. Marsili (1658 – 1730) was the founder of the Academy of Sciences at Bologna. In 1678 he was Malpighi's pupil. Francesco Nazzari had been for ten years one of the editors of the Roman *Giornale de' Letterati*.
6. *Catalogus Librorum in omni genere insignium quorum copia suppetit Octaviano Pulleyn* (London, 1657).
7. H.R. Plomer, *Dictionary of the Booksellers and Printers who were at work . . . 1641 to 1667* (Bibliographical Society, 1968), pp. 149 – 50, 245; W.W. Greg, *Companion to Arber* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 84 – 5, 276 – 7; D.F. McKenzie, *Stationers' Company Apprentices 1641 – 1700* (Oxford, 1974), p. 135; *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, p. 110. I am very grateful to Giles Mandelbrote for much information about Pulleyn as bookseller, publisher and traveller.
8. BL Stowne MS. 745, ff. 139, 141.
9. *Complete Peerage*, vii. 306; Bodl. Lister MS, f. 70
10. BL Additional MS. 29,559, f. 326.
11. *Ibid.*, ff. 341, 360, 380, 389, 400, 428, 430; *Hatton Correspondence*, ed. E. Maunde Thompson (Camden Society, 1878), ii. 28.
12. BL Additional MS. 29,560, ff. 89, 233, 265, 280, 311
13. Additional MS. 29,559, f. 438 and *Complete Peerage*, vi. 162. He also carried the spurs at the coronation of William and Mary, and of Anne. For his summons to the Parliament of 1685, *CSPD (1685 – 6)*, vol. 88, p. 102.
14. BL Additional MS. 29,560, ff. 233, 265 (28/18 April, 3 June n.s. 1684)
15. Bodl. Aubrey MS, f. 180
16. *An Account*, p. 34
17. *Remarks on the Grande Toure*, p. 266
18. G.M. Trevelyan, *England under Queen Anne* (London, 1930 – 4), ii. 86; W.A. Speck, 'The choice of a Speaker in 1705', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 37 (1964), p.27.

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# ARCHITECTURAL TASTE AND THE GRAND TOUR: GEORGE BERKELEY'S EVOLVING CANON\*

EDWARD CHANEY

In 1715, in his introduction to the first edition of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, Colen Campbell lamented that:

The general Esteem that Travelers have for Things that are foreign, is in nothing more conspicuous than with Regards to Buildings. We travel, for the most part at an Age more apt to be imposed upon by the Ignorance or Partiality of others, than to judge truly of the Merit of Things by the Strength of Reason. It's owing to the Mistake in Education, that so many of the British Quality have so mean an opinion of what is performed in our own Country: tho' perhaps in most we equal, and in some Things we surpass, our Neighbours.

Though the latter argument – if intended to refer to architecture or indeed the visual arts in general – was only just becoming plausible, patriotic (not to say paranoid) Protestants had been articulating something similar since the first signs of a thaw with the Catholic continent at the end of the sixteenth century. The argument that British buildings were as good as foreign ones was

\* The following is the full text of a paper given at the 1990 Annual Conference of the Association of Art Historians at Trinity College, Dublin: "Challenging the Canon". A synopsis was published in the Association's *Bulletin*, xxxvi, February 1990, p. 26.

The quotations from Berkeley's writings are taken from *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, eds. A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop, (London – Edinburgh, 1955 – 56). There is a somewhat unsatisfactory Italian edition of the Journals and Letters in *Viaggio in Italia*, by T.E. Jessop and F. Fimiani, (Naples 1979). In a review article entitled "George Berkeley in the Veneto" I published my discovery of Berkeley's visit to the University of Padua (and thus to the Veneto) in 1719 (*Bollettino del CIRVI*, I, ii, 1980, pp. 82 – 88). I have also discussed Berkeley's writings on Italy in "The Grand Tour and Beyond: British and American Travellers in Southern Italy 1545 – 1960, *Oxford, China and Italy: Writings in honour of Sir Harold Acton*, eds. E. Chaney and N. Ritchie (London, 1984), pp. 133 – 160, and 'British and American Travellers in Sicily', (*Blue Guide Sicily*, ed. Alta Macadam. 1988 and subsequent editions). The best biography is still that by A.A. Luce (1949) which is being reissued with a new introduction and notes by David Berman in 1992.

indeed exploited by the Puritanical tendency in their campaign against foreign travel, epitomised in its most respectable form by Joseph Hall's *Quo Vadis? or a just Censure of Travel*, first published in 1617. Elizabeth I founded Trinity College, Dublin, in 1591, soon after the failure of the Armada, in order that:

knowledge and utility might be increased by the instruction of our people there, whereof many have usually heretofore used to travel into France, Italy, and Spain, to get learning in such foreign universities, where they have been infected with popery and other ill qualities, and so become evil subjects.

If the humanities flourished as a result or in spite of such attempts at self-containedness, where architecture was concerned the much-travelled Inigo Jones was the exception that proved the rule that it was only in the late seventeenth century, when influential travellers such as Gilbert Burnet could at last cite the likes of Chatsworth, and returned Grand Tourists such as the Earl of Carlisle could build so confidently as at Castle Howard, that such claims could be taken seriously. It is ironic that late twentieth-century theorists, whose supposedly sceptical methodology seeks to warn us of the dangers of anachronistically canonical aesthetic judgements, should in practice be pushing us back to the relativism of the 'we're just as good as them' bigots of the pre-enlightenment. Even the *Spectator* recently carried an article which sought to assure its classical-liberal readership that sophisticated foreign visitors to Elizabethan England would have found much to admire in British buildings\*. Surely this tendency tells us more about our own sophisticated ability to appreciate styles as diverse as gothic, classic, baroque and modernist simultaneously, than about highly competitive and more single-minded early modern cultures groping towards a vocabulary with which they might disparage the despised barbarism of the pre and extra Renaissance.

Having defended myself in advance against the charge implicit in the 'challenging' title of this conference, and perhaps earned the right to exploit traditionally progressivist terminology, I would argue that it was really only in the eighteenth century, after the traumatic delays caused by Protestant Reformation and Puritan Rebellions, that Britain could be said to have caught up with the Catholic continent. Unfortunately for the anti-travellers, however, the process of catching up, which included learning (*à la* Bellori)

to pour scorn on Gothic and Baroque (which Campbell regarded merely as degenerate gothic), also required an enhanced appreciation of the fundamental qualities of ancient architecture. In order to acquire the correct taste, and *à la* Shaftesbury become virtuous by becoming a virtuoso, despite the best efforts of Inigo Jones and John Webb to promote Stonehenge as a classical building, there was no alternative but to travel to Southern France and Italy to study the best known examples of classical remains. Eventually, with an ever-expanding knowledge of archaeology combining with a kind of architectural one-upmanship, it became necessary to travel even further afield to the very sources of the classical style in Sicily, Paestum and Greece itself.

In 1713, still two years prior to the publication of *Vitruvius Britannicus*, at an age even Campbell could not have condemned as too impressionable, the 27-year-old George Berkeley, Junior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, wrote from London to his friend and patron Sir John Percival that 'There is not any place that I have a great curiosity to see than Sicily', and that he had found employment in a diplomatic mission which would enable him to go there. In the light of later evidence I believe that we can read into Berkeley's enthusiasm here a pioneering interest in Sicily's Greek remains and its Doric temples in particular. He would already have come across references to these in Cluver (referred to in his travel journals), or in Tommaso Fazello's even earlier, *de Rebus Siculis* (which he cites in *Alciphron* to demonstrate parallels between the pretensions to great antiquity of foreign-dominated Ireland and Sicily), but ultimately his awareness of their existence must have originated in that deep grounding in Greek literature and history suggested by his lectureship in this subject and epitomised by his subsequent presentation to Trinity College of its first fount of Greek type, and his endowment of the Gold Medal in Greek, now named after him. In 1738, an edition of Plato's Dialogues was printed using his fount to become the first Greek book ever produced in Ireland.

For various reasons, on this 1713 journey, though Berkeley saw something of France and Northern Italy, he travelled no further south than Tuscany. Having failed to see the antiquities even of Southern France, let alone those of Rome or Southern Italy, he returned to London disappointed, rationalising his disappointment

in speculation that perhaps the whole Grand Tour experience was over-rated. Despite what he had missed, however, he had seen enough of cities such as Paris, Genoa and Florence to have vastly extended his range of architectural reference and expertise. At the beginning of the year, having left Ireland for the first time and arrived in London, he wrote that the latter exceeded Dublin 'not so much in the stateliness or beauty of its buildings as in extent'. But two months later he had visited Oxford and praised it as:

most delightful place I have ever seen, as well for the pleasantness of its situation, as the great number of ancient and modern buildings which have a very agreeable effect, on my eye [an interesting choice of expression in view of his recently published theory of vision] though I came from London and visited Hampton Court and Windsor by the way.

By modern buildings in Oxford in the spring of 1713, Berkeley must have meant Hawksmoor's confidently classical Clarendon Building, Henry Aldrich's Peckwater Quad and All Saints Church, all three then in the process of completion (although All Saints had to wait another decade for its steeple).

But just as Oxford had superseded London and Dublin in his estimation, Paris, Lyon and Turin were to supersede Oxford, as they in turn were to be superseded by Genoa. In Paris, Berkeley visited all the major sites, and concluded that the buildings were:

wonderfully fine and curious, but the finest of all is the Chapel in the Church of the Invalides, which the Abbe d'Aubigne assured me was not to be surpassed in Italy.

Lyon was, according to Berkeley:

a very noble city, and more populous and rich in proportion than Paris, It has several fine buildings and antiquities, which made the week I have spent here pass very agreeably.

The court at Turin where he also spent a week, Berkeley described as 'polite and splendid, the city beautiful, the churches and colleges magnificent, but not much learning stirs among them'. Clearly, despite a taste for the neo-Palladianism of the Oxford of Aldrich and Clark, Berkeley was either in a pre or post-critical state regarding the gothic-flavoured Guarinian baroque.

The major bombardment which Genoa had received from the French Fleet in 1684, often said to have ended the city's seventeenth-century reputation as one of the finest in Italy, was not mentioned by Berkeley.

On the contrary, despite the narrowness of its streets, he reported that:

I have not seen any town that pleased me more than this. The churches, palaces, and indeed the ordinary houses are very magnificent.

Berkeley's interest in what he called 'ordinary houses' and his remarks on this category of buildings during his subsequent and far more extensive tour of Italy is worth noting. For someone already best known – indeed notorious – as the philosopher who argued that material things depend for their existence on our perceiving them. Berkeley was remarkably interested in things in themselves and works of art and architecture in particular. His travel journals and the more polished letters he sent back to friends such as Percival, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, are full of keen, unprejudiced observation, and offer a variety of insights into early eighteenth century taste. Consulting them in conjunction with related evidence we can study the aesthetic development of a highly gifted amateur with a rare degree of precision.

Despite becoming a member of Lord Burlington's circle and surviving longer than Campbell as such, thanks to his extensive travels Berkeley was able to retain and indeed develop his early admiration for neo-Palladianism (he owned a 1581 edition of the *Quattro Libri*) whilst developing (perhaps retaining here also) a remarkable capacity to appreciate a far wider range of styles than contemporary arbiters of taste such as Lord Shaftesbury were capable even of tolerating. During the course of his 1716 – 20 Grand Tour, Berkeley managed to anticipate the aesthetics of the Greek Revival at the same time as articulating enthusiasm for the provincial decorative baroque he discovered in Lecce, an otherwise unvisited city he described in a letter to Percival as 'the most beautiful . . . in Italy'. [Shaftesbury had chosen to retire to Naples where a more canonical baroque style still flourished, but Lecce would have had him spinning in his grave, his rejection of such exuberance contributing to a consensus of condemnation which was only repealed by Martin S. Briggs and the Sitwells in this century]. In selectively ignoring the fashionable orthodoxies, Berkeley's judgements on what he saw in Italy effectively undermine those Foucaultist, Spenglerian, or as David Watkin would have it, Pevsnerian theorists, who insist on the power of a period *episteme* or *Zeitgeist* to condition all those who happen to live within it.

As in 1713, Berkeley had been on the point of returning to Dublin from London when, in the autumn of 1716, he found another form of employment which would give him the opportunity to visit Sicily, this time as travelling tutor to George Ashe. As this rather frail sixteen-year-old was the son and heir of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dublin, this post was especially convenient in facilitating the extension of his sabbatical leave and perhaps also his promotion whilst still abroad to a Senior Fellowship at his College. Berkeley and his protégé crossed the Alps and were in Turin by the 24 November. Travelling south via Milan, Parma, Modena, Bologna, Florence, and Siena, by the beginning of January 1717, Berkeley was at last in Rome, having now seen; 'the best part of the cities of Italy'.

He made no attempt to compare Rome as a whole with these cities but recorded instead a fascinating sequence of reactions to its manners, painting, sculpture and architecture, both ancient and modern. Like the majority of tourists from long before John Evelyn, to long after the death of Keats there, Berkeley, Ashe, and their servant took lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna at the foot of the hill on which stands the French convent of Trinita dei Monti. Francesco de Sanctis's now famous Spanish Steps, though much needed, were still five years in the future, so that this area retained a considerably more rural aspect than it does today. The morning of 7 January, on what was probably his first full day in the city, apparently alone, Berkeley walked down to the Tiber, crossed it by the *Ponte Sant'Angelo*, manoeuvred his way through the medieval streets which filled the area cut through in the 1930s by Mussolini's Via della Conciliazione, to find himself suddenly embraced by Bernini's arm-like colonades in front of St Peter's. Writing of St Peter's after he had visited Sicily and seen the Greek Doric temples, he retained his admiration for the doric colonade (which I believe influenced those at Castletown) but found 'a thousand faults' with the church itself, 'as indeed with every other modern Church here', Bramante's Tempietto excepted. On the morning in question, however, he was probably as impressed by the sheer size of St Peter's as we know he was by that of the Vatican, the first building he describes in the first of his four surviving notebooks. As Fellow Librarian of Trinity College (and most likely a major force behind the rebuilding of what was to rival the Vatican

as the largest single-chamber library in the world), as well as the future benefactor of the libraries of Harvard and Yale, Berkeley's enthusiastic reactions to the modernity of the shelving and well-designed readers' facilities in Domenico Fontana's great papal library, are of considerable interest:

The morning I paced a gallery in the vatican four hundred and eighty eight paces long. We saw the Famous Library in that Palace. It contains seventy two thousand Volumes MSS and printed. The building surely is not to be equalled in that kind being nobly proportioned and painted by the best hands. It is in this form T the greatest length about eight hundred feet. The books are all contained in desks or presses whose backs stand to the wall. The desks are all low, of an equal height so that the highest books are within reach without the least straining.

Plans for Thomas Burgh's library were first formulated in 1709. On 26 November of that year, Berkeley wrote to his friend Molyneux of his appointment as librarian 'in a disconsolate Mood, after having passed the better part of a sharp and bitter day in the Damps and mustly [sic] solitudes of the Library without either Fire or anything else to protect Me from the Injuries of the Snow that was constantly driving at the Windows and forcing its Entrance into that wretched Mansion . . . ' Burgh submitted an estimate for £7,140 in 1710 (excluding wainscoting) and the foundation was laid in 1712. But it was not until after Berkeley's return from his second Italian journey in 1723 that even the exterior was finished. The interior, including the kind of furnishings to which Berkeley refers in his account of the Vatican, was not completed until 1733, the final cost being £20,000. He was thus in Dublin during all the crucial moments of its development.

Having inspected some of the contents of the Vatican library, including as was customary for Protestants, Henry VIII's lascivious (and Reformation-provoking) love letters to Anne Boleyn, Berkeley returned the same afternoon to view the classical sculpture arranged around the courtyard of the Belvedere.

Most of the next morning was taken up with a formal visit to the Anglophile Cardinal Antonio Gualtieri, but that afternoon Berkeley and his pupil 'went to see the Villa Borghese'. Having been accustomed to the great formal layouts of Hampton Court and Versailles, one might have expected an unsympathetic reaction to



this Villa's more natural seventeenth-century garden. It is now clear, however, that even the so-called English garden was ultimately derived from Italian models *Pace* the over-neat historicism which equates a taste for aesthetic informality with political liberty, an incipient taste for such artistic freedom can be traced back to proto-Tories, such as Richard Lassels, and proto-Whigs, such as Gilbert Burnet, alike. Even more than these though, Berkeley, a liberal Tory was unprecedentedly, and almost defiantly enthusiastic:

I liked the gardens, they are large, have fine cut walks, white deer, statues, fountains Groves, nothing of the little French gout, no parterres. If they are not so spruce and trim as those in France and England, they are nobler and I think much more agreeable.

Later on in this journal, Berkeley comments similarly that the great park attached to the Villa Montalto 'like the [other] gardens in Italy is not kept with all that neatness that is observed in French and English gardens'.

Where the Villa Borghese itself was concerned, Berkeley noted that it was:

noble and hath the richest outside that I have anywhere seen being enchased with beautiful relievos of Antiquity. The portico was furnished with old chairs very entire being hard stone colour's red in some places, and gilt in others, carved too with several devices. It was too dark to see the pictures, so we put off viewing the inside to another time.

Jennifer Montagu has recently reminded us that in accordance with changing taste, and perhaps the lack of respectable precedent for this sort of arrangement, most of the Roman reliefs were subsequently removed from the Villa Borghese, though those on the Villa Doria-Pamphili, which Berkeley also praised, survive to the present day.

The next morning, Berkeley's first visit was to the Augustan Pyramid of Cestius, the great marble tomb next to the Porta San Paolo, which in the third century was incorporated into the Aurelian walls. His interest in this was both architectural and archaeological, but also – as at the Vatican, somewhat Gulliver-like – in its dimensions:

This building is pyramidal, of great smoothed pieces of marble. A considerable part of it is now under ground but what appears is about a hundred foot in length, each side of the square basis, and

about a hundred and fifty the side of the pyramid. There is a chamber within in which there have been [found?] not many years ago several antique figures painted in fresco. They are now defaced and the entrance made up.

Even the nearby Roman rubbish dump of Monte Testaccio, up which Berkeley now climbed to obtain 'a fair prospect of Rome', served to remind him of the scale of the Roman achievement. Day by day the entries in his journal record a growing tendency to compare the ancients with the moderns, usually, though discriminately, to the disadvantages of the latter.

To move outside architecture for a moment, on returning to the Villa Borghese on the 10 January, having meanwhile studied the classical sculpture in the Belvedere courtyard, Berkeley begins his account of this collection's 'several excellent statues' with the ancients and then judges the moderns by comparison:

the most remarkable of the Antique are the Hermaphrodite, the Gladiator, and on the outside of the wall that of Curtius on horseback leaping into the Cavern. I must not forget three statues of Bernini in these apartments, that raise my idea of that modern statuary almost to an equality with the famous ancients Apollo and Daphne. Aeneas with Anchises on his shoulders. David going to fling the stone at Golia[t]h. The grace, the softness, and expression of these statues is admirable.

Next morning we find him looking for Greek books with a 'Mr Domville' whom I believe to be the Compton Domville with whom Berkeley signs the Padua University Visitors' book (and again two months later) rather than the William Domville alleged by Luce and Jessop.

If even Bernini, whose 'wonderfully well done' Saint Teresa in Soria's 'beautiful little church of S. Maria della Vittoria' Berkeley also admired, didn't quite match the ancient statuaries, then other baroque artists were hardly likely to either. Where modern painting was concerned there were very few ancient examples available for comparison and those there were, notably at the Palazzo Barberini, were considered suspect. Exceptionally for this period, Perugino is highly praised for his Madonna and Holy Family in the Palazzo Barberini, despite his ignorance 'of the chiaro scuro': 'But for sweetness, grace and beauty there is enough in this piece to render it admirable'. On returning to St Peter's, Berkeley lavished more

praise on Domenichino, and Guercino, whose Assumption of St Petronilla succeeded above all due to its chiaroscuro, which: 'gives it so strong a relief that it deceives the eye beyond any picture in the Church'. On the other hand:

Having seen the Palace of Farnese and the Borghesian Villa since my being last at S: Peters, the Statues did not near please me now so much as then. You may see grace, beauty and Fine attitude in these Statues of Algardi, Porta, Bernini, etc. They have sometimes a fine expression in the face. But on a near inspection you perceive nothing so finished, none of those delicate contours, those softnesses, that life and breath that you discover in the fine Antiques. The best statue in St Peter's in my judgement is the dead Christ of M. Angelo Bonaroti.

Not that Berkeley was incapable of discriminating between good and bad in ancient art. The 'Diogenes' in the 'magnificent' Palazzo Barberini, whose lack of an Elizabethan-style gallery (as distinct from 'many noble chambers') he bemoaned, showed that 'the ancients had indifferent statuaries as well as the moderns'. In the Aldobrandini gardens he criticised the quality of most of the sculpture as 'indifferent', and in the Villa itself described the Aldobrandini Wedding, which Padre Resta had attributed to Apelles, as an historical curiosity whose colouring and drapery was mediocre.

But to return to architecture, on the 12 January, again it seems alone, Berkeley walked up to the slope of the Pincian Hill behind his lodgings, whence he 'had a good prospect of Monte Cavallo, St Peters and the Intermediate parts of the towne'. Then, having as he says, 'amused [himself] some time here', remembering how impressed he had been with the Piazza del Popolo on entering Rome a week before, he decided to return for a closer look, taking in what he describes as the 'handsome Facade' of Longhi's Sant'Ambrogio e Carlo al Corso, and the less handsome housing of the Corso itself, along the way. In terms of his future involvement in architecture or more precisely, urban design, this description of the Piazza, with its radiating trident of streets laid out by Latino Manetti, both Fontanas and Bernini, is especially interesting, for in the late 1720s, Berkeley drew up at least two plans for the ideal university town he proposed to build on Bermuda. One of these was described by his widow and the other survives in an engraving

included in the first collected edition of his works, published in 1784. Looking at the latter and reading his account of the Piazza del Popolo, it becomes clear that for all that it incorporates elements of Inigo Jones's Covent Garden (in the type and position of the church), the Appian Way (for the tomb-lined 'Walk of Death'), the great Corinthian pillar in the main Piazza at Lecce (for the same feature here), and peculiarly English features such as the private and communal gardens behind the houses, the principal inspiration for this ambitious scheme was this Roman walk in January 1717:

The Piazza del Popolo is contrived to give a traveller a magnificent impression of Rome upon his first entrance. The Guglio [or obelisk] in the middle, the two beautiful Churches of the same architecture [Bernini's S. Maria dei Miracoli on the left, and Rainaldi and Fontana's S. Maria in Montesanto of 1675 – 78 on the right] that front the entrance standing on either side of the end of the Corso, or great street directly opposite to the gate carrying the eye in a strait line through the middle of the city almost to the Capitol while on the sides there strike off two other straight streets, inclined in equal angles to the Corso, the one leading to the Piazza d'Espagna, the other towards the Piazza Navona. From the Guglio your prospect shoots thro these three streets. All this I say is contrived to produce a good effect on the eye of a new comer. The disposition it must be owned is pleasing and if the ordinary houses that make up the greatest part of the streets were more agreeable and regular, wou'd make a very noble prospect.

Berkeley then goes on to comment in detail on the 1st century BC obelisk – originally set up in the Circus Maximus by Augustus who had brought it to Rome from Heliopolis – and to commend 'the most spirited' Sixtus V for erecting it and others as landmarks in the major piazzas of the city in just the way he was soon to propose in Bermuda. Worthy of note also in his plan is its prominent provision in the centre of the communal parks (top left and right), for an Academy of Music, and another for Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, which he probably intended the portraitist, John Smibert, to direct.

The almost Shaftesburian role Berkeley envisaged for these arts in an ideally civilised society he most clearly expressed in his *Essay towards the preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*, which he published in 1721, within a year of returning from Italy and discovering the terrible effects of the collapse of the South Sea company:

Those noble arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting do not only adorn the public but have also an influence on the minds and manners of men, filling them with great ideas, and spiriting them up to an emulation of worthy actions. For this cause they were cultivated and encouraged by the Greek cities, who vied with each other in building and adorning their temples, theatres, porticos, and the like public works, at the same time that they discouraged private luxury; the very reverse of our conduct.

In a later, more specifically nationalistic publication, the first edition of *The Querist* of 1735, Berkeley extended suggestions he had made for founding an Italian or French-style British Academy and pioneeringly proposed that Ireland should try and solve its economic problems by instituting an ‘Academy for Design’.

Within a matter of weeks, Berkeley’s aesthetic judgement had noticeably matured in Rome, but, as we have suggested, it was the experience of spending several months on Sicily that consolidated his inclination to judge sculpture and architecture by the standards of the ancients, and in particular those most ancient classicisers of all, the Greeks. Having returned to Rome in the summer of 1717, Berkeley articulated his enhanced confidence in a remarkable letter to Percival who had informed his friend of his intention to build a new house. Though he was aware of Percival’s own expertise – based on a Grand Tour completed almost a decade earlier – as also of his friendship with one of the ablest Italianate architects of the period, James Gibbs, Berkeley wrote that he longed to return home so that he might:

have a part in the contrivance of the house you design to build this winter, for you must know I pretend to an uncommon skill in architecture, as you will easily imagine when I assure your Lordship there is not any one modern building in Rome that pleases me, except the wings of the capitol built by Michael Angelo and the colonade of Berninies before St Peter’s. The Church itself I find a thousand faults with, as indeed with every modern Church here. I forget the little round one in the place where St Peter was beheaded built by Bramante, which is very pretty and built like an ancient temple. This gusto of mine is formed on the remains of antiquity that I have met with in my travels, particularly in Sicily, which convince me that the old Romans were inferior to the Greeks, and that the moderns fall infinitely short of both in the[ir] grandeur and simplicity of taste.

(Since Berkeley lost his notebook on Sicily during the journey back to Naples, we can be certain that he visited the now famous 'Valley of the Temples' at Agrigento only thanks to a passing reference in a much later letter to his friend Thomas Prior regarding the corrosive effect of sea salt on one of their columns).

In fact Berkeley remained in Italy for another two years, and two years after this, instead of (perhaps as well as?) helping Percival build his house, he was keeping Percival informed about progress on Speaker Conolly's great Italianate mansion at Castletown, 'about which they are pleased to consult me'. At this stage there was no architect and – according to one of Percival's replies – Berkeley therefore drew two 'fronts' or elevations. Percival clearly regarded Castletown as far more than a private house, something approaching instead the Irish equivalent of Blenheim Palace to judge from his advice regarding the construction of the fireplaces, which he thought should be built from Irish marbles similar to those which Inigo Jones had once imported into England:

You will do well to recommend to [Mr Conolly] the making use of all the marbles he can get of the production of Ireland for his chimneys, for since this house will be the finest Ireland ever saw, and by your description fit for a Prince, I would have it as it were the epitome of the Kingdom, and all the natural rarities she afford should have a place there.

To end this paper by addressing rather more specifically the regionalist theme called for by the conference title, it is perhaps worth speculating whether, if Berkeley had visited Lecce after Sicily instead of six months previously, he would have enjoyed the far from simple style he discovered there quite as much as he did. Discovery is the correct word here, just as it is with the temples of Sicily, for Berkeley is one the first Northern Europeans known to have visited either of these places along with much else in Southern Italy about whose Elysian landscape he wrote so appreciatively, describing Ischia to Alexander Pope, for example, as:

an epitome of the whole earth, containing within the compass of eighteen miles, a wonderful variety of hills, vales, ragged rocks, fruitful plains, and barren mountains, all thrown together in a most romantic confusion [a very early use of the word 'romantic' in such a context].

Berkeley was also an admirer of Sicily's post-1693 earthquake Baroque; praising the inhabitants of Catania in an article published in 1750, for having rebuilt their city 'more regular and beautiful than ever. The houses indeed are lower, and the streets broader than before, for security against future shock'.

Berkeley jotted down his first impressions of Lecce in pencil in the second of his four leatherbound notebooks, and on the basis of these, at his return to Naples in June 1717, composed one of his slightly teasing letters for Percival:

My Lord

I am lately returned from a tour through the most remote and unknown parts of Italy.

The celebrated cities your Lordship is perfectly acquainted with. But perhaps it may be new to you to hear that the most beautiful city in Italy lies in a remote corner of the heel. Lecce (the ancient Aletium) is the most luxuriant in all ornaments of architecture of any town that I have seen. The meanest houses are built of hewn stone, have ornamented doors, rustics. Doric, Corinthian, are ornaments about the windows, and balustrades of stone. I have not in all Italy seen so fine convents. The general fault is they run into a superfluity of ornaments. The most predominant are the Corinthian, which order is much affected by the inhabitants, being used in the gates of their city, which are extremely beautiful . . .

As much as the 'barocco leccese' itself, what impressed Berkeley here was what he had criticized as lacking in the urban design of Rome, the attention paid to what he calls 'the meanest houses':

You know that in most cities of Italy the palaces indeed are fine, but the ordinary houses of an indifferent gusto. 'Tis so even in Rome, whereas in Lecce there is a general good *gout*, which descends down to the poorest houses.

On the arduous journey to Lecce, Berkeley boasted of having seen 'many other remarkable towns, amongst the rest five fair cities in one day, the most part built of white marble, whereof the names are not known to Englishmen'.

A careful reading of Berkeley's second journal functions as a fascinating complementary background to this letter which still conveys something of the breathlessness of its source. Not surprisingly, we find that Berkeley and his long-suffering pupil 'were stared at like men dropt from the sky' by the natives. They

passed through 'various beautiful landscapes', Caserta, prior to its conversion into the Bourbon showpiece, and Benevento, whose Arch of Trajan Berkeley described as 'one of the finest remains in Italy'. As the journey progressed – apparently conducted in two small chariot-like chaises – the pencil notes reverted to English but become less decipherable as if jotted down whilst in motion. At Canosa, which he knew from Livy's account of the Battle of Cannae, Berkeley must surely have been the first and only Northern European for two or three hundred years to describe the remarkable twelfth-century Tomb of Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, which is attached to the Cathedral (though entered from inside it). At Barletta they saw what Berkeley calls 'the Colossus of Heraklius, 20 palms high, this brought from Constantinople in 1204'. Recently restored, this 5th century bronze is now considered more likely to represent Marcian or perhaps Valentinian. Searching constantly for evidence of Tarantulas and the Tarantella dancing thought to cure the spider's bite, via Trani, Biseglia, Molfetta, Bari, Monopoli and Brindisi, until finally, on 27 May they arrived at Lecce.

Lodging that night in what he described as 'a miserable camera locanda', the next morning Berkeley notes briefly that Corpus Christi was to be celebrated and then launches – stream-of-consciousness-style – into an extraordinary account of what he saw about him, enthusing first about the festival itself and then about the no less volatile architecture as he began to realise what he had stumbled upon:

standards, images, streamers, host, rich habits of priests, ecclesiastics of all sorts, confraternities, militia, guns, squibs, crackers, new cloaths. Piazza in it an ancient Corinthian pillar sustaining the bronze statue of S: Orontius, protexi & protegam, marble statue on horseback of Charles the 5th, another on horseback of a King of Spain on the top of a fountain adorned with many bad statues; Jesuites college most magnificent [possible source for the long, repetitive facade of Castletown] / fine buildings of hewn stone, ornamented windows, pilasters and large streets diverse piazzas, facades of churches and / Inhabitants 16,000 / 8 miles from the sea / oil only commodity / convents 14, nunneries 16 / streets open, pleasant but crooked / several open places / situate in a most spacious plain / gusto in the meanest houses, no where so common ornamented doors and windows, balconies, pillars, balustrades all of stone / the stone easily wrought / incredible profusion of ornaments in the facades of churches convents and pillars or pilasters (mostly



composite or corinthian) festoons, flowerpots, puttini and other animals crouded in the chapters above the foliages / double freezers filled with relievo i.e. beside the common frize another between the chapters / took particular notice of the Jesuites church that of the Dominicans, nunnerie of S. Teresa, convent of the Benedictines, of ye Carmelitas, nunnerie of S. Chiara. These and many more deserved attention / most of 'em crouded with ornaments in themselves neat but injudiciously huddled together / The facades of the church and convent of the jesuites noble and unaffected, the air and appearance wonderfully grand, two rows of pilasters, first composite, 2d or upper Ionic with mezzoninos above the second row of windows / windows in front 26 & 2 between each pair of pilasters in front. Orange-trees in the squares within the cloisters long corridors before the chambers which had each a dore of stone ornamented like that of a palace. Some Gr: M.S.S. as of Lycophron, Stephanus de urbibus & Homer in their library, but those dispersed and no index yt I cou'd see. "5 windows in front beside the church / Facade of the Benedictines convent and church wonderfully crouded with ornaments as Likewise the altars generally adorned with twisted pillars flourished all over and loaden with little puttini, birds and ye like in clusters on the chapters and between the wreaths along the fusts of the columns. Nothing in my travels more amazing than the infinite profusion of altorelievo and that so well done there is not surely the like rich architecture in the world. The square of the Benedictines is the finest I ever saw, the cloisters have a flat roof and ballustrade supported by double beautiful pillars with rich capitells, a fountain also and statues in the middle, the corridors above stairs are long lofty and wide in proportion . . . each chamber of the fathers hath a noble balcony of stone . . .

In a slightly calmer frame of mind, Berkeley described the Hospital, 'rustic at bottom, double pilasters. Doric below, Ionic above', but continues to express wonder at the 'bold flights of Architecture, as in the facade of S: Matteo a nunnery. / garlands and cornets often round their pillars and pilasters'. Finally he concludes with an attempt at explanation for the extraordinary phenomenon:

In no part of Italy such a general gusto of Architecture / environs well inhabited / Gates Corinthian and composite / Jesuites convent vaste building for 14 fathers / no river / their gusto too rich and luxuriant, occasion'd without doubt by the facility of working their stone / they seem to shew some remains of the spirit and elegant genius of the Greeks formerly inhabited these parts /

If there had been any doubt about the motivation behind Berkeley's expedition to Sicily a few months later, his attribution of what he likes most about *il barocco leccese* to the lingering 'genius of the Greeks' in Lecce surely dispels it.

Since the discovery of his signature in the University of Padua visitors' book, it is now clear that Berkeley visited the Veneto in 1719, prior to returning south to Florence and thence home in the following year. Perhaps he even met Lord Burlington there, who as well as revisiting Italy in order to look at Palladian Vicenza, may have been secretly meeting and even financing Jacobite plotters. But in contrast to Burlington and his more narrow-minded associates, Berkeley's Palladianism, which so rapidly evolved into neo-classicism, did not preclude an enjoyment of almost opposite styles, even after his crucial encounter with Greek Doric. Though he championed the temples even before John Breval illustrated them in the second edition of his *Remarks* of 1738 (itself an underestimated source for the Greek Revival), he retained his capacity to appreciate the regional baroque of Turin, Catania and Lecce. We have no direct evidence of what he thought of Vanbrugh and Wren but from what we have seen, it is most probable that unlike Lord Shaftesbury and the strictest Burlingtonians, but very much like Edward Lovett Pearce and James Gandon, he would have admired their individual and intelligent eclecticism.

Berkeley's grand total of almost five years in Italy manifested itself in many ways in later life. With its carefully chosen books, pictures, and Italian music master for the children, the Bishop's household at Cloyne seems to have been one of the most cultivated in the British Isles. His architectural expertise spilled over into his philosophical writings on at least one notable occasion, in the anti-Shaftesburian and anti-freethinking *Alciphron*, with its superb exposition of a quasi-functionalist theory of beauty and proportion. Consistent with his *New Theory of Vision*, Berkeley argues that 'beauty is an object, not of the eye, but of the mind' so that proportion also is ultimately dependent upon use and reason; the beauty of a chair, for example, depending upon our knowing what it is supposed to be used for. Citing another example, apparently at random, Berkeley writes:

The architects judge a door to be of a beautiful proportion, when height is double of the breadth. But if you should invert a well-proportioned door, making its breadth become the height, and its

height the breadth, the figure would still be the same, but without that beauty in one situation which it had in another. What can be the cause of this, but that, in the forementioned supposition, the door would not yield convenient entrances to creatures of a human figure? But, if in any other part of the universe there should be supposed rational animals of an inverted stature, they must be supposed to invert the rule of proportion of doors, and to them that would appear beautiful which to us was disagreeable.

These words were written on Rhode Island between 1729 – 31, when Berkeley was still hoping that funds would arrive to enable him to establish his colonial college on Bermuda. While he was waiting, he had a house built (or rebuilt) for himself and his growing family on the outskirts of Newport. This house, which he named 'Whitehall' was unremarkably 'regional' in style but for its striking Ionic doorcase which was almost certainly based on plate 56 of William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones*, first published in 1727. In the 1740s, incidentally, Berkeley collaborated with his exact contemporary Kent on the design and inscription of the Wainwright tomb in Chester Cathedral, but they would certainly have met in the 1720s in Burlington House if not indeed in Italy. House and distinguished doorcase still survive, the latter having been described as perhaps 'the first expression of the Palladian idiom to find its way to New England'. That its proportions are more squat than those of its Italianate model is due to the fact the left-hand panel is false, merely covering a blank wall. There can be little doubt that it was whilst attempting to solve this architectural problem that Berkeley dreams up the example he exploited in *Alciphron*. It seems appropriate that the solution he settled upon was essentially classical but adapted to particular circumstances and, thanks to its origins in a carefully cultivated, ultimately 'canonical' mind, thoroughly dignifies what is otherwise an 'ordinary' house in the most 'regional' location Berkeley had yet visited.

# TRANSLATION AS A METAPHOR FOR SALVATION: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH VERSIONS OF DANTE'S *COMMEDIA*

VALERIA TINKLER-VILLANI

Any student of the ways in which English artists appropriated Dante for their own purposes ends up asking himself the question: Why was it that Dante so obsessed first the Romantics, and then even more the Victorians, and later many of the Moderns? At least part of the answer is that, throughout this period, Dante has stood in the centre of English literature and culture, not only as a historical figure and a great artist, but also a fictional character – the protagonist of his own poem. He was, therefore, real but also fictional, and further, because of the nature of his fiction, he could be seen either as almost divine or, alternatively, as demonic. He thus became a myth, which could embody many of the values of English culture, and transform them. This process, by which Dante assumes and transforms a set of native values, is well illustrated in the first flourishing of interest in Dante, in the eighteenth century. The primary aim of this paper is to shed some light onto the process by which Dante became a catalyst in the transmission and transformation of certain values in English literature. This process occurred mainly through translations into English from the *Commedia*. My secondary aim here is to illustrate the function which translation assumes in providing a new emerging literary tradition with a model, which is read and interpreted in various ways.

The aesthetic values which gave shape to Dante's *Commedia* in its English version can be grouped under four headings: first, the importance of the visual and the arguments concerning the sister arts; secondly, the sublime, or grand style, which consists of the rhetorical sublime and the pathetic sublime; thirdly, that derivation from the sublime, so characteristic of the eighteenth century – the Gothic Revival in both literature and the visual arts; fourthly, and lastly, a set of minor trends in English Literature which have been seen as contributing to one larger trend which we call pre-

Romanticism – I am referring here to the sentimental, Northern primitivism, Miltonic sublimity in style, the imitation of Spenser, the cosmic journey of the poetry of Edward Young, the figure of the bardic poet, and graveyard poetry. These aspects of English poetry are identified in Dante's poem by English readers, but, more importantly, they are developed, emphasized, and added by the translators, who introduce on the English scene a version of Dante which becomes, in this way, thoroughly English.

When, in the eighteenth century, attention was more and more directed towards Dante, interest focused on two items in particular: the figure of Count Ugolino and the figure of Dante himself. The first translations from the *Commedia* were all of the Ugolino episode; and the first discussions of Dante's work in other arts were also based on this episode. The figure of Ugolino, therefore, came to stand for Dante and his work. In fact, later, even the figure of Dante himself came to be thought of in terms of Ugolino.

The first introduction of Dante's work into English literature in the eighteenth century is in the work of Jonathan Richardson the elder, a very important scholar of the times. He translated the episode of Ugolino not in a discussion on literature, but in the context of the visual arts. So it is via the recognition of the intensely visual nature of Dante's creation, and in the context of the argument on the relative powers of the sister arts that Dante is placed in the centre of English culture. Richardson's great influence on the English scene established the fame of Dante in the arts; paintings on the topic of Ugolino in particular flourished from that time on.

A friend of Reynolds, Richardson is particularly known for his studies on the idea of the sublime in painting and sculpture; and it is through the sublime that Dante enters fully upon the English scene. But for Richardson the sublime was not the grand style, nor the pathetic, but a tool for 'the communication of ideas'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, in Richardson's translation Ugolino is not presented as a pathetic father, but as an impressive picture of despair. Ugolino is, in the words of Jonathan Richardson, 'like a statue'. So it is not surprising that, later, Ruskin should see Dante as the author of a great pictorial poem, to such an extent that, in his pantheon of great artists, he placed Dante together with Phidias and Michael Angelo, rather than with Homer and Shakespeare.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is within this continuing tradition of the strong visuality of Dante's

poem that we can better understand the works of Dante's illustrators, and even Tom Phillips and Peter Greenway's recent 'TV Dante.'

As Samuel Monk has so fully discussed, the sublime in English literature came to be divided into two streams: on the one hand the rhetorical sublime, or the grand style, which eventually fell into disrepute, and on the other hand the pathetic, or emotional sublime, which became more and more central.<sup>3</sup> It is the pathetic which Joseph Warton sees in Dante's Ugolino. After translating the episode into English prose, he states:

Perhaps the Inferno of Dante, is the next composition to the Iliad, in point of originality and sublimity. And with regard to the pathetic, let this tale stand a testimony of his abilities: for my own part, I truly believe it was never carried to a greater height.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly Warton sees Homer and Dante as similar in terms of the sublime in general, but then moves to distinguish Dante's work as being the greatest of all in terms of the pathetic – the later emotional sublime. It is remarkable that the translation from the Dante which precedes this comment should occur in *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*. For it appears as a striking digression. In fact, Warton was trying to tackle something important to him and to English poetry: to place side by side two different traditions – the native English tradition of established models, based on the classics and on French critical values, and exemplified by the poetry of Pope, and the quite different poetry of Dante.

As for the rhetorical sublime, it also appears in versions of the Ugolino episode, most clearly in the version of Ugolino by the Earl of Carlisle – a not very famous scholar of the day. By eliminating all physical movement, by introducing grand rhetoric, particularly in the speech of the children, and by stressing static visual allegory, Carlisle produces, and I quote, a 'horrid tale', in which the human drama is buried under operatic gestures.<sup>5</sup> Carlisle's translation is characterized, indeed, by the static quality of opera, or of the more rhetorical grand style of formal English 17th and 18th century heroic tragedy.

Beyond the various styles adopted by the translators, the story of Ugolino remains that of a father who recounts, with great feeling, how he is forced to witness the deaths of his children; Ugolino

becomes a sentimental hero, and indeed accounts of continental travellers prove that already by 1726 the tower of famine was the destination of the sentimental traveller. Great was the disappointment of John Durrant Breval who says:

At Pisa, I was desirous to see the *Torre di Fame*, remarkable for the disastrous End of Count Ugolino and his four or five Sons, pathetically described by the Great Dante, but found the entrance walled up . . . (*DEL*, p. 204)

It is Thomas Gray's translation that shows to what an extent Dante could be absorbed into a native tradition. His version of Ugolino has a very strong element of the pathetic because of the interplay of feelings and of physical movement which he emphasizes and introduces. Gray's version is a tale with a strong narrative movement, reinforced by the varied form of the blank verse Gray uses. This version was an early exercise when he was studying Italian, and could not have contributed to Dante's fame in England; but Gray did write a footnote on Dante in his "Elegy Written In a Country Churchyard", which became an extremely famous poem. So Dante would then be associated with Gray, and his poetry with the characteristics of Gray's work – such as his antiquarian interests, his translations of Icelandic sagas, his interest in northern mythology, and his attachment to the school of churchyard poets and to what we now call pre-romanticism.

Paradoxically, a catholic poet from Southern Europe thus becomes a means to turn to England's native sources – but myth has little to do with logic. Following a process not dissimilar from placing Roman statues along the Thames to underline England's own aspiration towards empire, but in significance more similar to regarding a gothic ruin from a pre-Norman past as a reminder of the civic liberties enjoyed under the Saxon kings, Dante becomes such a gothic ruin, to be placed within the English landscape.

In their versions of the Ugolino episode, all these early translators, except maybe Joseph Warton, add blood and other graphic details which increase the horror of the scene. Richardson presents us with a Ugolino with 'shuddering lips', Gray gives him gore-dyed lips, Carlisle turns Dante's 'capelli' into 'the clotted blood/with hair'. But it was inevitable that Ugolino's story would be seen as a tale of gothic fiction. It is, after all, a tale of imprisonment and terrible torture, and that at the hand of a Bishop. The setting, too, is gothic:

an isolated tower, with a small window and a locked door. And the dream of the hunt is truly with the nightmare of the mind pursued and imprisoned. All this makes of Ugolino a gothic hero.

But if gothic fiction started as a movement parallel to other eighteenth century trends such as graveyard poetry and sentimental romance, it underwent drastic changes, which transformed it into what has been called the dark romantic, characteristic of the nineteenth century, and best exemplified by Byron.

G.R. Thomson describes the difference between the gothic and the dark romantic hero. The gothic hero ends in despair, pain and annihilation. He is torn apart by demons. But the dark romantic hero, and I quote, 'by working in and through evil and darkness, by withholding final investment of belief in either good or evil, by enduring the treachery of his own mind, and by accepting his crucifixion by whatever demonic forces may exist, perhaps attains some Sysiphean or Promethean semblance of victory.'<sup>7</sup> This is the state of Byron's Manfred, or of his Cain. Cain in particular becomes the representative of such a state: branded with the mark of a terrible but mysterious crime, and hence an outsider, he is both criminal and victim. In these terms, the dark romantic hero is therefore similar to the Byronic hero, a figure, according to the definition of Jerome McGann – and I quote – 'cast into antithetical terms . . . (and who can) foster ambivalent perspectives'.<sup>8</sup> Ugolino, a traitor punished on earth and in hell, torn by the torments of his story, in turn torments his own betrayer and murderer and therefore unifies the roles of gothic hero, dark romantic hero. Assuming himself the role of Satan, even the pit of hell he continues, prometheus-like, his vain destructive struggle against the forces of evil.

The shift from sentimental and pathetic protagonist into gothic and dark romantic hero, including the ambivalence of the latter, is definitely present in a later translation of the episode by Richard Warton, in 1804<sup>9</sup>. Here, the gothic claptrap is highlighted: Ruggieri is called priest very often, once in the combination "perfidious priest"; the word 'horror' is added whenever at all possible; and blood charnel house imagery is added. So, in the opening of the episode Ugolino 'with unhallowed fangs, like common food/Grinded the naked scalp and sucked the blood'. This picture of Ugolino as vampire is stressed further by the complete



additions, for example, of the last four lines of the episode. These are the last six lines of the episode:

The Specter ceas'd: and kindling with disdain  
Snatch the torn scalp with eager fangs again.  
Still as he gnaws, the flesh, the vessels grow,  
Still as he quaffs, the purple current flow.  
Still o'er th'eternal wound the fibres spread:  
Such is their mutual doom, and such th'atonement paid.

The repetition of the fangs and of blood, and the reference to Ugolino as a Spectre make of him a vampire. But in terms of Thomson's definition of the dark romantic hero, the external healing of the wound, which requires eternal gnawing, introduce a Sisiphean, or Promethean doom, and the atonement paid aids the acceptance of this crucifixion by demonic forces. In terms of McGann's definition of the Byronic hero, Ugolino also qualifies. For he is introduced at the beginning as a victim, more sinned against than sinning, when Warton adds a footnote to his text explaining that Ugolino had "by the wiles of the Bishop Ruggieri been led into a plot against his country." But Warton's Ugolino must also bear the mark of Cain, and so he makes Ugolino look at his sons, and recognize in their features 'the likes of their sinful sire', where the adjective 'sinful' is an addition.

Particularly once the rest of Dante's poem came to be translated, Dante himself came to be seen in terms of the figure of Ugolino. Both seen as outcasts desiring vengeance, both seen as inflicting punishment on their tormentors, Ugolino and Dante attracted the imagination of English poets, scholars and artists. The features which gave shape to the English version of Ugolino were added also to the version of Dante himself, who also became demonic. To begin with, the man, the writer and the protagonist were seen as one. So, already in 1719 Richardson describes the history of Florence and Dante's role in it and adds: 'This was Dante, who . . . was ruined by the commotion of the times'. He then continues 'This great man . . . in his passage through hell introduces count Ugolino . . .'. Later, Fuseli points out how the protagonist's decision in Canto 33 of Hell not to respect his promise to Fra Alberigo is a 'moral lapse' on the part of Dante. Fuseli is one of many to remain uncertain about the moral stance of a writer who

describes so accurately such dreadful punishments. The result is that by the nineteenth century Dante had become, like his own Ugolino, a figure of Satan. Even the deliberate attempt by some translators to counteract this view of Dante as being an inaccurate and extreme one, failed, for by then Dante had been fully absorbed into the English scene. In 1782 Charles Rogers, an antiquarian, produced a relatively literal, straight version of the original with little or no interpretative additions. This was hardly read, and the author never had it reprinted. In 1785, Henry Boyd's version of *Inferno* fared better, probably because of Boyd's strong use of the sublime and of English native traditions. In fact, the poetry of Spenser, Milton and Young is more prominent in his verse than the poetry of Dante. Boyd went so far as to distort the original in order to counteract the view of Dante held by readers like Fuseli. Whereas in the original Dante had refused to fulfil his promise to Fra Alberigo, saying "e cortesia fu lui esser villano", in Boyd, Dante the protagonist is on the point of doing so, when Virgil intervenes:

"Far be the task profane!" the Mantuan cry'd.  
Mute I obeyed my unrelating guide."<sup>10</sup>

The responsibility of the cruel act is attributed unequivocally to Virgil, the protagonist remaining passive, but innocent. But Boyd's attempt to create a 'pius Dante' failed, as often when a text attempts to enforce a deliberate intention. Dante certainly remained a figure of Satan. In Macaulay words,

We think we see him standing amidst those smiling and radiant spirits with that scowl of unutterable misery on his brow, and that curl of bitter disdain on his lips, which all his portraits have preserved, and which might furnish Chantrey with hints for the head of his projected Satan.<sup>11</sup>

These features belong to Melmoth the Wanderer (and here the word 'unutterable' is a giveaway in terms of the gothic) and to Byron's *Manfred* or indeed his Dante, rather than to the Dante we know.

Thus Dante became a mask which the English artist could use to give a face to his own creations. What did Dante offer the English mind? Out of many, I have selected two main points. First, that major issue in eighteenth century poetry, ridiculed by Pope – whether it was still possible to write an English epic poem. The problem was one of theme and setting. After Spenser's

example, Milton, as we learn from his 1638 Latin lament on the death of Charles Diodati, had planned to write on the theme of Arthur or Merlin; later, Wordsworth, too, hoped he could write on 'some British theme, some old Romantic tale by Milton left unsung' (*Prelude* 1805, I 179 – 80). But Spenser and Milton had left little unsung. All that was left was imitation. One of the major scholars and poets of the late eighteenth century, now almost totally forgotten, William Bayley, found the solution to the problem of imitation in Dante. In his *An Essay on Epic Poetry* (1782), a poem in five epistles, he states that it is indeed possible to write an English epic poem as yet. But first, the poem must be placed in a different province: 'Tis the Celestial sphere, or Fairy ground'.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, the poem will have to follow a different example, that is that of 'daring Dante', who produced a 'wild Vision'. Hayley also points to the poet who should be able to accomplish this task, naming William Mason, famous antiquarian, author of 'The English Garden' (4 books, 1771 – 81). And it is in order to provide the poet with a suitable example that Hayley translated the first three cantos of *Inferno*, which he added as a footnote to his poem.

In addition to this translation, Hayley's own poem *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781), very popular in his time, is also of relevance for our discussion, for, like Joseph Warton, Hayley, too, juxtaposes Pope and Dante. This poem is in five cantos, and Hayley himself points out in his preface that his basic design is to alternate a canto in the manner of Pope and one in the manner of Dante. But rather than a juxtaposition, here we have integration. The foreign, catholic medieval poet is inserted within the established native tradition. Hayley is attempting to produce a new genre, which includes tradition, with Pope, and renewal with Dante.

Dante represented, to the English mind of the late eighteenth century, a particular kind of renewal. To move towards the conclusion of my argument with the second point about what Dante offered the English scholar, I turn to the famous translator of Dante, Henry Francis Cary. When still a student at Oxford, in 1792, he wrote to Anna Seward to defend his liking for Dante in particular, and the Italians in general. He juxtaposes the Italians with the French – these are his words:

I much wonder that you should listen to the idea, that a fondness for Italian poetry is the corruption of our taste, when you cannot

but recollect that our greatest English poets, Chaucer, Spenser and Milton, have been professed admirers of the italians, and that the sublimer province of poetry, imagination, has been more or less cultivated among us, according to the degree of estimation in which they have been held.

The poetry of the French is diametrically opposed to that of the Italians: the latter are full of sublimity, pathos, and imagination; the former of ethics, and descriptions of common life.<sup>13</sup>

Thus Cary defines the true native line of English poetry, the poetry of sublimity and imagination, and sees it as following the tradition of the Italians. In the same letter, he continues by saying:

we have lately condescended to go back a little to our own masters, and to them and the Greek poets we owe all the best writers of our times, Gary, Warton, Hayley, Mason.

This combination of names is not what we would produce nowadays as a summary of 'the best writers' of the 1790s – Crabbe or Akenside would qualify earlier than Hayley or Mason. But these are the names that we have come across in our survey of the translation of Dante into English. Thus the Italians, and Dante, become 'our own masters' – the true ancestors of the English native tradition of the poetry of imagination and sublimity, providing authority, a precedent, and a new example.

Traduttore traditore – say the Italians, all translators being figures of the traitor Ugolino. But while it is true that in relation to the source culture – in this case, Italian literature and the original of Dante's poem – the translator is a traitor, and his translation a fallen version of the original, it is also true that for the target culture, the culture into which the translation is made, translation can mean salvation, that is, the translation of a foreign author becomes a way of providing an authority and justification for deviant values, a developing ideology and a change in native literary tradition.

## Notes

My title derives from F.T. Steiner's discussion of the nature of translation in the eighteenth century in *English Translation Theory 1650–1800* (Assen and Amsterdam, 1975), p.2.

1. Jonathan Richardson the Elder, *Two Discourses* (London 1719), p. 259.
2. *Modern Painters* II, Part III, section I, vii – 4.

3. Samuel Monk, *The Sublime*, Ann Arbor, 1962.
4. Joseph Warton, *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 1, 1756; 4th edn. London 1782; facsimile reprint (Farnborough, 1969), 1, p. 266.
5. Earl of Carlisle, *Poems . . . by the Earl of Carlisle*, 1773; as quoted in Paget Toynbee, *Dante in English Literature from Chaucer to Cary*, 2 vols (London, 1909): 1, 337 – 8. Further reference to Toynbee's anthology in the text will be to *DEL* to *DEL II*.
6. *DEL*, p. 204
7. G.R. Thomson, "Introduction", in *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in dark Romanticism* (Washington State U.P., 1974), p. 6.
8. Jerome McGann, 'The Aim of Blake's Prophecies', in *Blake's Sublime Allegory*, eds Curran and Wittreich jr., (Madison, Wisconsin, and London, 1973) p. 13.
9. *DEL*, p. 661
10. Henry Boyd, *A Translation of the Inferno of Dante Alighieri in English verse, with Historical Notes, and the Life of Dante to which is added A SPECIMEN OF A NEW TRANSLATION OF ARIOSTO*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1785) canto XXXIII, stanza XXVIII.
11. Lord Macaulay, 'Criticism of the Principal Italian Writers', *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, January 1824; in *Miscellaneous Writings*, (London, n.d.), p. 38.
12. William Hayley, *Essay on Epic Poetry*, in *William Hayley* (containing facsimile editions of various works), intr. Donald H. Reiman (New York and London, 1979).
13. H.F. Cary, Letter dated 'Christ Church, Oxford, May 7 1792', in *Memoir*, 1, p. 42 – 3.

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# FROM PETRARCH TO DANTE: THE DISCOURSE OF DISENCHANTMENT IN SHELLEY'S *THE TRIUMPH OF LIFE*

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Ever since A.C. Bradley and F.M. Stawell recorded numerous echoes of Dante and Petrarch in Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* nearly eighty years ago,<sup>1</sup> scholars have concentrated their attention on the nature of Shelley's debt to these poets – a debt that has been confirmed by no less a critic than T.S. Eliot, who claimed it was Shelley's most Dantesque poem<sup>2</sup>. However, the credit for establishing Dantean influence should go to John Taaffe, a cultured Irishman and a somewhat bumptious member of Shelley's Pisan circle who, in his annotations of the first Pisan edition of *Adonais*, personally sent to him by Shelley, perceived the impact of Dante's *Paradiso* (and to a lesser extent the *Purgatorio*) on Shelley's poetic symbolism – the 'splendour-fragrance' and 'star-flower' configurations which embroider the texture of Shelley's pastoral elegy on the death of Keats<sup>3</sup>. Taaffe, it will be recalled, had written his *Comment on the 'Divine Commedy' of Dante Alighieri* with Shelley's help, and this treatise was eventually published by John Murray in 1822 on Byron's insistence<sup>4</sup>. His discerning of the Dantean echoes in *Adonais*, as Richard Fogle's commentary shows, is revealing in the light it throws on Shelley's method of poetic composition<sup>5</sup>.

Shelley's gradual absorption of Dante's style involved the painstaking process of translation. Conscious imitation was for Shelley, a means of keeping the 'creative energies flowing'. Indeed some of the deliberate echoes of Dante in *Epipsychidion*, for instance, have the effect of bolstering those passages where Shelley's Pisan platonics tended to sag. Dante's *Purgatorio* (and *Paradiso*) could also be tapped to camouflage, under the veil of transcendence, Shelley's own domestic situation when his *ménage à trois* was about to extend to a *ménage à quatre* to include the Pisan damsel in distress, Teresa Viviani, who was then incarcerated in a convent by her despotic father<sup>7</sup>. The Advertisement to

*Epipsychidion* conveniently focuses the cultured reader's attention on the poem's elaborate discourse, taking as its model Dante's intricate relationship with the reader in the *Vita Nuova*, while at the same time appending a literal translation from Dante's *Canzone* (the first canzone of the *Convito* – 'Voi ch'intendendon il terzo ciel movete') which, the author claims, is only intelligible to a certain class of reader – presumably as intelligent and discerning as the poet himself – who would be expected to be *au fait* with the whole corpus of Dante's works. The sporadic echoes of the *Paradiso* in *Adonais* have the effect of providing a dynamic structure which supports the poem's ascent into the celestial regions, with the apotheosis of *Adonais* into a heavenly beacon where Christian sentiment is fused with the Platonic One<sup>8</sup>. Shelley's 'that light whose smile kindles the Universe/That beauty in which all things work and move' is, as Taaffe observed, a direct borrowing from the *Paradiso* and helps to explain his concluding comment on the 'Italianate' quality of this elegy:

... for me I am acquainted with nothing in English that combines such sublimity, learning and melody as this little poem in so small a compass. It is a kind of poetry little familiar to our tongue, or to any modern tongue but Italian.

This comment would perhaps be more apt if it were to be applied to *The Triumph of Life*, which perfectly reproduces the rhythmical cadences of Dante's *terza rima*. Taaffe had not read this poem, since it did not appear in print during his lifetime.

In all probability this work grew out of Shelley's reading of Petrarch's *Trionfi* which, according to Mary Shelley, he first read in September 1819<sup>9</sup>. The germ of this poem could be traced to an allegorical prose fable in the Petrarchan manner entitled "Una Favola", written presumably with Emilia Viviani in mind – a fable which describes the tussle of twin sisters, La Vita and La Morte, for the love of a youth who mistrusts them both; La Vita being more treacherously seductive, ('aveva reputazione di incantatrice gagliarda, e più finta che alcuna sirena'). Here, in his halting Italian, Shelley, in Petrarchan fashion is articulating old concerns – the restless quest for the immortal in the sphere of mortals, and the self-destructive craving for the moth for the lamp. Charles Robinson has argued convincingly that Shelley wrote this poem with the

*Trionfi* in mind, and that the poem serves as a seventh, and probably final, triumphal procession in the series begun by Petrarch with its succession of 'trionfi' – Love over Man, Chastity over Love, Death over Mortality, Fame over Death, Time over Fame and Eternity over Time<sup>10</sup>. But in this poem Petrarch's optimism is muted into an ironical commentary in which Shelley questions the earlier optimism of *Hellas* and *Prometheus*.

The link with the *Trionfi* is established in the opening stanzas with their sacramental treatment of Nature that responds to the vitalizing rays of the radiant Taskmaster. Petrarch's Vaucluse is transported to a secluded spot in the Apennines where the Brescian shepherd's weary note can be heard. The dreamer's vision merges into a surrealistic landscape in which Petrarchan allegory is suffused in consciously wrought images reminiscent of Dante's 'citta dolente'. The triumphal chariot of the 'sommo duce' (Petrarch's 'Amor') is transformed into a triumphant car of Life-in-Death subduing its devotees in juggernaut fashion. The smooth transition from Petrarch's representational allegory to Dante's surrealistic world is one of the interesting features of the first part of the poem. The transformation is, in my view, understandable; when one reads the *Trionfi*, one is uncannily aware of the presence of Dante. The obvious explanation is that Petrarch's use of *terza rima* recalls Dante's previous use of the same metre. The sensitive reader (Shelley's ideal reader) becomes aware of a number of distinctly Dantean echoes which, as Carlo Calcaterra has observed, reverberate throughout the first two *Trionfi*<sup>11</sup>. In fact Calcaterra scrupulously records thirty distinct echoes of the *Inferno* in these Cantos and a substantial number – as Shelley must have perceived – come from the *Inferno*. Scholars have explained this as Petrarch's inability to exorcize the spirit of Dante, whom he considered his rival, thereby succumbing to the 'anxiety of influence'. What is remarkable is that Shelley's poem seems to follow the same course for *The Triumph of Life*, I would suggest, reads like a *rifacimento* of Petrarch's *Trionfi* in terms of Dante's *Inferno*. The influence of Dante here extends beyond mere imitation: it is a total absorption of Dante's mode of thinking and feeling. I should like to focus here on the way Shelley assimilates Dante's poetic effects. The encounter with the figure of Rousseau is a case in point. Here Dantean imagery and situations are part



of the texture of the poem and contribute to the dialectical quality of the poem's intertextuality. The poem's structure, incorporating as it does, a vision within a vision, reinforces Shelley's ironic stance – the awareness, suggested by the poem's discourse, of the dichotomy between the transcendental and the terrestrial. The light of life, which is blinding and binding, illuminates humanity's pathetic inability to soar beyond the 'diadem of earthly thrones or gems'. The luminaries of the Enlightenment, singled out of the crowd by Rousseau, are all captivated by the power of life itself – that ruling passion which is, paradoxically, an enervating and disfiguring force which subdues Frederick, Catherine, Leopold and the sage Voltaire himself.

Rousseau is the poem's central consciousness, assuming the double role of victim and spectator. He has striking affinities with the characters one meets in the *Inferno*, for Shelley portrays him in the Dantesque manner, that is, as Dante would have portrayed him had he known him. The influence of Dante here goes beyond the uneasy stages of apprenticeship, the imitative or the purely decorative. The process is one of complete assimilation, where the encounter between the two poets (Shelley considered Rousseau a poet) could, *mutatis mutandis*, have materialized in the *Inferno*. Rousseau is reduced to a disembodied voice emanating from a distorted tree-stump on the hillside. There is a deliberate echo of Pier de la Vigne who shares a similar fate in the *Inferno*, his predicament being brought about by his committing the 'sin' of putting an end to his own life. He had, as Dante makes him admit, committed a crime against himself – 'ingiusto fece me contra me giusto'. But Shelley's Rousseau is a more complex character – he is in fact a composite figure who combines Pier de la Vigne's melancholy with Farinata's arrogant disdain and Brunetto Latini's solicitude. Shelley's conception of Rousseau is baffling. There is no doubt that Shelley revered Rousseau not only as a *philosophe* who sparked off the French revolution, but also as a 'poet' whom he pronounced 'the greatest man since Milton'.<sup>13</sup> That Shelley himself shared a kindred feeling with Rousseau is evident from the representation of Rousseau's self-analysis ('I was overcome by my own heart alone'), which echoes Shelley's view of his own weakness: 'Love far more than hatred has been to me . . . the source of all sorts of mischief.'<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, Shelley's Rousseau

inhabits a Dantean Inferno and is given a role which is characteristic of some of the personages Dante and Virgil encounter in the 'citta di Dite'. In the absence of the customary explanatory preface, Shelley goes out of his way to foreground the Dantean aspect of this poem – 'a wonder worthy of the rhyme of him who returned from the depths of Hell to tell/in words of hate and awe the wondrous story/how all things are transfigured except love'. Shelley exploits the ironic possibilities afforded by this strategy of linking his poem with the *Inferno*, for the transformation brought about Life-in-Death (conceived in terms of the absolute triumph of a Roman general) is here depicted as a hideous transfiguration sustaining what Paul de Man calls the poem's 'trajectory from erased self-knowledge to the disfiguration of Life-in-Death'<sup>15</sup> – a trajectory which is evident in Dante's *Inferno*, and which is connected with Dante's ironic conception of Divine Justice. In Dante's *Inferno*, poetic justice has ironic implications – 'la legge del contrapasso' ensures that the sinner is punished by his crime mainly through the ironic mode of representation,<sup>16</sup> the obvious cases being the sin of Paolo and Francesca where the 'bufera infernal' eternally buffets the impetuous lovers and the punishment of Pier de la Vigne who, in the act of self-annihilation, is tormented by what Patrick Boyde had called 'a monstrous fusion of human spirit and tree-like frame'<sup>17</sup>. Shelley here follows Dante in exploiting the ironic possibilities of Rousseau's fault, the ultimate irony being that the advocate of a return to nature is himself distorted into a tree-stump; where Shelley adapts the Dantean device of literalizing the metaphor, Rousseau's fault, which Shelley makes him admit, is that he has fallen victim to life, his destruction being caused by his unfulfilled desires: 'I was overcome/By my own heart alone' (240 – 1). Shelley here also draws one of the most enigmatic scenes in the *Inferno*, Dante's encounter with his former mentor Brunetto Latini. Scholars have found this passage to be the most equivocal of all Dante's encounters with his contemporaries<sup>18</sup>. Dante's warm affection for Brunetto is undeniably present and yet, though he expresses amazement at meeting his tutor in hell he confines him to the fiery desert of the sodomites. Brunetto for, his part, shows a deep affection for Dante whom he treats as his protégé: he recognizes Dante's poetic talent and avows that he would have

supported him against his detractors ('dato avrei a l'opera conforto') had death not cut his life short. This is one of the episodes which Shelley must have found rather objectionable, an example of 'Dante's most heretical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments'.<sup>19</sup> But to return to Shelley's poem: in confining Rousseau to his wretched condition in a Dantesque inferno Shelley is being as equivocal as Dante. The search for the meaning of life, which the poem's rhetorical questioning repeatedly underlines, must have made the poet aware that in the *Inferno* the self-regenerative process is effected by Dante by a partial rejection of his former mentor. It is possible to suggest that in his close reading of Dante, Shelley found a reflection of his own imaginative needs, and in another's fate (that of the luminary Rousseau), Shelley now weeps his own<sup>20</sup>. This is perhaps why Rousseau is cast in the ambivalent role of victim and guide, a device which enables Shelley to shift perspective, thereby achieving that visionary quality of 'looking before and after'.

I should like to focus on another aspect of this remarkable poem: the passage in which Shelley seems to draw on Dante's *Purgatorio* for his own purposes. Rousseau's vision and his account of his encounter with 'the shape all light' is the focal point of the poem. Rousseau's 'confession', with its deliberate echoing of Wordsworth's *Immortality Ode*, engages the dialectical quality of the poem's discourse.<sup>21</sup> The change in the scenario suggests a purgatorial perspective which is meant to condition our response to Rousseau's experience. An important link is established between this female figure ('the shape all light' and her crystal glass) and Matelda, the beautiful maiden whom Dante meets in Canto XXIX of the *Purgatorio*, a passage which had such an impact on Shelley's imagination that he actually translated it, while preserving the *terza rima*. The encounter with Matelda is indeed one of the finest passages in the whole of the *Commedia* and it is here that Dante establishes a larger figural mode which prepares the reader for the graceful ascent from the natural world (the terrestrial garden of bliss) to the symbolic landscape of the celestial regions, and the advent of the Griffin and 'quella milizia del celeste regno', with its fusion of the classical harmony of the pagan world with Christian notions of the terrestrial paradise. Dante's Matelda is said to represent human wisdom reconciled with God – the 'donna gentile' of the *Vita*

*Nuova* leading to Beatrice, Divine Wisdom, represented in the *Paradiso* by a sublimated version of the Florentine woman Dante loved<sup>22</sup>. But she also reminds Dante of the innocence of the classical world before it was brutally disrupted by Pluto:

Tu mi fai remembrar dove e qual era  
Proserpina nel tempo che perdette  
la madre lei, ed ella primavera.

Shelley consciously invites a parallel with this episode which heralds Dante's regenerative process. Rousseau's meeting with 'the Shape' evokes the parallel with the Matelda passage. It is here that Rousseau's manner changes: from victim of the chariot of life, he becomes a guide or 'duce', and imagery is deployed as a structuring device in Shelley's skilful use of synaesthesia to suggest an enchantment of the senses in Rousseau's account of his imaginative growth;

... but all the place  
was filled with many sounds woven into one  
oblivious melody, confusing sense.

This passage, suggestive of the Wordsworthian-Coleridgean imagination, is ultimately Dantesque in its inspiration – for the poem's strategy is to run a parallel course with the Purgatorial scenario that reflects a heightening of the senses in the gradual dissipation of shadows as the pilgrim/quester approaches the culmination of his journey towards the sublime. Rousseau's account of his seduction by life resounds with echoes from the *Purgatorio* – the natural landscape vibrates with an intense irradiation ('emerald fire', 'flashing rays', 'silver music', 'fierce splendour'). 'Splendour' is in fact a direct borrowing of Dante's 'splendore', a resonance which, as Taaffe observed, Shelley had used with great effect in *Adonais*<sup>23</sup>. These echoes of the *Purgatorio*, however, have the force of a marginal ironic commentary which subverts the poetic quality of Rousseau's 'excited reverie'. Indeed, the effect of the Shape's Nepenthe on Rousseau is to blind with cold light, encasing him within Life-in-Death. Shelley here reverses the process of regeneration which is conveyed in the *Purgatorio* through images of light and refraction as Dante and Virgil ascend the mountain. These images in *The Triumph* merely light the way to Rousseau's (and Shelley's) disenchantment: the guiding beacon of the Enlightenment is led

to his bright destruction, like the moth that is attracted and repelled by the lamp, a favourite image with Shelley. The process of enchantment by life, induced by the Shape's Nepenthe, is in effect a measure of Rousseau's disillusion. Shelley's irony is double-edged – the Enlightenment is mocked by an excess of light, and Wordsworthian Nature, here epitomized by the spirit of the youthful Rousseau, merely accentuates the frustration of the visionary.

It is not surprising that Shelley should have turned to Dante in order to come to terms with his own lingering doubts about the efficacy of poetry in an age in which the 'absurdities of society had defaced' eternal truths charactered upon the imagination of men'. His own disenchantment is reflected in a changing landscape which is an ironic reversal of the quester's progress in the *Divina Commedia*, in that Rousseau's vision is actually a regression from the terrestrial Paradise to an infernal mode of existence in which the visionary (Rousseau-Shelley) becomes the living sepulchre of himself. Rousseau's monologue establishes an antithetical link between the Shape and Matelda. Both are connected with the natural beauty of the landscape, but whereas Matelda is an agent of Dante's sublimation to the rarefied atmosphere of the celestial regions (symbolised by Beatrice), the Shape, in trampling out the sparks of Rousseau's mind ('as Day treads out the lamps of night') reduces him to a grotesque version of his former self. Petrarch's bland allegorical representations of the *Trionfi* had sparked off Shelley's poem, but it was Dante who taught Shelley the importance of deploying a larger figural mode in which the quest for self-knowledge could be dramatized in the form of an encounter with a former mentor. Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Inferno* afforded Shelley a deliberate structure of literary allusion which supported the poet's dialectic with himself.

## Notes

1. A.C. Bradley., 'Notes on Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*' *MLR*, 9, (1914) 441 – 56. and F. Melian Stawell, 'Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*', *Essays and Studies* 5(1914), 104 – 131.
2. T.S. Eliot., 'What Dante means to Me', in *To Criticize the Critic* (Faber, 1965), p. 130
3. Richard Harter Fogle., 'John Taaffe's Annotated copy of *Adonais*, K-Sb, Vol 17, (1968), 31 – 52
4. Taaffe's *Comment* focuses on a historical interpretation of the *Inferno* and it deals specifically with the first eight cantos.

5. Richard H. Fogle, 'John Taaffe's Annotated Copy of *Adonais*' *K-SbJ*, Vol 17, (1968), 31 – 52.
6. See Timothy Webb's fine discussion of Shelley's translations from Dante in *The Violet in the Crucible: Shelley and Translation* (Oxford 1976), pp. 310 – 336.
7. See K.N. Cameron, 'The Planet-Tempest Passage in *Epipsychidion*', *PMLA*, 63 (1948) 950 – 72. Richard E. Brown 'The Role of Dante in *Epipsychidion*', *Comparative Literature* 30 (1978) 229 – 48 and Earl Schulze, 'The Dantean Quest of *Epipsychidion*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 1982, 191 – 216.
8. See E.B. Silverman, 'Poetic Synthesis in Shelley's 'Adonais' (The Hague 1972), p. 82 and Alan Weinberg's discussion of Dante's influence in 'Shelley's *Adonais* and its links with Dante' in *Paradise of Exiles: Shelley and Byron in Pisa* edited by M. Curelli and A.L. Johnson (Pisa, 1988), pp. 53 – 67.
9. *Mary Shelley's Journal* edited by Frederick L. Jones (University of Oklahoma Press, 1947) p. 124.
10. Charles E. Robinson, *Shelley and Byron: The Snake and Eagle Wreathed in Fight* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 225 – 31.
11. C. Calcaterra, 'La prima ispirazione del *Trionfi*' in *Nella Selva del Petrarca* (Bologna 1942), pp. 145 – 208.
12. Ernest P. Wilkins, 'On the chronology of the *Triumphs*', in *Studies in the Life and Work of Petrarch* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955), pp. 254 – 72.
13. Ernest P. Wilkins, *Studies on Petrarch and Boccaccio* edited by Aldo S. Bernardo (Padova, 1978). See also Aldo S. Bernardo, 'Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante', *PMLA* 70, (1955) pp. 488 – 514.
14. *Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* edited by Frederick L. Jones (Oxford, 1964), Vol. 2, p. 339. For a full treatment of Shelley's attitude to Rousseau see Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England: The Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* (University of California Press, 1979).
15. Paul de Man, 'Shelley Disfigured' in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 100.
16. See John Freccero's discussion of this aspect of the *Inferno* in his chapter on 'Infernal Irony: the Cates of Hell', in *Dante: the Poetics of Conversion* edited by Rachel Jacoff (Harvard University Press, 1986).
17. Patrick Boyde, *Dante Philomythes and Philosopher* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 73.
18. For a discussion of the ambivalence of Dante's treatment of Brunetto see Richard Kay, *Dante's Swift and Strong* (Kansas 1977), p. 297 – 300. See also Anne Paolucci, 'Brunetto's Race' *Dante Studies* XCV (1977), pp. 153 – 55.
19. in Shelley's comments on Dante in "A Defence of Poetry" in *Shelley's Prose or the Trumpet of a Prophecy* edited by David Lee Clark (London, 1988).
20. I am indebted to Seamus Heaney's essay 'Envy and Identifications: Dante and Modern Poetry' in *Dante Readings* edited by Eric Hayward (Irish Academic Press, 1987).
21. Harold Bloom draws attention to Shelley's parody of the 'Immortality Ode' in Rousseau's vision in his discussion of the 'Triumph of life' in *Shelley's Mythmaking* (Yale University Press, 1959).
22. See Peter Armour's convincing interpretation of Matelda as Wisdom ('As wisdom is to God, so is Matelda to Beatrice, both sister and daughter') in 'Matelda in Eden: The Teacher and the Apple', *Italian Studies*, XXXIV (1979) p. 26.
23. In his annotated copy of *Adonais* (see Richard H. Fogle. *K-Sb-J*, Vol 17, (1968), p.50.
24. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry".

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# WORDSWORTH AND ITALY

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Wordsworth's direct acquaintance with Italy during his most creative years was very slight. His Continental tours of 1790 and 1820 included brief visits to the Italian Alps (and, the second time round, to Milan). But his most comprehensive visit to the country was delayed until 1837, when the discomforts of coach travel in a cholera-stricken land (not to mention the late hours kept up by his travelling-companion, Henry Crabb Robinson), made the whole experience somewhat wearisome to the ageing poet, – though his letters home are a conscientious record of what he saw and felt.

The *idea* of Italy, on the other hand, had figured largely in his imaginative life since childhood. He dreamt of the Sicilian mountains, he tells us in *The Prelude*, long before he read about them in Greek Pastoral; and the *genius loci* of Virgil's and Horace's rural landscapes, which he evoked so vividly for Coleridge's benefit when his friend was absent in Malta and Sicily, was a lifelong inspiration and challenge to him.<sup>1</sup> For Italy, the cradle of Classical and Renaissance civilisation, was also the homeland of a nation whose degradation was mourned over the centuries by poets like Petrarch, Filicaia, and (in his own day) Leopardi, but which might yet rise again to its former glory if the twin evils of Austrian domination and the Pope's temporal power could be removed. While Wordsworth was recuperating at Racedown in 1796 from the aftermath of the French Revolution, and beginning to establish fresh poetic priorities on the eve of his greatest decade as a poet, Napoleon began his Italian campaign, and thereafter Italy was seldom out of the news, or the poet's thoughts.

To understand this Italian dimension to Wordsworth's mind and art, one has to lay aside the fashionable stereotype of him as a brooding genius preoccupied with his own mental powers, and the 'simple' Wordsworth of popular legend, and take a fresh look at his literary culture and political philosophy. His engagement with Italian poets, moralists and historians, which began in his undergraduate years at Cambridge under the aegis of the refugee-

scholar Agostino Isola<sup>2</sup> and lasted for the rest of his life, has never been fully explored: partly perhaps because his acquaintance with Italian works can sometimes only be tentatively established, but more importantly because Italian sources often blend with other influences, Classical and English, so as to become almost indistinguishable from them.<sup>3</sup> Italian connections must not be asserted at the expense of the many other forces that helped to shape his art. Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth's Italian reading has also be taken into account, though Wordsworth came to the language much earlier. A brief discussion cannot provide a comprehensive catalogue of all the works that Wordsworth was probably acquainted with, but it can suggest the nature of his debt to the Italian literary tradition. The abiding presence of Italian writers and artists in his imagination, elusive though it sometimes is, cannot be doubted, so vividly real were they all to him when eventually he visited Vacluse, Savona, Rome and Florence in 1837. Where should we look for evidence of these Italian affiliations?

Some Italian writers exerted a passing influence during his revolutionary period in the early 1790s. He placed Beccaria, for example, the great Enlightenment penal reformer, among those 'distinguished for their exertions in the cause of liberty',<sup>4</sup> and Beccaria's influence blended with Tom Paine's and Godwin's during the poet's republican phase. But Wordsworth soon repudiated Beccaria's utilitarian assumptions when his affinities with Bentham began to emerge, though the poet remained interested in penal questions to the end his days. His final arguments in the *Sonnets upon the punishment of Death* (1839 – 40) were closer to those of Beccaria's grandson, Alessandro Manzoni, whose *Column of Infamy*, published two years later as an appendix to his novel *The Betrothed*, was to explore the problems of human responsibility in much the same spirit, in reaction against the Enlightenment.

Wordsworth's early *penchant* for satire on courts and princes, for example Salvatore Rosa's<sup>5</sup> (who was also familiar to the young poet as a painter in the picturesque tradition) may have coloured the Juvenalian tone of much of Wordsworth's republican writing, which is as much a matter of literary stance as personal animus. But Rosa's attacks on literary pedantry and *marinismo* were more relevant to the poet's long-term aims, since his rejection of Marino's lavish conceits,<sup>6</sup> and the 'gaudiness and inane



phraseology of many modern writers', paved the way for the new 'experimental' manner of *Lyrical Ballads*.

By 1806, in a letter to Francis Wrangham asking him to destroy his early 'Imitation of Juvenal'<sup>7</sup>, Wordsworth said that he had long since decided to steer clear of personal satire. But satirical comment on the *mores* of the age was another matter, and his letters thereafter from London were not entirely free from it.<sup>8</sup> As late as the *Preface of 1815*, he was still allowing a place in poetry for 'philosophical satire', on the model of Horace and Juvenal.<sup>9</sup> He could hardly have done otherwise, for in Coleridge's scheme for the *magnum opus* of *The Recluse*, Wordsworth was to don the mask of satire when he came to treat of the 'high civilisation of cities and towns.'<sup>10</sup> It was natural, therefore, that enough satire was clearly not his *forte*, he should continue to interest himself in works like Tommaso Garzoni's *Hospital of Incurable Fools*,<sup>11</sup> a casebook of human folly which rose to his lofty idea of the genre.

More fundamental, however, was Wordsworth's devotion to Italian epic and pastoral, in the footsteps of Spenser and Milton. In *Michael* and *The Prelude*, he was to show how the older conventions of Ariosto and Tasso, and of Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, which had already been transformed by his English predecessors, could be adapted to the fresh demands of modern poetry.<sup>12</sup> The *Orlando Furioso* had accompanied him on his 'pedestrian tour' to Switzerland in 1790, and Ariosto and Tasso continued to haunt his imagination at Blois, at the height of his hopes for France:

And if a devious traveller was heard  
Approaching from a distance, as might chance,  
With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs  
From the hard floor reverberated, then  
It was Angelica thundering through the woods  
Upon her Palfrey, or that gentler Maid  
Erminia, fugitive as fair as She.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth invokes the romantic epics of the Renaissance before launching into a very different epic mode that 'cherishes our daily life',<sup>14</sup> and in 1802 he was translating the *Furioso* during a break in *Prelude* composition at Dove Cottage. Had he yet finally broken with the world of romance, as he had claimed to have done four years earlier in *Peter Bell*?

Wordsworth's prolonged interest in Ariosto suggests that his first commitment to 'The common growth of mother earth'<sup>15</sup> was not as final as is often supposed. The whimsical prologue to *Peter Bell*, one of his finest imaginative flights, reflects the pull still exerted by Ariosto's romance through all his successive revisions up to the date of publication in 1819. The poet's voyage among the stars in a little boat 'Whose shape is like the crescent-moon' (the 'adventurous Skiff/More daring far than Hippogriff' in the final version), echoes two epic journeys in the *Furioso*, Ruggiero's flight around the world on the back of the hippogriff in Canto IV, and Astolfo's trip to the moon and back in a divinely-powered chariot in Canto XXXIV. Though (as Wordsworth tells us),

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,  
I shall not covet for my dower,  
If I along that lowly way  
With sympathetic heart may stray  
And with a soul of power,<sup>16</sup>

even so, the attractions of the world of romance were not diminished or removed in successive revisions of the text. Wordsworth leaves open the possibility of escape into 'a deep romantic land',

Or we'll into the realm of Faery,  
Among the lovely shades of things;  
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,  
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair;  
The shades of palaces and kings!<sup>17</sup>

He retained the magical and bantering note of his controversial prologue right through to publication. Indeed, the idea of a voyage in an 'air craft' continued to appeal to him. In *On the Frith of Clyde* a late sonnet of 1833, he imagines the view of Arran from the air, echoing his earlier lines from *Peter Bell* about the hippogriff:

Who but must covet a cloud-seat, or skiff  
Built for the air, or winged Hippogriff?  
That he might fly, where no one could pursue . . . .  
And, as a God, light on thy topmost cliff.<sup>18</sup>

The burlesque epics related to the *Orlando Furioso* and the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which captivated the second generation of Romantic poets, and Byron in particular, seem to have left little permanent mark on Wordsworth's mind. But he knew such works

as Pulci's *Il Morgante, Il Malmantile Racquistato* of Lorenzo Lippi, the *Eromana* of Francesco Biondi, and Casti's *Gli Animali Parlanti* (1809)<sup>19</sup>, and they could well furnish a precedent for his mock heroics in the *Peter Bell* prologue. It may be that the difficulties which many readers have found with this jeu d'esprit spring from its echoes of a mode that is foreign to English ears.

More important for Wordsworth, from as early as the Cambridge years, were the commanding figures of Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio, and he was well ahead of many of the readers of his day in his knowledge and appreciation of all three.

Petrarch seems to have been an abiding presence in Wordsworth's life up to his Laureateship, not only as Milton's master in the sonnet, but more importantly because Petrarch set the agenda for the European poets who followed him, and Wordsworth shared his love of Italy and distrust of the Papacy, his preoccupation with memory and human transience, his passion for nature and solitude as the poet of Vaucluse. Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria*, with its praise of the literary life which can nowhere be more fruitfully pursued than in rural solitude, would have provided a classic precedent, had Wordsworth needed one, for the grand design of *The Recluse*, which was to offer pictures of Nature, Man and Society from the poet in retirement; and at the climax of his on *The Convention of Cintra* (1809), he cites the example of Petrarch, 'a man of disciplined spirit, who withdrew from the too busy world – not out of indifference to its welfare, or to forget its concerns – but retired for wider compass of eye-sight, that he might comprehend and see in just proportions and relations,'<sup>20</sup> invoking Petrarch's hatred for the rush of city life, and applying it to the blundering British policy in the Peninsula:

We who were wont to show the right road to others, now like blind men led by the blind – a token of impending ruin – are being rushed along dangerous ways, revolving in the orbit of strange examples, not knowing what we desire . . . <sup>21</sup>

Wordsworth's indignation at the continuing plight of Italy would have gained strength from Petrarch's remarks in his treatise *De Remediis contra utriusque fortunae*, which Wordsworth knew.<sup>22</sup> The later perception of Petrarch's poems as embodying the history of a human soul may even have provided a precedent for Wordsworth's own arrangement of his poems in sequences to correspond with his sense of his own creative life.

The connections between Wordsworth and Dante are somewhat more elusive. He naturally applauded Dante's championship of the vernacular over Latin,<sup>23</sup> and thought his Italian 'admirable for conciseness and vigour, without abruptness.'<sup>24</sup> He cites the *Inferno* from time to time, and echoes its opening lines in earlier drafts of Peter Bell<sup>25</sup>. But he could not go all the way with Coleridge's enthusiasm for what he called 'the poetic union of religion and philosophy' in the *Commedia*,<sup>26</sup> and while admiring Cary's monumental translation, which did so much to further Dante's reputation in England, Wordsworth does not seem to have returned to the poem with much pleasure in later life, being put off – like so many eighteenth-century critics – by its 'offensively grotesque and fantastic' fictions.<sup>27</sup> Dante's creative influence on Wordsworth can be most clearly felt in the Sixth and Seventh Books of *The Excursion*, where the Pastor, taking on something of the role of Virgil in the *Commedia*, guides the Poet around the churchyard among the mountains, expounding the life-histories of his deceased parishioners, and the lessons they offer to the eye of faith, in an episode which is the equivalent to the descent into the Underworld in earlier epics.

As for Boccaccio, his influence as scholar, poet and storyteller was writ large over the English literary tradition from Chaucer onwards<sup>28</sup> and cannot have escaped Wordsworth's attention from the time when he discovered a copy of the *Decameron* in the Racedown Library, if not before.<sup>29</sup> Like Hazlitt, later, Wordsworth preferred Boccaccio's tales of noble love and gallantry (exemplified in Dryden's *Fables*) to the stories of sexual intrigue by which he is chiefly remembered today.<sup>30</sup> When he 'modernized' Troilus's lament at Cressida's departure from Troy, Wordsworth must have been conscious of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* as a shaping presence behind Chaucer's tragic lines.<sup>31</sup> Like Coleridge, who planned to undertake a complete edition of Boccaccio, Wordsworth had a wider sense of his varied achievements as a humanist than most modern readers, and a further link between Boccaccio and Wordsworth will emerge when Wordsworth's affinities with Leopardi are examined below.

Wordsworth's genius as a translator from the Italian found its perfect expression in his versions of Gabriello Chiabrera, a kindred spirit whose epitaphs he introduced into Coleridge's periodical *The*

*Friend* in 1810,<sup>32</sup> followed by the first of his three *Essays upon Epitaphs*,<sup>33</sup> which are among the least known but most characteristic of all his works. Many of Wordsworth's poems resemble inscriptions or epitaphs – like 'The Poet's Epitaph' in *Lyrical Ballads* or the passages from *The Excursion* referred to above – and his discussion of the form develops and clarifies the general ideas about poetry set out in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. An epitaph was in many ways Wordsworth's ideal poem, because it reconciled personal feeling with the timeless monumental qualities of great art.<sup>34</sup> Thus the congenial spirit of Chiabrera, the poet of Savona, guided Wordsworth towards some of his deepest intuitions about the nature of poetry.

The two Italian contemporaries of Wordsworth who have been thought to show the closest affinities with him are Ugo Foscolo and Leopardi. Are the resemblances coincidental, or do they suggest that some influence passed between them?

The case of Wordsworth and Foscolo can be quickly disposed of, for the two poets did not really have much in common. It turns on general resemblances between Wordsworth's first *Essay upon Epitaphs* (1810) and Foscolo's patriotic poem about the commemoration of the dead, *Dei Sepolcri*,<sup>35</sup> written three years earlier in indignation at Napoleon's edict of St. Cloud (promulgated 1804, extended to Italy 1806), outlawing burials within the city of Paris, and the inscribing of epitaphs on tombs, in the interests of sanitation and social equality. Could Wordsworth have known Foscolo's poem before writing his *Essay*? It seems very unlikely, since it was not published in England (and then only in part) till 1824,<sup>36</sup> the year the two poets met for the first time. To judge from an eye-witness account of their encounter at Haydon's,<sup>37</sup> they had a somewhat acrimonious argument about self-interest and altruism, and there is no evidence to suggest that Wordsworth had even heard of Foscolo, or his poems, before that date. Wordsworth's interest in epitaphs, on the other hand, is reflected in some of his earliest writings.<sup>38</sup> Is it not much more likely that Napoleon's inhuman edict, followed within a year by the tragic death by shipwreck of Wordsworth's brother John, led the poet quite independently to develop his thinking about the

One great Society alone on earth,  
The noble Living and the noble Dead,<sup>39</sup>

which was to be later embodied in the *Essays upon Epitaphs*?

Wordsworth's affinities with Leopardi are much more extensive, and more intriguing.<sup>40</sup> Though Wordsworth writes of 'Despondency corrected' and Leopardi is the saddest of poets, they were both preoccupied in different ways with Man and Nature, with memory, and with the springs of poetic inspiration; but their shared Romantic themes and images seem to have been arrived at independently. Crabb Robinson got to know Leopardi quite well in Florence in 1831,<sup>41</sup> when the Florentine edition of the *Canti* was published, and he could have discussed Leopardi's 'excellent qualities and superior talents' with Wordsworth. The English poet might also have seen his friend Wrangham's version of *All'Italia* in the *Winter's Wreath* for 1832.<sup>42</sup> But if Wordsworth did learn anything of the *Canti*, his knowledge came far too late to have any effect on his own poetry; and while his best work was written early enough to have influenced Leopardi, there is no evidence that the Italian poet had ever heard of him.

The affinities between them can to some extent be explained by the fact that both poets were in varying degrees drawing on a common poetic inheritance going back to Petrarch.<sup>43</sup> But in one striking instance, at least, in their common devotion to the ancient mythopoeic view of the world from which modern man has become estranged, they both appear to have drawn on a common (and hitherto unnoticed) source – in Boccaccio. The lovely passage in *The Excursion* about the ancient religions,<sup>44</sup> and Leopardi's *Alla Prima Vera*, both show the influence of Boccaccio's humanist treatise *Genealogia deorum gentilium*,<sup>45</sup> in which Boccaccio, in the steps of St. Augustine, maintains that the great myths of the ancient world (later allegorized and sanctified by the early Christian Fathers) embody in sensible form the changeless truths which constitute the value of poetry, and are a perpetual fount of spiritual power and inspiration, without which man runs the risk of spiritual death and alienation from his environment.<sup>46</sup> As Wordsworth had put it earlier, in a celebrated sonnet of 1803, soon after he had been reading Boccaccio's treatise with Coleridge:

Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear Old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.<sup>47</sup>

There is only space left to mention one other Italian influence on Wordsworth, and that perhaps the most unexpected one, his relationship with Machiavelli, which has been explored at length elsewhere.<sup>48</sup> Wordsworth admired him at first as an exemplar of Classical republicanism and a friend of liberty; but with the rise of Napoleon, the darker side of Machiavelli, the master of *realpolitik*, for whom the end justified the means, became increasingly relevant. For was not Napoleon a student of *The Prince*? Was he an aggressor against the nation states of Europe, – or a deliverer on the Machiavellian model, who would stop at nothing to bring about the unification of Italy, as he incorporated more and more territory into his new Italian state, exiling the Pope to Fontainebleau as the Papal system, so devastatingly exposed by Guicciardini, fell in ruins? Wordsworth's sonnet *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*, 'the eldest Child of Liberty' celebrated by Machiavelli and the whole republican tradition, probably belongs to early 1807; for it is not so much a protest at Napoleon's high-handedness in 1797, as a serene and considered farewell to an older tradition of liberty, as Venice found a fresh role in the new Italy that Napoleon was bringing about.

Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade  
Of that which once was great, is passed away.<sup>49</sup>

During the crisis of the Hundred Days in 1815, Wordsworth was still hopeful that Napoleon would redeem himself by delivering Italy from the Austrian yoke. But it was not to be. The Risorgimento was only to be crowned with success two decades after the poet's death, and Wordsworth could only continue to mourn the degradation of Italy in the spirit of Filicaja, the seventeenth-century Florentine poet whom he so much admired.<sup>50</sup> In the meantime, however, study of Machiavelli's *History of Florence* would help him to interpret class antagonisms and social discontent at home and abroad in the age of the Reform Bill. Wordsworth's final verdict on Napoleon's 'Ambition' and 'Pride' came during his visit to Milan in 1820.<sup>51</sup> It was not until many years later that Gladstone sent him his version of Manzoni's elegy on the Emperor, *Il Cinque Maggio*, but Wordsworth refrained from commenting on it.<sup>52</sup>

Wordsworth kept in touch with the Italian question through the distinguished Italian exiles whom he met in London or who visited him at Rydal Mount. One such was Count Pecchio (1785 – 1835),

a political refugee from Lombardy, Foscolo's friend, and author of *Storia della Economica pubblica in Italia*, and *Semi-Serious Observations of an Italian Exile* (1833).<sup>53</sup> Another was Enrico Mayer (1802 – 77), Mazzini's friend and editor of Foscolo, who was later active in educational reform in Tuscany.<sup>54</sup> Crabb Robinson had many Italian friends, especially after his residence in Italy (1829 – 31), where he met Niccolini, the dramatic poet, and many other Florentine liberals, and Wordsworth was undoubtedly well acquainted with the revolutionary aims of the *carbonari* long before his visit to Italy in 1837.<sup>55</sup> Mazzini was a great admirer of his poetry,<sup>56</sup> and though the two never met, they had mutual friends in common like Mrs. Fletcher of Lancrigg, with whom Wordsworth could discuss the aims of Young Italy,<sup>57</sup> counselling patience and moderation when hot-headed insurrections fizzled out, or were brutally suppressed, as in the Bologna uprising of 1837 –

... effort worse than vain  
For thee, O great Italian nation, split  
Into these jarring fractions. – Let thy scope  
Be one fixed mind for all . . .  
Learn to make Time the father of wise hope.<sup>58</sup>

Wordsworth's tone here recalls the moderation of another victim of Austrian tyranny, Silvio Pellico, whose highly-influential work *Le mie prigioni*, an account of his inhuman imprisonment for supporting the *carbonari*, may have been known to the poet in Thomas Roscoe's translation (1835). Wordsworth certainly had a presentation copy from Roscoe of his translation of Pellico's tragedy *Esther of Engaddi*, though whether he studied it any more than the translations of Alfieri and Monti which he had in his library, must remain a matter of conjecture.<sup>59</sup> There is no record of what Wordsworth made of the shortlived Roman republic of 1848. He would undoubtedly have applauded the monarchical solution to the Italian problem propounded so long before by Petrarch and Machiavelli, and finally engineered by Cavour, had he lived to see it; though, like others, he would not have been entirely happy about Cavour's machiavellian methods of bringing it about.

Wordsworth's last thoughts on Italy are best studied in his *Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837*, the mellowest of his later works, where he blends memories of Chiabrera and Dante, and



the landscapes and associations of Horace and Virgil, with his love of the legendary and mythological past of Rome, its pagan and Christian traditions, threatened (as he feared) by the 'demythologizing' history of Niebuhr, and the 'march of mind' in the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup> His tone is much more robust and hopeful than Byron's, in *Childe Harold*, Book IV, or Leopardi's:

Fallen Power,

Thy fortunes, twice exalted, might provoke  
Verse to glad notes prophetic of the hour  
When thou, uprisen, shalt break thy double yoke,  
And enter . . .

On the third stage of thy great destiny.<sup>61</sup>

Perhaps the most remarkable of these poems is *The Cuckoo at Laverna*, where Wordsworth recaptures the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi working like some local tutelary power to bless the land

By unsought means for gracious purposes;  
For earth through heaven, for heaven, by changeful earth,  
Illustrated, and mutually endeared.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps Wordsworth remembered that St. Francis, though vilified by Milton and many of his own contemporaries, had been upheld as a reformer by Machiavelli and placed in Paradise by Dante. Also worthy of note in this collection are two further translations from Michelangelo,<sup>63</sup> which illustrate his deep instinctive grasp of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. He was, as Foscolo wrote, 'one of all our living poets the most capable of understanding the mysteries and feeling the beauties of the doctrines which gave birth to the original.'<sup>64</sup>

Wordsworth's final mood on leaving Italy was not one of melancholy, but of hope for the future, as he called to mind what the land and its culture had meant to him over the years, –

Thy gifts, magnificent Region, ever young  
In the sun's eye, and in his sister's sight  
How beautiful! how worthy to be sung  
In strains of rapture, or subdued delight!<sup>65</sup>

Wordsworth's poetic career is finely poised between the claims of the pre-ordained modes of the Classical Renaissance and the more provisional forms in which the modern poet seeks to embody the spirit of poetry. Like Leopardi, he pioneered the path of the moderns, but his debt to the literature of the past, including the Italian, was great, and it has still to be fully investigated.

## Notes

1. *Prelude* (1805), x. 998 – 1039; viii. 312 – 24.
2. According to his autobiographical memoranda (Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (London, 1851), i. 14), the poet spent his first year at University in 'rather an idle way; reading nothing but classic authors according to my fancy, and Italian poetry'. For a full discussion see E.R. Vincent, 'Wordsworth, Isola, Lamb', *Essays in Honour of J.H. Whitfield*, ed. H.C. Davis *et al* (London, 1975), pp., 209 – 21. Apart from editions of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Cambridge, 1786) and *Orlando Furioso* (Cambridge, 1789), Isola published *Pieces selected from the Italian poets . . . and translated into English verse by some Gentlemen of the University* (Cambridge, 1778), which suggests the current taste and Wordsworth's own likely reading – Guarini, Marino, Tasso, Tassoni, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Metastasio. His own copy of the 2nd edn. (1748), with alternative versions from Metastasio in his own hand, dating from c. 1802 – 6, is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. See *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford, 1940 – 9, and rev. issues, 1952 – 9), iv. 369 – 70, 472.
3. The principal sources for investigating Wordsworth's library are the MS. Catalogue (1829) in the Houghton Library, Harvard (which includes a number of Coleridge's books, which were lodged with Wordsworth for many years), and the *Rydal Mount Sale Catalogue* (1850). They form the basis, with additions, of C.L. and A.C. Shaver's comprehensive *Wordsworth's Library, A Catalogue* (New York and London, 1979). As the lists belong to Wordsworth's later years, they have to be interpreted with some caution. It is often impossible to determine when individual books were acquired, and the absence of a work from the lists does not necessarily mean that Wordsworth had never read it. But among the Italian books, the earlier acquisitions, and the Renaissance translations like Fairfax's Tasso and Harington's Ariosto, stand out fairly clearly from the later presentation copies. For the general background to Wordsworth's knowledge of Italian literature, see Harry W. Rudman, *Italian Nationalism and English Letters* (London, 1940); C.P. Brand, *Italy and the English Romantics* (Cambridge, 1957); and *Italian Poets and English Critics, 1755 – 1859*, ed. Beatrice Corrigan (Chicago and London, 1969).
4. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Early Years, 1787 – 1805*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd edn., rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967), p. 125.
5. See Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 219. Wordsworth seems to have had the Amsterdam edn. (1790) of the seven *Satires*, published posthumously in 1694. See also *Early Years*, p. 449.
6. *Ibid.* p. 56.
7. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Middle Years, Part I*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd edn., rev. Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1969), p. 89. For Wordsworth's 'Imitation' of Juvenal's Eighth Satire, see *Political Works*, i. 302 – 6; and *Early Years*, pp. 167, 172 – 7.
8. See, for example, the letters to his wife from London in 1812 (in the forthcoming *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Middle Years, A Supplement*, ed. Alan G. Hill).
9. See *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford, 1974), iii. 28.

10. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford, 1756 – 71), iv. 574 – 5; *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London, 1835), ii. 70 – 1. For a full discussion of the ramifications of the *Recluse* project, see Alan G. Hill, *Wordsworth's 'Grand Design'* (London, 1987).
11. For Coleridge's copy of the *Opere di Tommaso Garzoni* (Venetia, 1617), see Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 330.
12. For Ariosto and Tasso, see *ibid.* pp. 11, 252 – 3 and for Coleridge's Sannazaro, *ibid.* p. 350.
13. *Prelude* (1805), ix. 449 – 55.
14. *Ibid.* i. 231. For his later translations of Ariosto, see *Poetical Works*, iv. 367 – 9; and *Early Years*, p. 628.
15. *Peter Bell*, 1. 138 (1st edn.). See *Poetical Works*, ii. 331 ff., and for the successive revisions of the Prologue before publication, *Peter Bell (The Cornell Wordsworth)*, ed. John E. Jordan (Ithaca and London, 1985).
16. 11. 141 – 5 (1st edn.).
17. 11. 106 – 10 (1st edn.). 'A deep romantic land', 1. 91 of earlier drafts, became 'the secrets of a land' in the 1st edn. (1. 101).
18. *Poetical Works*, iv. 36 – 7.
19. See Shaver's *Catalogue*, pp. 348 (Coleridge's Pulci), 159, 27, 48.
20. *Prose Works*, i. 342.
21. *De Vita Solitaria*, trans. J. Zeitlin (Urbana, 1924), pp. 177 – 8. Wordsworth gives the Latin. A quotation from this work occupies a similarly commanding position at the beginning of Coleridge's *Friend*, setting the serious tone for what is to come.
22. From Coleridge's copy. See Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 347.
23. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Later Years, Part I*, 2nd edn., ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1798), p. 79.
24. *Ibid.* pp. 245 – 6.
25. 1. 168 (*Cornell* edn., p. 60).
26. In the Lectures of 1818. See *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (London, 1936), p. 147.
27. *Later Years, Part I*, p. 246.
28. For a general discussion, see Herbert G. Wright, *Boccaccio in England from Chaucer to Tennyson* (London, 1957).
29. See *Early Years*, p. 155. Machiavelli (see below) and Davilla were also available in the Racedown library (*MS. Catalogue, Bristol University Library*). Enrico Davila's *Historia delle Guerre Civili di Francia* (see also Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 74) would have helped Wordsworth to understand the polarisation of French society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which prepared the way for the Revolution.
30. See Wordsworth's letter to Walter Scott in 1805, *Early Years*, pp. 642 – 3.
31. For Wordsworth's version of *Troilus and Criseyde*, v. 519 – 686, see *Poetical Works*, iv. 228 – 33.
32. *The Friend (Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke (Princeton and London, 1969), ii. 334 – 5. For Wordsworth's nine translations from Chiabrera, see *Poetical Works*, iv. 248 – 53, and for his copy of Chiabrera, Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 292.
33. See *Prose Works*, ii. 45 ff. The first *Essay* was reprinted as a note to *The Excursion* in 1814.

34. See W.J.B. Owen, *Wordsworth as Critic* (London, 1969), pp. 115 – 50; and D.D. Devlin, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Epitaphs* (London, 1980).
35. See Vincent, op. cit. p. 216, and his inaugural lecture, *The Commemoration of the Dead, A Study of the Romantic Element in the 'Sepolcri' of Ugo Foscolo* (Cambridge, 1936).
36. In the *European Review* for June.
37. See T. Landseer, *Life and Letters of William Bewick* (London, 1871), i. 75ff., cited in E.R. Vincent, *Ugo Foscolo, An Italian in Regency England* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 14 – 18.
38. See, for example, *Prose Works*, i. 8, 13 – 14. Coleridge's early *Notebooks* reveal a similar interest in epitaphs.
39. *Prelude* (1805), x. 969 – 70. Cf. the similar sentiment in *The Convention of Cintra* (*Prose Works*, i. 339).
40. See Geoffrey L. Bickersteth, *Leopardi and Wordsworth* (London, 1927); and Iris Origo and John Heath Stubbs, *Giacomo Leopardi, Selected Prose and Poetry* (London, 1966), pp. viii – ix.
41. *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Thomas Sadler (London, 1869), ii. 507.
42. G. Singh, *Leopardi e l'Inghilterra* (Firenze, 1968), p. 6.
43. *The Poems of Leopardi*, ed. G.L. Bickersteth (London, 1923), pp. 53 ff.
44. *Exc.*, iv. 631 – 762. See also vi. 538 – 47.
45. The Wordsworths were reading the Italian version, *Genealogia degli Dei*, with Coleridge in Nov. 1802 to improve his Italian. See *Marginalia (Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge)*, ed. George Whalley (Princeton and London, 1980), i. 542; *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, 1957 – ), i. 1649; and Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 318.
46. See *Genealogia*, XIV. vii – viii, and XV, viii (Charles G. Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry* (Princeton, 1930), pp. 39 – 47, 121 – 3); and St. Augustine, *City of God*, xviii, 13 – 14.
47. *Poetical Works*, iii. 19.
48. See Alan G. Hill, 'Wordsworth and the Two Faces of Machiavelli', *Review of English Studies*, xxxi (1980), 285 – 304.
49. *Poetical Works*, iii. 111 – 12. For the probable occasion of the sonnet, see Alan G. Hill, 'On the Date and Significance of Wordsworth's Sonnet *On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic*', *RES*, xxx (1979), 441 – 5.
50. See *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. Edith J. Morley (Oxford, 1927), i. 262; *Poetical Works*, iii. 461; and Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 94.
51. See 'The Column intended by Buonaparte for a Triumphal Edifice in Milan, now lying by the Way-side in the Simplon Pass', *Poetical Works*, iii. 189, 483 – 4.
52. *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: the Later Years, Part III*, 2nd edn., ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1982), p. 611.
53. *Rydal Mount Visitors Book, 1834 (Wordsworth Library MSS)*.
54. See *Later Years, Part III*, pp. 412, 707; and A. Linaker, *La Vita e i tempi di Enrico Mayer* (Firenze, 1898).
55. See *Diary* (ed. Sadler), ii, 474 ff., 505 – 6; and the Fenwick note to 'After Leaving Italy' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 501).
56. See, for example, his comment in 'The Present State of French Literature', *Monthly Chronicle*, iii (1839), 218 – 27.

57. *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher*, ed. her daughter (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 244. Mrs Fletcher also knew the Ruffini brothers – refugees from Piedmont, Mazzini's followers, and friends of the Carlyles. Giovanni Ruffini (1807 – 81) published a successful autobiographical novel *Lorenzo Benoni* (Edinburgh, 1853), about his adventures and sufferings in Piedmont. See *Giuseppe Mazzini e i Fratelli Ruffini*, ed. Carlo Gagnacci (Porto Maurizio, 1893).
58. From the first of three linked sonnets 'At Bologna' (*Poetical Works*, iv. 132 – 3).
59. See Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 198, for Wordsworth's presentation copy of *Esther of Engaddi* from the translator, which is now in the British Library. The Preface refers to *Le mie prigioni*. For Charles Lloyd's translation of Alfieri's *Tragedies* (1815), see Shaver's *Catalogue*, p. 6, and for Vose's translation of Monti's *Caius Gracchus* (1839), *ibid.* p. 180.
60. See particularly 'Musings Near Aquapendente' and the three sonnets 'At Rome' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 202 – 14). For his memorable visit to Vaucluse *en route* for Italy, and his last words on Petrarch, see the Fenwick note, *ibid.* p. 489 – 90.
61. 'From the Alban Hills, looking towards Rome', *ibid.* p. 217.
62. *Ibid.* p. 219.
63. *Ibid.* pp. 226 – 7.
64. *Retrospective Review*, xiii, pt. ii (1826), 248. For Wordsworth's earlier translations of Michelangelo for Richard Duppa's *Life* (2nd edn., 1807), see *Poetical Works*, iii. 14 – 15, 408. 423, and iv. 370 – 1, 473; and *Early Years*, pp. 628 – 9.
65. 'After Leaving Italy: Continued' (*Poetical Works*, iii. 228).

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# DICKENS AND ITALY

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The aim of this paper is to give a brief account of some aspects of Dickens's relationship to Italian culture, politics, and society. It proposes a modest originality of scope, consisting in the inclusion of at least partial consideration of articles on Italian subjects written between 1850 and 1870 for two periodicals edited by Dickens, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. Though few of these are by Dickens himself, several of them are collaborations, and all of them, most particularly the *Household Words* articles, bear the marks of Dickens's editing. That this was thorough and interventionist, especially in the early years, and that most of the views expressed in these journals may be assumed by and large to have tallied with his own, can be gauged by the fact that the sole name mentioned in either periodical was that of Dickens himself. Each page bearing the inscription 'Conducted by Charles Dickens', all other contributors remaining anonymous, it seems reasonable to give more attention to these writings, as providing at least supporting evidence of Dickens's views on Italian social, cultural and political issues, than they have hitherto been accorded.

To begin with some generalities about Dickens's relation to foreign countries, it may be somewhat surprising to notice that a writer so often regarded as English to the core was willing to devote so much space in both periodicals to articles dealing with matters overseas. In fact it can be shown that motion and indeed travel – not loving attachment to known and familiar environments, as in some nineteenth century realists, but discovery of the unknown and marvellous in the everyday, and habitual movement toward its embrace – is a fundamental principle of Dickens's mind and art. He loved, says Percy Fitzgerald, 'that actual living movement in the form of walking, riding, travelling by coach or other vehicle, railway excursion, ascent of mountains abroad, travelling over the Continent in diligences or carriages.' What Dickens often called his restlessness, particularly at times when he was beginning to write a new book, with its edge of metaphysical yearning ('this is one

of what I call my Wandering days, before I fall to work. I seem to be always looking at such times for something I have not found in life, but may possibly come to, a few thousand of years hence, in some other part of some other system, God knows.') seems to have been at the root of a lifelong predilection for travel. His bookshelves, according to George Henry Lewes were full of 'three volume novels and books of travel,' many of them no doubt souvenirs of that childhood 'greedy relish for a few volumes of voyages and travels' emphasised in *David Copperfield*, for in 1850 we find him unable to respond to a *Household Words* colleague's need for more recent travel books: 'my travels are chiefly old, and I have none of these books.'<sup>1</sup>

This sense of other countries as a site and source of magic and wonder certainly had a distinctive Italian focus. *Pictures from Italy* recalls how as a child he had responded to 'pictures in school-books, setting forth 'The Wonders of the World', published by Harris of St. Paul's Churchyard, which of course included the leaning Tower of Pisa. The preface, attempting in part to explain why his first extended excursion into Europe should have been to Italy, refers to a long-standing fascination with 'places to which the imaginations of most people are attracted in a greater or lesser degree on which mine had dwelt for years.'<sup>2</sup> As the editors of volume 4 of the Pilgrim House edition of the letters conjecture, that imagination must have imbibed its fantasies of the peninsula from a variety of sources – from writers such as Shakespeare, Byron, Samuel Rogers and Bulwer Lytton, from painters like Stanfield, Turner and Eastlake, from composers like Auber<sup>3</sup>; but it seems to me that two other youthful influences predisposing Dickens in favour of Italy can be singled out. Sir Walter Scott is one; Dickens married, as he wrote later to Wilkie Collins, the daughter of 'the great friend and assistant of Scott, . . . who first made Lockhart known to him', and sought to emulate his great predecessor in a number of ways, not least by visiting Italy before the onset of old age and ill health – he had read his Lockhart with passionate attentiveness, and visited Scott's biographer on his second visit to Rome in 1853.<sup>4</sup> The other, representing the less official or respectable side of Italy's appeal, is that of the great pantomime clown Grimaldi, the source of a special enthusiasm for Italian popular culture and traditions of carnivalesque art, reflected in numerous articles in the two periodicals.

To detect this keynote of pleasing unfamiliarity in Dickens's representation of Italy in telling context, one may turn simply to the title of the account of his Italian travels of 1844 – 5, *Pictures from Italy*, implying of course the code word 'picturesque'. It occurs throughout the book, and on innumerable occasions in the *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* articles; it not only governs the Dickensian writings associated with Italy, but also crops up frequently to describe a fundamental aim of the two journals: the desire to provide stimulus, through attractively fanciful highlightings of the realities round about us, to the imaginative faculties of ordinary people steeped, Dickens felt, in a world that was developing in an increasingly materialist, anti-magical direction. His editorial rewritings invariably went in the direction of enlivening articles that he felt to be too dry; in a letter to the *Household Words* office manager Henry Wills, for instance concerning a jointly-written article on English Wills, he declares, 'I have endeavoured to make it picturesque', or in criticism of the 'Shadows' series by Charles Knight (clearly borrowing in some respects from the emphasis upon shadows in *Pictures from Italy*) he writes that 'the use of the past tense instead of the present, a little hurts the picturesque effect.' However, as Burgan and others have shown, there is at the same time in Dickens's employment of the term 'picturesque' a constant critique of its habitual associations, made explicit in the writings on Italy. He cannot abide writers or artists who go to Italy in search of the supposedly pure and spontaneous aesthetic beauty and 'picturesque' charm of people and places that in reality suffer from crippling poverty and oppressive and corrupt government. A letter to Forster from Naples in February 1845 seeks to discriminate between the types of picturesqueness: 'The condition of the common people here is abject and shocking. I am afraid that the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established as the world goes on,' and leads on, in *Pictures from Italy*, to a specification of what this 'new picturesque' might aim at: 'Painting and poetising for ever, if you will, the beauties of this most beautiful and lovely spot on earth, let us, as our duty, try to associate a new picturesque with some faint recognition of man's destiny.'<sup>5</sup>



This term 'new picturesque', tilted once more back in a realist direction, can serve as a label for the kind of writing that Dickens attempts to establish in *Pictures from Italy* and that contributors to *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* attempt to imitate. In characterising it, it may be said first that it does not by and large attempt to deal in any very direct way with Italian political and social problems. In *Pictures from Italy* itself, for example, the narrative voice declares at the outset his 'strong conviction' on the subject of misgovernment in Italy, 'but as I chose when residing there, a Foreigner, to abstain from the discussion of any such questions with any order of Italians, so I would rather not enter on the inquiry now.' That the abstention may not be to the book's disadvantage, as an effective reflection upon the condition of Italy, is suggested by the Italian Dickensian Ugo Piscopo, from whom I am constrained to quote in French, 'au contraire *Pictures from Italy* constitue un des documents le plus vivants et les plus passionés mais sans rhétorique ni mystification sur le tragique situation sociale italienne.' A similar tone – acknowledging that politics insists upon obtruding itself into a discourse that does not seek to invoke it – is adopted in the introduction of a *Household Words* article by H.G. Wreford, a *Times* and *Daily News* correspondent based in Naples who is one of the best and most prolific of Dickens's contributors on Italy: 'Seeking health here in Naples, and meddling not at all with European politics, I find it impossible to walk with an impassive mind among the scenes that are daily presented to my notice.'<sup>6</sup>

The image of the *flâneur* introduced here, strolling about the streets and observing the *passaggiata* of city life, points to another cardinal principle of the Dickensian 'new picturesque' representation of Italy – that it is fundamentally *physiognomical*. Walter Benjamin has explored the meaning of the 19th century preoccupation with physiognomy as a response to the pressures of anonymity in modern urban life, a fantasy of the legibility of the surface appearance of individuals in a crowd;<sup>7</sup> it has an obvious relevance, too, to the anonymity of the traveller in a foreign country, attempting to interpret the signs about him. Dickens's acceptance in many places, not least in an *All the Year Round* article of December 11, 1869 entitled 'Physiognomy of Luggage' which confidently asserts that 'there is a physiognomy in the human back,

the wave of the rim of a hat, the height of a shirt-collar' as much as in a face in which can be read 'the curious marks which the interior soul leaves behind it, wherever it comes in contact with earthy matter, or earthy manners and modes.'<sup>8</sup> Eschewing the overtly political, the Dickensian manner of representing Italy looks (like Blake's lyric persona in 'London') into the outward appearance of Italians for 'marks of weakness marks of woe' – or for the villainy of their oppressors. In the appearance of the priesthood of Genova, for instance, 'if Nature's handwriting be at all legible, greater varieties of sloth, deceit, and intellectual torpor, could hardly be observed among any class of men in the world' – a manner copied by Grenville Murray in his Roving Englishman series for 'Household Words', seeing in Naples a priest with 'a broad-brimmed hat and stealthy step – a bad face, I am sorry to say, if we dared believe in faces as, let me confess it, we all do.'<sup>9</sup>

These relatively crude examples show how transparently Dickens's 'strong conviction' on Italian political questions shines through the physiognomical surfaces that the writings observe. Though the famous war-correspondent W.H. Russell (himself one of the contributors on Italy to Dickens's periodicals) wrote that, at the time of his brief editorship of the *Daily News* in 1844 he "was ignorant and indifferent to what are called 'Foreign Affairs'; indeed, he told me himself that he never thought about them till the Revolution of 1848",<sup>10</sup> it is clear that firsthand experience of Italy and Italian politics, and friendship with distinguished refugees, altered and developed his attitudes. 'I have known Mazzini and Gallenga,' he wrote to Henry Chorley in February 1860; 'Manin was tutor to my daughters in Paris.'<sup>11</sup> Not only Italy, but also France, Hungary and Poland engaged his sympathies during and after 'the year of revolutions' (in a letter of 1849 he signs himself 'Citoyen Charles Dickens').<sup>12</sup> But his intervention on behalf of Italy seems to go further than that for any other country – extending, in August and September 1849, after the fall of Rome, beyond condemnation of the Governor of Malta, More O'Ferrall, for his refusal to let the refugees land, to his authorship of 'An Appeal to the English People on Behalf of the Italian Refugees', issued from Tavistock House, which was to become Dickens's own home two years later. Echoing themes that are to figure in *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit*, it speaks of the

refugees as 'good citizens... who built upon the ruins of a monstrous system which had fallen of its own rottenness and corruption, one of moderation and truth.'<sup>13</sup> A gauge of the extent to which Dickens was publicly identified with the Italian cause at this time can be had in an interesting 1849 detective novel by 'Morna' (the pseudonym of Thomas O'Keefe) entitled *The Battle of London Life: or, Boz and his Secretary*, in which the central figure, engaged unwittingly by Dickens, turns out to be a Government agent investigating the extent and nature of the novelist's involvement with Mazzini.<sup>14</sup>

What emerges both in Dickens's own writings about Italy and in those that he sponsored in his journals is a determined separation of his positive estimation of the Italian people and his negative condemnation of most if not all of the peninsular governments. 'So many jewels set in dirt' is the commentary of *Pictures from Italy* on the Italians themselves, praising 'the smiling face of the attendant, man or woman: the courteous manner; the amiable desire to please and be pleased.' The letter to Chorley of 1860 gently chides him for his negative representation of Italy in his novel *Roccabella* and urges a 'symptomatic' understanding of the wrinkles on the surfaces of Italian behaviour: 'I believe they have the faults you ascribe to them (nationally, not individually), but I could not find it in my heart, remembering their miseries, to exhibit those faults without referring them back to their causes.'<sup>15</sup>

Sala's influential question, referring to the continental episodes of Dickens's great novels – 'Can you divest yourself of the impression that Dickens had, on the whole, a good-humoured contempt for foreigners?'<sup>16</sup> – thus seems to offer an inadequate approach to the question of Dickens's attitude towards Italy, or for that matter to France or to a number of other European countries. According to the varying attitudes of individual contributors there are certainly many instances of various kinds and degrees of prejudice, condescension and even downright jingoism to be found in the articles on Italy in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, not least on the question of religion. But the overall picture is a good deal more complex<sup>17</sup>: the comparisons between England and Italy that are inevitably frequently implied by no means operate wholly in England's favour.

The 1869 dictum that is often quoted as the quintessence of Dickens's political attitudes – 'my faith in the people governed is on the whole limitless, my faith in the people governing strictly limited'<sup>18</sup> – is in fact not so far from his central position on Italy; indeed, his experience of Italy may have helped him to formulate it. Beginning with the passage in *Pictures from Italy*, which sees the effort required at Carrara to make sculpture out of marble as an allegory of Italy, of the difficulty besetting 'virtue that springs in miserable ground', the emphasis recurs throughout *Household Words*, in Wreford's writing on Naples, for instance, where 'quick talents and very good nature' are intermixed with 'many of those low qualities which spring from the want of a regard to truth and honor distress', but 'this deficiency may in a great measure be attributed to the *régime* under which they live.' We can see too why, in an 1862 *All the Year Round* article entitled 'The Country of Masaniello,' Cavour's dying words on Naples are prominently quoted: 'there is much corruption in their country; but it is not their fault, poor people, they have been so badly governed!'<sup>19</sup> Dickens's compassionate view of 19th century Italy seems in some ways to anticipate Brecht's focus, in *The Good Woman of Setzuan* or *The Life of Galileo*, upon the difficulty of doing good in an evil society.

Thus there is in fact a good deal more dialectical to-and-fro and balance in the handling of comparisons between England and Italy than the Sala tradition of commentary on Dickens and Europe has cared to admit. On the question of crime, it is true that Wreford's article on 'Spy Police' in Italy is specifically linked to other *Household Words* articles by Wills and by Dickens himself that praise the skill and integrity of the London police and describe from the enthusiastic perspective of liberal faith in scientific progress recent advances in crime detection;<sup>20</sup> by comparison Italian governments, obsessed with the fight against subversion, and finding it in such apparently innocuous physiognomical manifestations as the sporting of beards and moustaches (Dickens began to wear both after about 1852; was he expressing solidarity with Italian 'radicals'?<sup>21</sup>), are seen as backward and indifferent in the fight against real criminals. It is true, too, that on matters of religion, Dickens is strongly biassed in favour of Protestantism against Roman Catholicism (in March 1851 he writes of his

enjoyment of Malvern 'where the wind blows as freshly as if there were no Popes and no Cardinals whatsoever – nothing the matter anywhere'), and that he appears himself almost a little paranoid about what he perceives as the threat to established religion in England emanating from Puseyism and the Pre-Raphaelite movement (on Millais' painting he writes in May 1850: 'If such things were allowed to sweep on, without some vigorous protest, three fourths of this Nation would be under the feet of Priests, in ten years.')22 In a *Household Words* article of December 1858, 'Doctor Dulcamara M.P.', written chiefly by Wilkie Collins but with Dickens's own collaboration, there is sharp satiric reference to Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* to attack Mr. Sidney Herbert as a quack for his enthusiastic recommendation of the Puseyite novel *The Heir of Redclyffe*, by Charlotte Yonge, with its use of an idealised Italian setting to chart the moral and religious regeneration of an Englishman suffering from a bad temper.<sup>23</sup>

But when it comes to cultural questions, with their own very important social and political implications, very different emphases are seen at work. Schlicke has observed how in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* the dearth and decline of popular culture in Britain is consistently contrasted with its vitality in other countries, not least Italy itself.<sup>24</sup> Here it is a case of a different kind of suppression – of popular national traditions of festival and carnival, such as Bartholomew Fair – by the prudishly moralistic power that middle-class evangelicalism was able to exert in Victorian Britain (the kind of attitudes mocked in 'Dr. Dulcamara, M.P.', which ridicules, in Charlotte Yonge's novel, the refusal of Sir Guy Morville to read the descriptions of Italy in *Childe Harold* 'because Lord Byron was a profligate man.')25 It is interesting that one such person – Mary Elizabeth Taylor – wrote to him in the autumn of 1849, asking him to lend his voice to a campaign to clean up the immortality of street Punch-and-Judy shows, and turn Punch into a propagandist for decency. In declining to do so, Dickens points to Naples, 'where Punch is still a censor of the follies of the day . . . In the most popular Theatre in Naples that is still his character every day and night, and Naples is perhaps the wickedest City upon earth,' and speaks on behalf of what he sees as 'one of those extravagant reliefs from the realists of life which would lose its hold upon the people if it were made moral and

instructive.’<sup>26</sup> The work of Wreford in *Household Words* offers many clear examples of pointed celebrations of how ordinary Italian people achieve a liberation of spirit at popular festivals such as that of the Giglio in Nola, when on a Sunday, their one rest day, they can revitalise themselves in forgetful carnival, unlike their counterparts, the working class in England: ‘Sunday is not, to their minds, what the week had been to their bodies – a weight and a cloud, oppressing and saddening.’<sup>27</sup> So that, as commonly in Dickens, as with London and Paris in *A Tale of Two Cities* or high and low society in *Dombey and Son*, categories initially set up in opposition to each other, in the end collapse into one other and offer multiple mutual ironic cross-lightings.

And this handy-dandy imbrication of the one and the other is no doubt one driving force of the continuing reference to Italy in Dickens’s work. Italy was an actual presence in the streets of London, in the shape of image-boys or organ-grinders, with whom – despite his detestation of street music, and campaigning with Michael Bass in 1864 to tighten the law<sup>28</sup> – Dickens loved to speak Italian; Hans Christian Andersen describes him doing so, and Dickens himself in a letter of 1846 declares: ‘I talk to all the Italian Boys who go about the streets with organs and white mice, and give them mints of money *per l’amore della bell’Italia*.’<sup>29</sup> Italy aroused suppressed depths of emotion in him, referring him back of course to experiences in England – thus in Genoa Michaelmas church bells caused him to dream again for the first time in years of the traumatic experience of his young sister-in-law Mary Hogarth’s death in his arms; in the dream, she even appeared to persuade him that Catholicism was the right religion for him.<sup>30</sup> So that when James Joyce, in a fine essay on Dickens written in Padua in 1912 as part of an attempt to gain official status as a teacher of English in Italy, uses the Dick Whittington motif to express his conviction that Dickens needed constantly to return in his imagination to London (as Joyce himself did of course to Dublin), he only grasps half the point in asserting that ‘whenever he went far afield . . . his magic seems to have failed him, his hand seems to have lost her ancient cunning.’<sup>31</sup> The real truth is that for Dickens the near and the far were held in essential counterpoint, and the magic of the near to hand needed constant replenishment from the magic of the far away.

## Notes

1. See Philip Collins ed., *Dickens: Interviews and Recollections* (London, Macmillan, 1981; 2 vols.) I, 25, (Lewes) II, 229 (Fitzgerald); Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, Nina Burgis eds, *The Letters of Charles Dickens, 1850 – 1852* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988), 144 (to Wills, 10/8/50), 721 (to Mary Boyle, 22/7/52). This is vol. 6 of the Pilgrim House edition of the Letters, hereinafter referred to as *Letters*.
2. Charles Dickens, *Pictures from Italy* in *American Notes and Pictures from Italy* (London, Oxford University Press: Oxford Illustrated Dickens, 1957), pp. 357, 260; hereinafter referred to as *PI*.
3. *Letters* IV, xiii.
4. To Wilkie Collins 6/6/56, quoted in *Interview and Recollections* I, 2. See also *Letters* I, 54, and Liselotte Thalmann, *Charles Dickens in seinen Beziehungen zum Ausland* (Zürich, Juris Verlag, 1956), p. 35; *Letters* II, 365 (to Thomas Mitton, 23/8/41).
5. See *Letters* VI, 165 (to Wills, 8/9/50), 446 (to Knight, 27/5/51); William Burgan, 'Little Dorrit in Italy', *Nineteenth Century Fiction* XXIX (March 1975), 393 – 411; Michael Hollington, *Dickens and the Grotesque* (London, Croom Helm, 1984), chapter 7: 'The New Picturesque: *Pictures from Italy* and *Little Dorrit*', pp. 138 – 152; *Letters* IV, 266 (to Forster, 11/2/45); *PI*, 413.
6. *PI*, 259; Ugo Piscopo, 'Dickens en Italie', *Europe* XLVII, no. 488 (December 1969), 119 ('in my view *Pictures from Italy* constitutes one of the most living and passionate of documents on the tragic social situation in Italy, but at the same time it is without any rhetoric or mystification'); Wreford, 'Neapolitan State Prisoners', *Household Words* II, 235 – 7 (29/11/51; hereinafter referred to as *HW*).
7. See *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, transl. Harry Zohn (London, New Left Books, 1973), p. 39.
8. *All the Year Round* XXIII, 39 (11/12/69; hereinafter referred to as *AYR*); the author of the article is unknown to me.
9. *PI*, 296; 'Beautiful Naples,' *HW* VII, 303 (28/5/53).
10. *Interviews and Recollections* I, 76.
10. Quoted from *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, eds. Mamie Dickens and Georgina Hogarth (London, Macmillan, 1893), p. 494 (to H.F. Chorley, 3/2/60); see also Harry W. Rudman, *Italian Nationalism and English Letters* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 126.
12. *Letters* V, 257 (to John Forster, 29/2/48).
13. See *Dickensian* X (1914), 320 and *Letters* V, 598.
14. See W. Dexter, 'When Found', *Dickensian* XL (1940), 56.
15. *PI*, 326.
16. *Interviews and Recollections* II, 201.
17. On the complexity of Dickens's relations to Englishness and foreignness see eg. Chesterton: 'Now Dickens is at once as universal as the sea and as English as Nelson', in *Charles Dickens* (London, Methuen, 1906), p. 295, and Floris Delattre, *Dickens et la France* (Paris, Gamber, 1927), p. 74: 'sous l'Anglais qu'il a l'air d'être, on trouve sans peine un romancier européen.'
18. Speech to the Birmingham and Midland Institute 27/9/69, quoted in House, *The Dickens World* (London, Oxford University Press), p. 172 – the chief source for its wide dissemination.
19. *PI*, 356; H.G. Wreford, 'Neapolitan Purity', *HW* VIII, 572 (11/2/54); *AYR* VII, 564 (23/8/62; author unknown to me).

20. See *Letters* VI, 130 for the nexus of relations between Wreford's article, which appeared in *HW* on 21/9/50, and 'Will's article 'The Modern Science of Thief-Taking' of 13/7/50, and Dickens's article 'A Detective Police Party' of 27/7/50.
21. See *Interviews and Recollection* I, 81, II, 186.
22. See *Letters* VI, 106 (to Maclise, 30/5/50), 340 (to Forster, 29/3/51).
23. See Harry Stone, ed., *The Uncollected Writings of Charles Dickens: Household Words 1850 - 1859* (London, Allen Lane, 1969; 2 volumes), II, 619 - 626.
24. Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (London, Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 197 etc.
25. *Uncollected Writings* II, 624.
26. *Letters* V, 640 (to Mary Elizabeth Taylor, 4/11/49).
27. *HW* 16/8/56.
28. See the article on Michael Bass in *The Dictionary of National Biography* for the details of Bass's bill 'by which householders might require street musicians to quit the neighbourhood of their homes', which was enthusiastically welcomed by 'Carlyle, Tennyson, Charles Dickens' and others.
29. See *Letters* V, 154n for Andersen, and IV, 535 (to Mrs. de la Rue, 17/4/46).
30. See *Letters* IV, 196 (to John Forster, ?30/9/44), VI, 276 (to Thomas Stone, 2/2/51).
31. See Louis Berrone, ed., transl., *James Joyce in Padua* (New York, Random House, 1977), p. 34.

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# L'ITALIA DI SAMUEL BUTLER

MARIAGRAZIA BELLORINI

Samuel Butler, l'autore di *Erewhon*, di *The Way of All Flesh* e di una eclettica ed amplissima raccolta di altri scritti sugli argomenti più diversi ed imprevedibili<sup>1</sup>, amava l'Italia. Era stato, egli stesso dice, un amore a prima vista da quando vi si era recato per la prima volta ad otto anni, nel 1843, e al quale rimase fedele fino alla morte nel 1902, con visite annuali e con lunghi soggiorni prevalentemente nelle zone del Piemonte, della Lombardia e del Canton Ticino. In questi luoghi egli trovò ammirazione e rispetto come storico e critico d'arte di gran cultura nonchè come artista egli stesso, presso i piccoli intellettuali e storici locali che divennero suoi amici devoti e solleciti collaboratori<sup>2</sup>.

Se, come egli scrive, un uomo nel suo lavoro deve essere esatto e preciso mentre le vacanze sono 'our garden, and too much precision here is a mistake'<sup>3</sup>, l'Italia fu per lui questo, al di fuori di ogni trita metafora che egli del resto mai uso' per indicare direttamente la sua seconda patria. L'Italia è il luogo ove si può dar tregua momentanea alle infinite polemiche, 'I wish to leave all quarrelling behind me', che in Inghilterra lo mantengono, ironicamente, 'in good health and temper' (*Alps*, p. 64). È il momento in cui affrontare da una salutare prospettiva diversa la propria vita e Butler fa ricorso, significativamente, al codice pittorico per la metafora che illustri il processo di metamorfosi: 'turning the canvas of . . . life occasionally upside down, of reversing it in a mirror, as painters do with their pictures that they may judge the better' (*Alps*, p. 66).

All'Italia Butler dedicò due opere e una terza la ebbe in progetto senza per altro arrivare a comporla: si tratta di *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* del 1881 (1882) e di *Ex Voto* del 1888<sup>4</sup>, due opere diverse nella struttura e nei contenuti, ma originate da un comune atteggiamento di amore e di affettuosa attenzione del loro autore, come egli afferma in conclusione del capitolo introduttivo di *Alps*: 'I have chosen Italy as my second country, and would dedicate this book to her as a thank-offering

for the happiness she has afforded me' (*Alps*, p. 7); mentre nella introduzione alla traduzione italiana del 1894 di *Ex Voto* egli ringrazia il traduttore per la passione impegnata concludendo, in italiano, 'e ciò sono lieto di fare appunto nell'introdurmi in Italia che è la Nazione in cui stima apprezzo sopra ogni cosa. Non so se questo libro contribuirà a procurarmi ciò che cerco di ottenere sotto il bel cielo d'Italia dal Santuario di Varallo al Monte Erice in Sicilia: so che ho fatto il mio possibile, e lascio il resto al lettore'<sup>5</sup>.

Sono parole di accattivante franchezza e semplicità, che potremmo considerare antesignane di un nuovo atteggiamento verso il tradizionale viaggio in Italia, lontano dai fuori romantici del Grand Tour e più democraticamente attento alla piccole cose di ogni giorno, al contesto umano e sociale, al paesaggio a dimensioni d'uomo. Atteggiamento che comunque in *Alps* ci sorprende piacevolmente alla fine delle dotte e apparentemente capricciose divagazioni sulla assoluta grandezza di Shakespeare e di Händel, sulla assoluta ammirazione di Butler per questi autori che egli sente tanto più affini a se' per aver essi stessi avuto carissimi i due paesi 'which are dearest to myself, I mean England and Italy' (*Alps*, p. 3). Affermazione che a sua volta innesca e risolve con una idiosincratica scelta di esempi, la preoccupazione di provare il suo amore altrettanto grande per l'Inghilterra e per Londra in particolare: 'my Italian rambles are taken not because I prefer Italy to England, but as by way of paragon, or by-work, as every man should have both his profession and his hobby' (*Alps*, p. 7). Italia/Inghilterra, Giardino/ufficio, Hobby/professione: il pensiero procede su schemi di opposizione binaria, che provano in Butler la ricerca continua di un equilibrio fra affermazioni polarmente opposte, perseguito con una oscillazione costante fra estremi in funzione progressiva. Nella sua opera la presenza di paradossi, di chiasmi, di antitesi e parallelismi, non è solo gioco retorico ma correlazione essenziale della sua visione dinamica alla realtà, dialettica e analitica, relativista e asistemica<sup>6</sup>.

Il legame tematico fra le due opere è presentato nell'introduzione di *Alps and Sanctuaries* dove Butler si scusa per aver parlato poco o punto del Sacro Monte di Varallo in un libro dedicato ai santuari del Piemonte: il fatto è che lo studio di Varallo allungherebbe di troppo il libro in corso di pubblicazione: 'Varallo requires a work to itself', nascerà così *Ex Voto*, il cui titolo rimanda a questo

impegno, nonchè alla promessa da lui fatta agli amici piemontesi e al sindaco di Varallo che gli avevano offerto un pubblico banchetto<sup>7</sup>. Questo onore lo aveva profondamente commosso e lo aveva portato alla decisione di scrivere il suo studio sul Sacro Monte e sugli artisti che avevano concepito e realizzato le quarantaquattro cappelle che inscenano gli episodi della vita di Cristo e sono sparse intorno al Santuario formando un complesso di interesse eccezionale per Butler.

La struttura delle due opere è però diversa: se *Ex Voto* soddisfa un impegno di documentazione storico-estetica condotta con criteri scientifici, tanto quanto l'eclettismo divagante del suo autore permetterà, *Alps* si presenta a metà tra la guida e il diario di viaggio con un dichiarato compromesso con il genere narrativo: 'I have treated the events of several summers – egli scrive – as though they belonged to only one. This can be of no importance to the reader, but as the work is chronologically inexact, I had better perhaps say so' (*Alps*, p. v). Siamo così avvertiti della presenza di avvenimenti e di un tempo narrativo, per cui i connotatori temporali si alleano all'elemento spaziale secondo una correlazione del tutto arbitraria. Troviamo una apertura e una chiusura narrativa circolare corrispondente all'inizio e alla fine di questa vacanza che porterà Butler e l'amico Jones da Faido verso le valli italiane in un caso, da Faido verso casa nell'altro, con uno spazio narrativamente indifferente tra il S. Gottardo e Boulogne, traccia di pendolarità fra due poli: i viaggiatori infatti riprendono un interesse alla vita solo quando 'the science-ridden, art-ridden, culture-ridden, afternoon-tea-ridden cliffs of Old England' compaiono all'orizzonte (*Alps*, p. 371). Non mancano peraltro gli elementi propri al genere della guida di viaggio: indicazioni di distanze, altitudini, usi e costumi, flora e fauna<sup>8</sup>, consigli sugli alberghi ed alloggi, sempre condizionati però dalla forte personalità dell'autore, che relega quindi involontariamente in margine le informazioni strettamente topografiche, e si impone nella fase di scelta, di interpretazione e valutazione degli altri elementi.

Il titolo completo di *Alps and Sanctuaries* recita o f *Piedmont and Canton Ticino*. L'estensione della attenzione di Butler al dilà dei confini politici è una delle tante scelte idiosincratiche dell'autore: egli ritiene, e subito dichiara nel primo capitolo, di iniziare il suo viaggio letterario da Faido che si trova appunto nel

Canton Ticino 'which though politically Swiss is as much Italian in character as any part of Italy'. (*Alps*, p. 8). Sempre nello stesso capitolo torna sull'argomento confessando di non aver più alcun interesse per la Svizzera tedesca, ben diversa dal versante italiano, al punto che non appena vede 'the water going down Rhinewards' se ne ritorna al più presto a Londra (*Alps*, p. 16 – 17).

Questo sarà un atteggiamento costante di Butler: l'abbandonarsi ad un libero gioco di pensieri ed associazioni che lo porta a ritrovare in questo angolo tanto conosciuto ed amato d'Italia una conferma ai suoi interessi, alle sue interpretazioni, a ipotesi e congetture, senza alcuna asprezza o tensione polemica ma con una calma e vivezza espositiva che ce lo rivelano in uno stato di grazia, in quelli che sono stati definiti giustamente gli *otia italica*: sensibile alle bellezze suggestive dei paesaggi e delle stagioni di cui ci dà descrizioni che alla precisione della osservazione uniscono una intensità emotiva: attento alla lingua nei suoi usi idiomatici, affascinato dalla gestualità e dalla mimica, convinto della somiglianza fisica fra le due razze, l'anglosassone e l'italiana del nord<sup>10</sup>. Gli alberghi diventano per lui luogo di abituale incontro con gli amici albergatori. Preti e parroci dei piccoli paesi sostengono la sua polemica contro il conformismo sterile e ottusa della chiesa anglicana a confronto con quella che egli ritiene una maggior apertura e tolleranza della chiesa romana. Affiorano le sue teorie sull'apprendimento, sulla evoluzione, sulla educazione, o vengono trascritte pagine di musica di Händel per sopperire alla parola o al disegno o quanto meno per integrarne l'efficacia comunicativa.

*Alps and Sanctuaries* ha infatti una fisionomia tutta particolare segnata dalla presenza delle illustrazioni e delle citazioni da spartiti musicali, elementi assenti in *Ex Voto*, che è corredato soltanto da una ricca documentazione fotografica sempre ad opera dell'autore. Illustrazioni e spartiti assumono un valore strutturale intrinseco al testo e non puramente esornativo. I disegni sono di mano di Butler stesso, da lui scelti fra i tanti schizzi raccolti durante i soggiorni italiani, per la riproduzione dei quali egli indica anche il metodo adottato ai fini della stampa. Ad essi egli fa via via riferimento nel testo, ad essi rimanda per confortare le descrizioni e i commenti di ordine artistico, o culturale o geografico. Sembra esserne soddisfatto se non orgoglioso, li firma e li data e se è necessario arricchirli di qualche figura umana allora ricorre all'aiuto

dell'amico Charles Gogin e scrupolosamente lo indica nella incisione stessa, oltre ad avercelo già annunciato nella introduzione. I disegni possono disporsi quasi a darci una prospettiva cinematografica dell'oggetto da rappresentare, osservato da successive tappe di avvicinamento come per il monastero di S. Michele (*vedi illustrazioni*<sup>4</sup>), o per il sacro Monte di Varese; o seguendo le fasi di un movimento rotatorio come a S. Marina in Calanca (*Alps*, p. 291 - 93). Potranno farsi parte testimoniale del discorso sull'arte che Butler sviluppa come inevitabile corollario alla esplorazione di questa parte d'Italia<sup>11</sup>:

Sulla importanza delle illustrazioni egli insiste nel corso stesso dell'opera, sostenendo la superiorità dei moderni sugli antichi in questo campo, provata anche dalle vignette in bianco e nero delle riviste umoristiche. A questo proposito ritiene che se Leonardo da Vinci si presentasse con le sue caricature alla redazione di *Punch* verrebbe sicuramente bocciato. Gli stessi Michelangelo e Tiziano, cadrebbero rovinosamente nel campo della illustrazione moderna:

“They had no more sense of humour than a Hebrew prophet; They had no eye for the more trivial side of anything round about them . . . Fancy even the result which would have ensued if [Michel Angelo] had tried to put the figures into the illustrations of this book. I should be very sorry to let him try his hand at it . . . to him a priest chucking a small boy under the chin was simply non-existent. He did not care for it and had therefore no eye for it” (*Alps*, p. 184).

Per quanto riguarda il secondo tratto originale di *Alps and Sanctuaries*, Butler inserisce pagine di musica quando la parola non gli sembra sufficiente veicolo di comunicazione per sensazioni od emozioni<sup>17</sup>. Musica di Händel perlopiù, il musicista che, come si è visto nella introduzione, egli stima superiore ad ogni altro e che, come Shakespeare e Butler stesso, amò l'Italia e ad essa sembrò ispirarsi nelle sue composizioni. È certo comunque che la musica di Händel rimanda per Butler all'Italia, e l'Italia di contro rimanda ad Händel. Udendo la sua musica egli si chiede quale dei valichi alpini Händel passasse per recarsi in Italia, in quale stagione, con quale tempo, quali fiori vedesse, quale musica egli sentisse dentro di sé<sup>13</sup>. Si ferma nel Campo Santo di Calpiogna del quale dà uno schizzo diurno, ma nè schizzo nè parole possono dare un'idea del pathos del luogo; descrive i fiori, le montagne purpuree al tramonto

il silenzio rotto solo dal rumoreggiare sul fondovalle del Ticino e sente allora risuonare all'orecchio le note di un brano dal Messiah di Händel che certo doveva aver visto luoghi come questi per ricordarli quando scrisse 'the divine music which he has wedded to the words of them that sleep', e riporta la scrittura musicale del brano insieme con alcune battute di un Preludio händeliano (Suite de pieces, I, 8), (*Alps*, p. 19 – 21). Alla musica di Händel si intreccia una visione surreale, un sogno che Butler ha al Lago di Cadagna, presso Piora, in una luminosa notte estiva di luna piena: un paesaggio che da dolce e incantato si è fatto aspro e sublime, popolato non più dai giovani contadini ma da masse osannanti che vorticando tra le creste dei monti e il cielo cantano un coro dall'oratorio Theodora di Händel ('Venus Laughing from the Skies'), mentre al risveglio la musica che egli sente dentro di sé e che viene riportata nel testo è un brano dal sesto concerto per organo di Händel, naturalmente (*Alps*, p. 85 – 89). La musica può anche aiutare ad esprimere uno stato d'animo collettivo: la popolazione di Primadengo da lui sorpresa in una mattina domenicale appollaiata sugli alberi di ciliegio a riempirsi a sazietà di frutti, rimanda non solo alla quieta estasi dei santi e degli evangelisti di Lippo Lippi, ma anche al coro dei profeti di Händel (Te Deum di Dettingen), o a quello delle muse intorno all'altare de *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso* con una fusione di referenti pittorici e musicali e questa volta anche letterari tipica dell'autore (*Alps*, p. 22 – 23). Sensibilità, preparazione ed interessi musicali lo spingono peraltro a cimentarsi nella trascrizione musicale del grido modulato con cui i valligiani si chiamano da una valle all'altra (*Alps*, p.262), o ad impegnarsi in una dissertazione sui toni, semitoni, scale diatoniche presenti a suo avviso nel canto del passero solitario in un confronto con il canto degli altri uccelli: il tutto suffragato dalla trascrizione musicale dello melodia che egli ha individuato (*Alps*, pp. 299 – 302): cosa che avverrà anche per il suono delle campane di Vogogna messe a confronto con quelle di Castelletto (*Alps*, p. 344).

Salendo al santuario di S. Michele, la vista di scheletri ammassati in una nicchia nelle mura massicce sollecita il suo immaginario ad una visione di gusto gotico: la neve di una bufera invernale delicatamente posata sui teschi e sulle spalle degli scheletri, al tramonto di un gelido e cupo giorno di gennaio; ancor meglio

ricordando il riferimento ad una antica tradizione, egli immagina questi scheletri disposti lungo la scalinata di accesso al santuario, fra corone di fiori ormai appassiti in una chiara notte invernale dopo la nevicata: 'Fancy twilight or moonlight on these stairs, with the corpses sitting, among the withered flowers and snow, and the peeling of a great organ . . . a burst of music from an organ in the church above', dalle chiesa spalancata scende il suono dell'organo e il brano musicale inserito è un largo dal quinto concerto grosso di Händel. Il razionalista è subito pronto comunque a stabilire l'anticlimax notando tra parentesi 'I am sorry to say that they have only an armonium; I wish some one would give them a fine organ' (*Alps*, pp. 107 – 108).

La bellezza della valle di Sambuco, 'an ideal upland valley' che egli finalmente trova e non può che essere in Italia<sup>14</sup>, si definisce in termini musicali con un brano del terzo concerto per organo di Händel (*Alps*, pp. 356 – 66). Le cappelle del Sacro Monte di Varese sono architettonicamente belle e si presentano 'as fresh one after the other as a set of variations by Händel' (*Alps*, p. 327).

Non mancano manifestazioni di sensibilità pittorica e insieme di controllo della tensione emotiva attraverso il mezzo verbale. Effetti cinestesici rafforzano l'efficacia descrittiva della notte di luna a Cadana: 'I could see the cattle a mile off, and hear the tinkling of their bells which danced multitudinously before the ear as fireflies come and go before the eyes' (*Alps*, p. 83 – 84). Altrove si impongono al lettore la traversata del S. Gottardo in un tramonto invernale, lo splendido effetto del ghiaccio e del gelo in un mattino d'inverno, sul paesaggio alpino tra Airole e Giornico; la tempesta di neve vista dalla finestra della *parca* di Ronco (*Alps*, p. 80 – 81)<sup>15</sup>: una tranquilla mattina di autunno tra le montagne e i prati della valle di Mesocco con giochi di riflessi di luci tra le nuvole basse e i prati bagnati di pioggia, le fiammate degli alberi, la varietà di colori e di forme dei campi coltivati, il ruscello che scorre come nel brano handaliano 'While Kedron's Brook' dal Joshua, di cui Butler ci ripropone lo spartito (*Alps*, pp. 258 – 61).

Ritorniamo alla funzione delle illustrazioni e alla loro connessione con il testo scritto. Butler è presente in questo suo diario-racconto, anche come pittore in piena attività mentre coglie ed annota scorci di paesaggio con elementi architettonici e umani in schizzi che entreranno a far parte integrante del testo di *Alps and Sanctuaries*.

Lo vediamo così spesso circondato da bambini (p. 33), assistito dai valligiani che gli offrono ciliege mentre lavora, (p. 39) o che vorrebbero acquistare i suoi schizzi (p. 40); che temono che egli stia facendo rilievi di interesse militare (p. 161), o che commentano sottovoce il suo lavoro: 'Oh bel! oh bel! Oh che testa! oh che testa!'. Registra con sommesso compiacimento di aver ricevuto l'appellativo 'egregio pittore' da un frate cui ha regalato un suo disegno, e di essere stato definito perfino 'esimio Pittore', qualifica che egli ritiene essere superiore ad egregio (p. 286). Oppure racconta la sua meraviglia per il riflesso che il verde esterno proietta sulle pareti bianche interne del portale della chiesa di Giornico che egli sta riproducendo, come dal disegno poi a fianco riportato (p. 74), o confessa la necessità di ricorrere alla collaborazione dell'amico pittore Gogin per completare con figure di bambini un suo disegno perchè i bambini sono soggetti dinamici, mentre chiese ed affreschi sono statici: 'I can get on with statical subjects, but can do nothing with dynamical ones' (p. 266).

Il contesto pittorico è però ben più ampio ed articolato al di là della esperienza fattuale. I pittori italiani, grandi o meno grandi, i loro principi estetici, le peculiarità della loro arte, costituiscono referente di riflessioni più o meno direttamente connesse al fatto artistico, sono oggetto di valutazione comparativa, costituiscono gli assunti di base di enunciazioni teoriche. Leonardo e Botticelli concludono la pagina sulla importanza della illusione con le loro opinioni discordi sul dipingere paesaggi; la bianca chiesa di Prato con campanile romanico in cima ad una verde collina 'forms a lovely little bit of landscape such as some old Venetian painter might have chosen as a background for a Madonna' (*Alps*, p. 14); spesso si è fermato nell'ombra a dipingere, in Val Leventina, guardando 'the blue upon the mountains which Titian watched from under the chestnuts of Cadore' (*Alps*, p. 50). Un campo può essere alla Cima da Conegliano (*Alps*, p. 150), un vecchio può avere un aspetto mantegnesco (*Alps*, p. 161), la gente che si sazia di ciliege sugli alberi, come abbiamo visto, ha l'aria estatica degli angeli di Lippi.

Un interno capitolo di *Alps and Sanctuaries* è dedicato a considerazioni sul declino dell'arte italiana contemporanea, e ad esso si riconducono le osservazioni sparse nel testo sull'argomento. Butler si limita alla pittura e trova gli artisti moderni insignificanti se non intollerabili perchè falsi, perchè non sono mossi da un



irresistibile desiderio di dipingere ma dal desiderio di produrre 'an academic picture and win money and applause' (*Alps*, p. 183). Come in Inghilterra certo, ed egli ne ha fatto una dolorosa esperienza diretta<sup>16</sup>. La causa principale di questa decadenza è nell'accademismo della scuola, a partire dalla apertura dell'Accademia Bolognese dei Caracci che ha così raggiunto risultati opposti agli intenti. L'errore sta nel proporre agli studenti non la natura, ma le opere dei grandi pittori del passato: essi non possono così svilupparsi gradualmente da uno stadio embrionale, studiando la natura con i loro occhi, cercando di esprimere con sincerità e in libertà la loro individualità. Si dovrebbe permettere loro di vedere quadri e disegni non oltre l'inizio del 1500, le tavole votive, i disegni dei periodici umoristici contemporanei. In questi ultimi, come si è detto, egli vede il perpetrarsi di immediatezza e realismo di espressione grafica. Quanto alle tavole votive, gli *ex voto* (*Ex Voto* pp. 114 - 15), gli spiace di veder neglette queste umili cronache dove tutto sembra andar a rotoli, ma dove sappiamo che tutto alla fine si risolverà per il meglio. Sono ingenua e libere da ogni affettazione, non hanno tono enfatico, sono ricche di sensibilità e a volte di mano di qualche maestro nato fuori tempo. In queste pitture covano le braci dell'antico fuoco dell'arte italiana, e da queste piuttosto che dalle serre dell'accademia quella fiamma potrà riaccendersi. Egli trova con facilità le prove che convalidano questa sua analisi e le riproduce nel testo di *Alps and Sanctuaries*: il disegno sterilmente accademico del bambino dodicenne (p. 189), la vista di S. Michele così anonima e fredda nel disegno di Avogadro, che egli propone di confrontare con le sue vedute di S. Michele, operano in senso contrario allo sviluppo coerente e naturale delle capacità artistiche che egli crede di ravvisare ad esempio nei disegni regalatigli da un giovane italiano dilettante. Questi ultimi sono prova della freschezza e della spontaneità che lasciate al loro naturale sviluppo potranno riportare a grandezza l'arte italiana.

Come in ogni campo della esperienza umana così in arte nulla può sostituire un primo ed anche ingenuo approccio ai problemi di rappresentazione. Altri, come Raffaello, possono aver raggiunto la soluzione di un particolare problema o la conclusione che non vi sono possibili soluzioni, ma ciascuno di noi non capirà se non avrà percorso lo stesso cammino da solo. Si possono sintetizzare i primi passi, ma non molto di più perchè è necessario fare una

esperienza pratica, per quanto breve, a partire dai livelli più bassi della professione. Il giovane vada dunque a bottega, incominci dal preparare la tavolozza e dal pulire i pennelli del padrone (*Alps*, p. 201), purchè sia lasciato libero di fare ciò che gli piace. Del resto così ha imparato a dipingere l'amico Jones guardando lui, Butler, mentre lavorava e cimentandosi subito a riprodurre ciò che vedeva (*Alps*, p. 193). Potrà inevitabilmente capitare che questi apprendisti dell'arte, raggiunta la perfezione, divengano a loro volta dei professionisti dogmatici e generino di nuovo una ribellione contro la loro autorità: il che, secondo la ricerca di bilanciamento simmetrico tipica di Butler, non potrà che essere un progresso: 'The balance on the whole would be to the good' (*Alps*, p. 203).

Egli considera gli affreschi di S. Maria in Calanca, ad esempio, gli estremi gemiti della vera arte strozzata dall'accademia, o i vagiti di un'arte condannata a morte sul nascere dagli accademici; mentre lo riempie di continuo stupore una personalità come quella di certo Dedomenici della Rossa<sup>17</sup>, un autodidatta che non uscì mai dal suo villaggio e pure riesce a confondere la perizia critica del Butler con una Madonna dove tratti moderni ed elementi di una semplicità primitiva si fondono con perfetta originalità. Questo conferma ulteriormente la sua convinzione che questa Italia delle vallate secondarie e sconosciute offra infinito materiale, (ci si potrebbe scrivere sopra un libro, egli sostiene con un ammicco bonario al proprio lavoro) di interesse artistico assoluto a volte, più spesso di valore relativo quando il pittore riesca almeno a comunicare l'impressione di aver visto e sentito 'for himself' (*Alps*, p. 294).

Si afferma anche in campo il relativismo Butleriano: come non esiste un'unità di misura esterna, oggettiva del bene, così per il bello c'è solo un criterio interno relativo, determinato dal senso del piacere che accompagna l'attività artistica, creativa o fruitiva; il giudizio di valore è quindi relativo all'esperienza individuale e viene dal Butler formulato con schemi sintattici caratteristici che potremmo definire di simmetria bilaterale, con una approssimazione graduale ad un giudizio conclusivo che rimane peraltro virtuale. In *Alps and Sanctuaries* proprio a proposito dell'arte egli afferma: 'Every extreme – every opinion carried to its logical end – will prove to be an absurdity' (p. 198). In *Ex Voto* gli artisti vengono giudicati per coppie: Gaudenzio Ferrari è più grande di Raffaello, egli preferisce Giovanni Bellini a Gaudenzio,

il Luini è grandissimo, ma Gaudenzio Ferrari è nel complesso 'the stronger man' (pp. 16; 82). Fra gli scultori plasticatori che lavorarono alle cappelle dei diversi Sacri Monti il Ferrari è il più grande, ma il Tabacchetti è il più robusto; il Tabacchetti ha il senso dell'insieme ma il D'Enrico è più attento ai particolari, e così via. Altro esempio caratteristico di questa ricerca continua di bilanciamento, è nel consiglio che egli dà di visitare le cappelle di Varallo seguendo un ordine rovesciato rispetto a quello che ora è naturale: questo permetterebbe di vedere prima, quando non si è ancora stanchi, le cappelle migliori, salvo poi ritornare all'ordine precedente quando tutti si mettessero a seguire il suo consiglio.

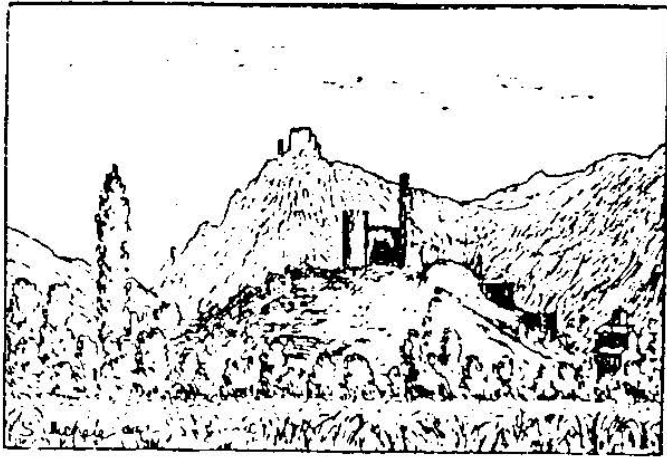
Egli infine previene qualsiasi obiezione ammettendo di essere 'apt to take fancies to works of art and artists', ma sostenendo anche che nonostante questa sua tendenza alla stravaganza, egli si sforza di conservare un metodo nella sua pazzia! (*Ex Voto*, p. 181). Nell'ambito di queste 'fancies' possiamo citare, sempre da *Ex Voto*, la sua soddisfazione nel constatare come molti artisti che hanno usurpato per secoli la fama di grandezza, siano precipitati dell'impostura (p. 201), o la tesi della morte quasi biologica e comunque salutare delle opere d'arte dopo un periodo determinato di vita, per evitare le enormi formazioni geologiche che il loro numero costruisce nei secoli e che finirebbero con il soffocarci (p. 203).

Nel suo procedere a studiare, soprattutto in *Ex Voto*, l'opera di artisti perlopiù sconosciuti o quasi, e nel sostenerli come pari se non più grandi e validi dei Raffaello e Michelangelo e Leonardo, egli è consapevole di usare un linguaggio forte (p. 62) che può colpire i suoi lettori come una esagerazione (p. 164), ma ritiene di essere pienamente giustificato dal fatto che, per quanto riguarda le cappelle, ci si trova davanti ad un genere artistico del tutto nuovo: è necessario perciò uno sforzo immaginativo di adeguamento storico per riportare il giudizio sull'opera al momento della sua genesi. Si arrogherà fino alla fine il merito di aver dissotterrato 'a whole school of sculpture of which the pundits of arts knew nothing'<sup>18</sup>. Il fondamento teorico del confronto fra i grandi del passato e gli artisti che egli preferisce loro, è di ordine generale e sta nella distinzione che egli pone all'inizio di *Ex Voto* fra *gnosis* e *agape*, in relazione a qualsiasi forma di espressione artistica: la vera opera d'arte non può fondarsi solo sulla perfezione tecnica,

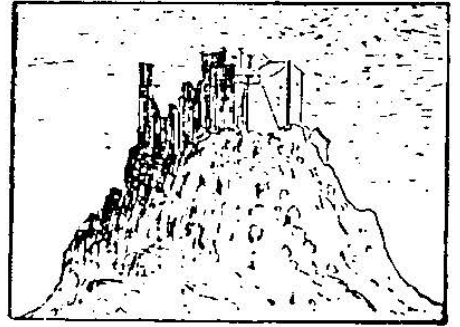
sulla *gnosis*, ma deve basarsi sulla sincerità, sulla fede, sull'amore verso Dio e verso l'uomo. Lo spirito e non la lettera è l'anima dell'arte: Tiziano e Leonardo e Raffaello e Michelangelo possono al massimo far presa sulla mente, ma non sul cuore<sup>19</sup>.

Nella sua teoria estetica si possono avvertire echi di Ruskin e dei preraffaelliti, nel recupero dei fiorentini del XIV secolo, di un realismo non falsato da preoccupazioni tecniche o soffocato dallo studio della natura; nella difesa di una profondità etica e religiosa, di un apprendimento artigianale 'a bottega', non accademico, che lasci all'allievo tutto il tempo e lo spazio necessari per esemplari per esprimersi. Certo è che i disegni del giovane amico italiano che egli propone nel testo, sembrano approdare, nel tratto grafico e compositivo, ai moduli figurativi del primitivismo dell'arte moderna di un Rousseau o di Paul Gauguin. Non sorprenda quindi il rifiuto del principio estetico dell'arte fine a se stessa, di 'art for art's sake' (*Alps*, p. 203), e la giustificazione è tipicamente butleriana: l'artista lavora per il piacere che la sua opera genera in lui, senza pensare al guadagno o al piacere di chi nemmeno conosce. Suggestisce anche, con bonaria ironia, agli esteti che si dovessero stancare di girasoli e gigli, la possibilità di trovare una non minore 'weary utterness' nella cicoria e nei cipollotti la cui bellezza egli ha scoperto nell'orto di un certo frate italiano (*Alps*, p. 295).'

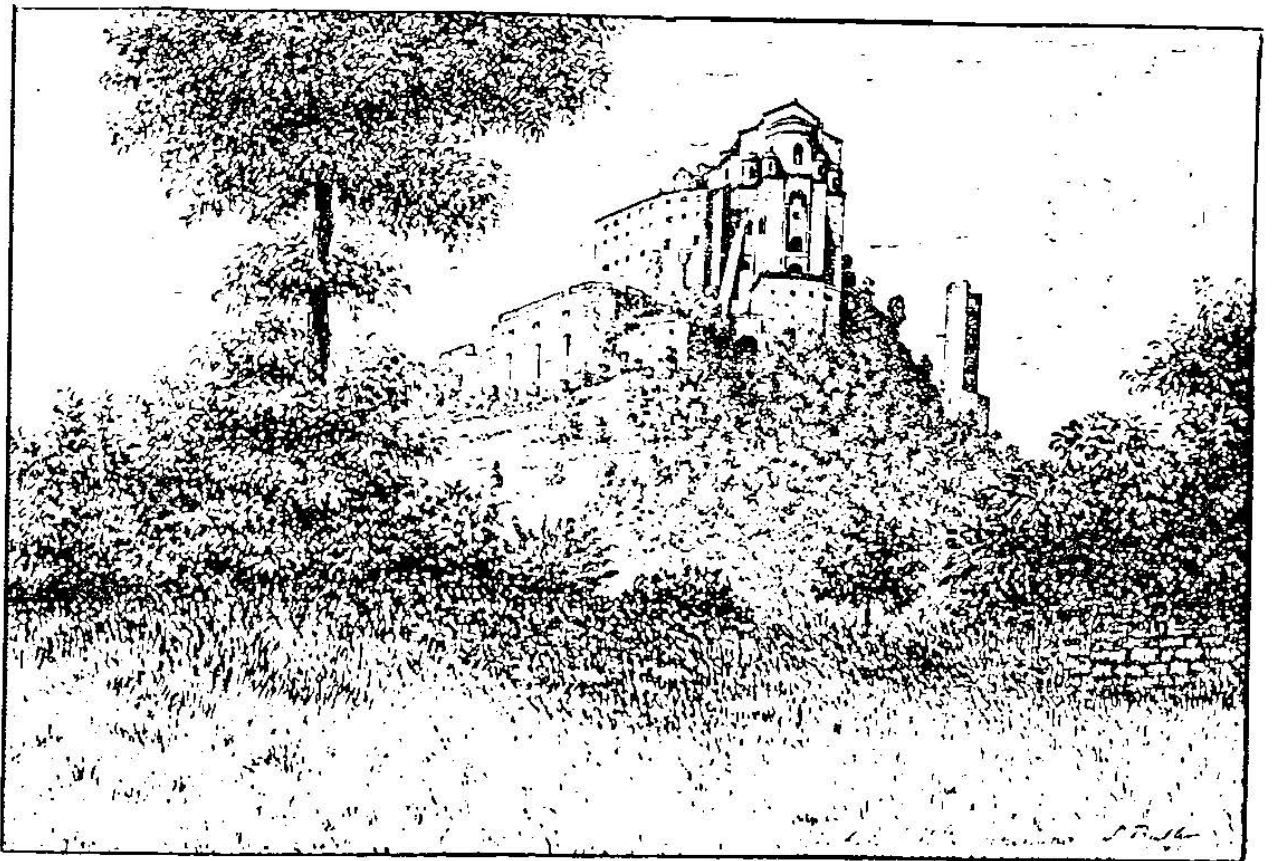
Chiese e chiesine della Val Leventina, come delle valli piemontesi e lombarde che Butler percorre a piedi, o in carrozza o per brevi tratti in treno, formano per lui un costante punto di riferimento, come elementi del paesaggio in un contesto pittorico o lette nelle loro semplice strutture architettoniche: il portale o il campanile romanico, il portico che precede l'entrata, gli affreschi sbiaditi per le intemperie o resi illeggibili per l'umidità. Scrive: 'It is not safe ever to pass a church in Italy without exploring it carefully' (*Alps*, p. 311): potrebbe essere un edificio nuovo e perciò stesso detestabile, ma vi si potrebbe al contrario trovare un frammento delle innumerevoli cose belle o perlomeno interessanti che l'Italia possiede e che nessuno conosce. Quando incontra le numerose cappelle, 'small countries', disseminate lungo le strade di montagna, ce ne dà una spiegazione bizzarra, certo ironica: poste al culmine di dure salite starebbero a frenare le imprecazioni del viandante che le raggiunge faticosamente con il suo carico (*Alps*, p. 34)<sup>20</sup>.



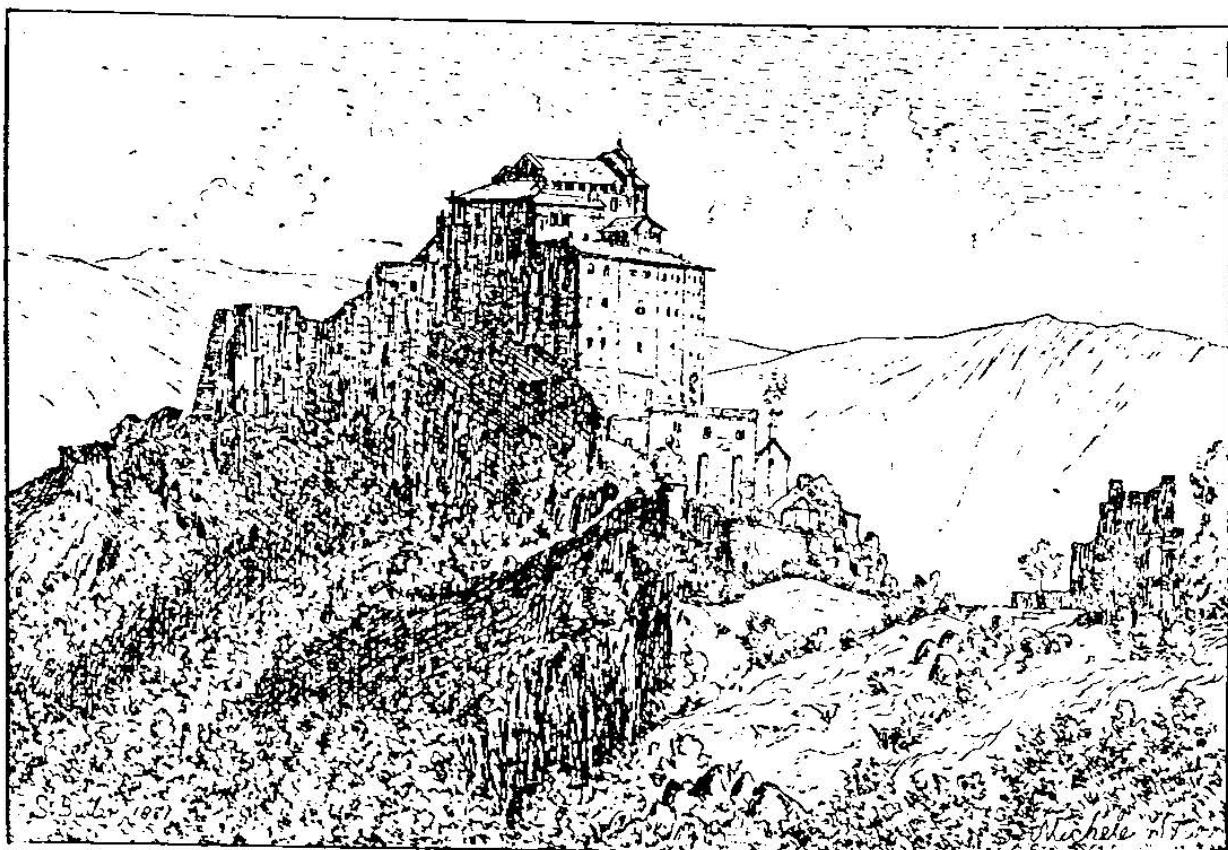
S. MICHELE FROM NEAR BUSSOLENO



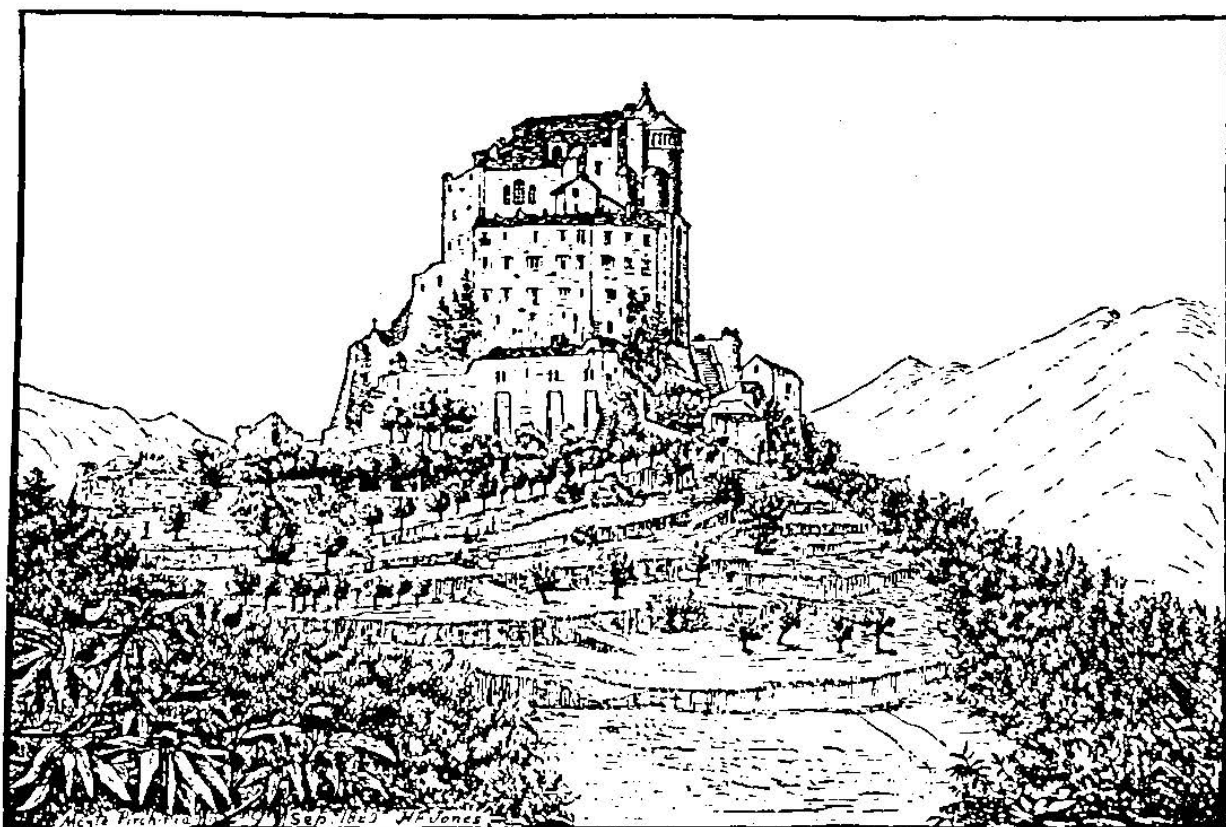
S. MICHELE



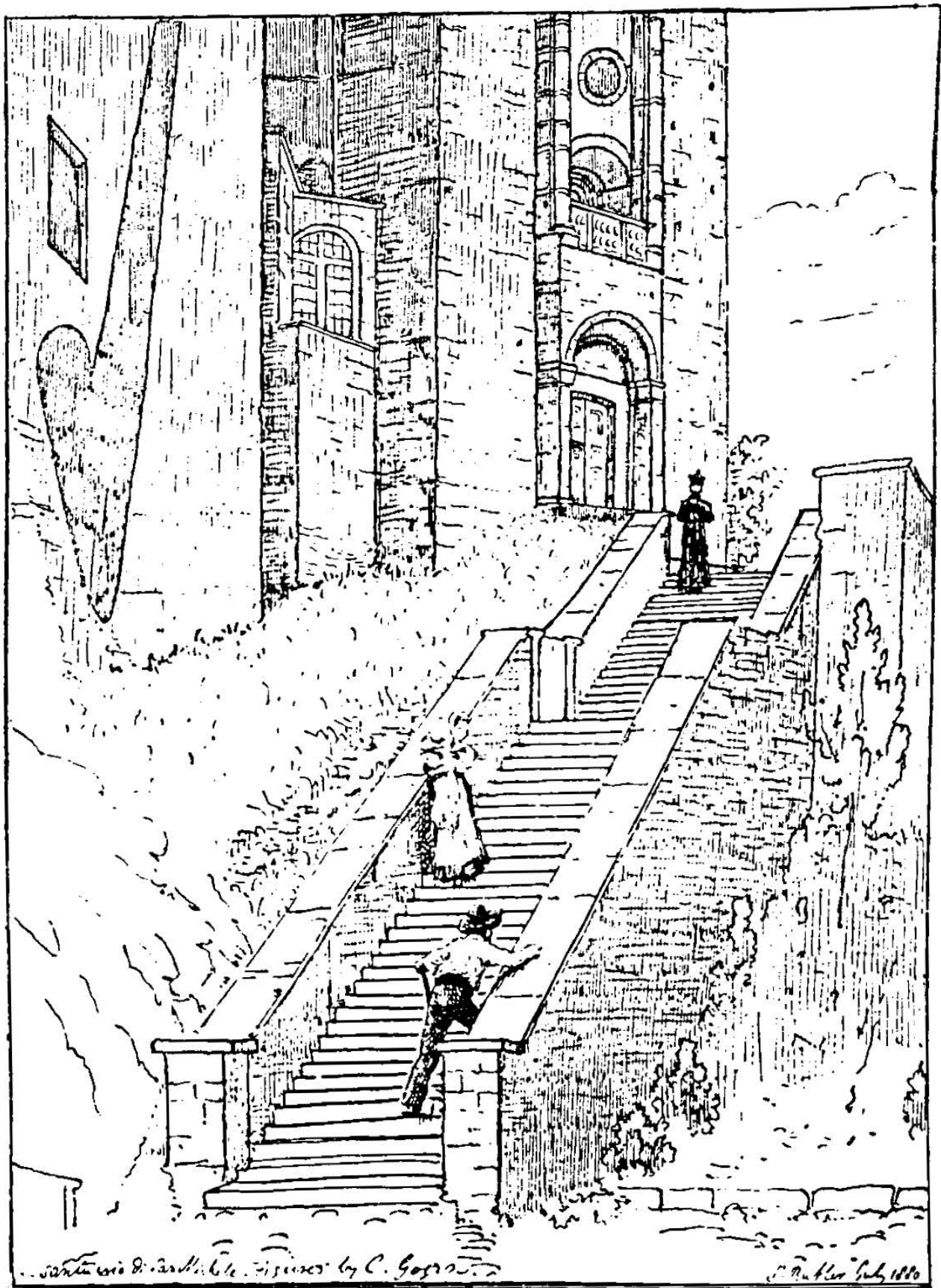
S. MICHELE FROM S. PIETRO



S. MICHELE, NEAR VIEW.



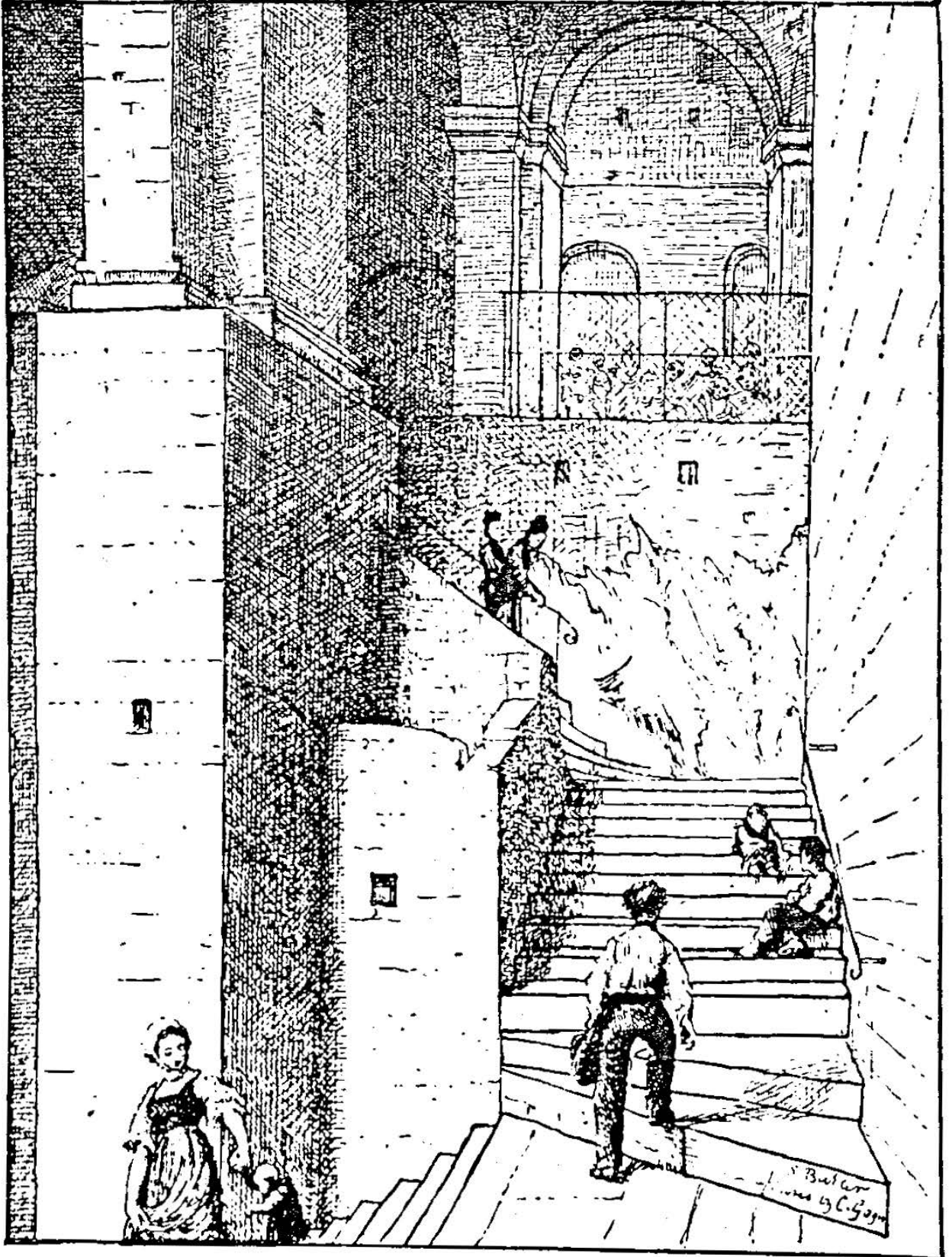
S. MICHELE, FROM PATH TO AVIGLIANA.



Sanctuary & ... by C. Goswami

July 1880

MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE SANCTUARY.



STEPS LEADING TO THE CHURCH. No. 1.





STEPS LEADING TO THE CHURCH. No. 2.

*Largo.*

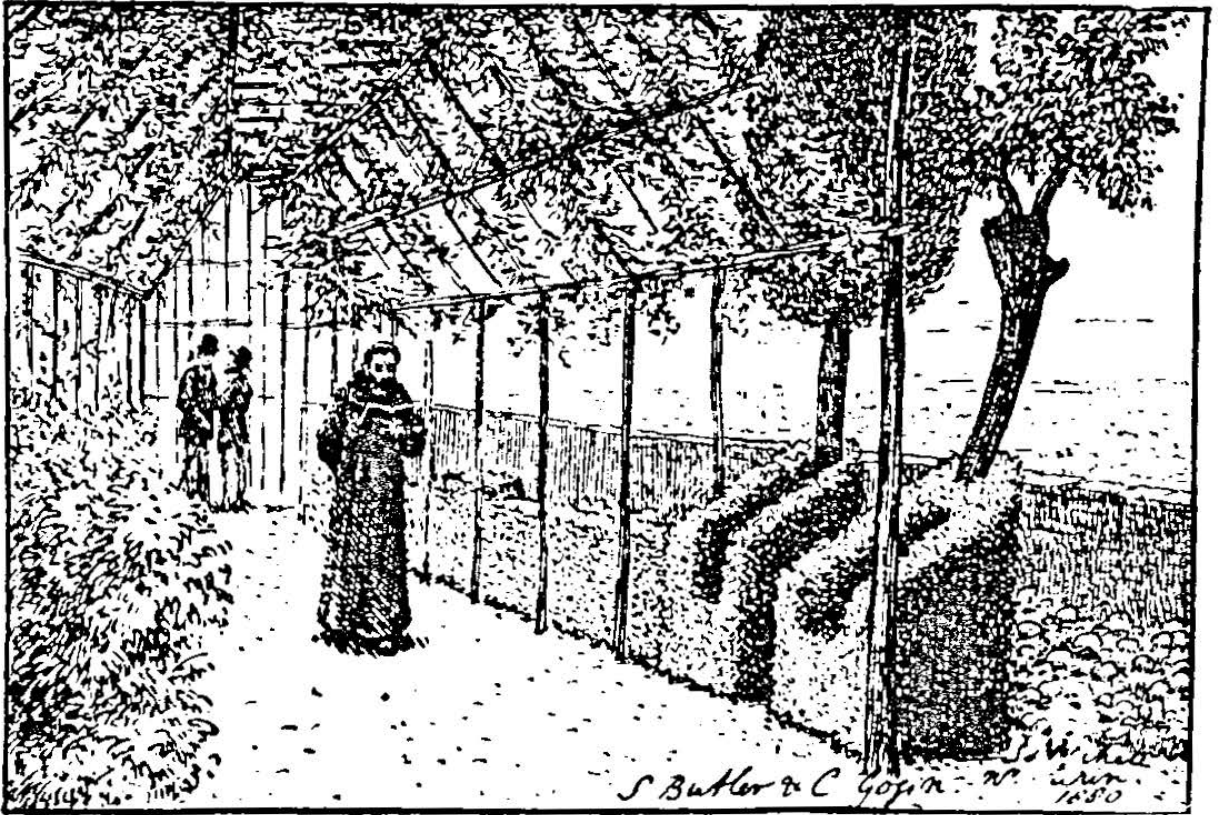
8ves. . . . .

This system consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 3/2. The music features a series of quarter notes in the upper staff and half notes in the lower staff. A trill is indicated above the final note of the upper staff. The tempo marking 'Largo.' is placed between the staves. Below the bass staff, the instruction '8ves.' is followed by a dotted line.

This system continues the musical piece with two staves. The notation includes quarter notes and half notes. A trill is present above the final note of the upper staff. Below the bass staff, there is a dotted line.

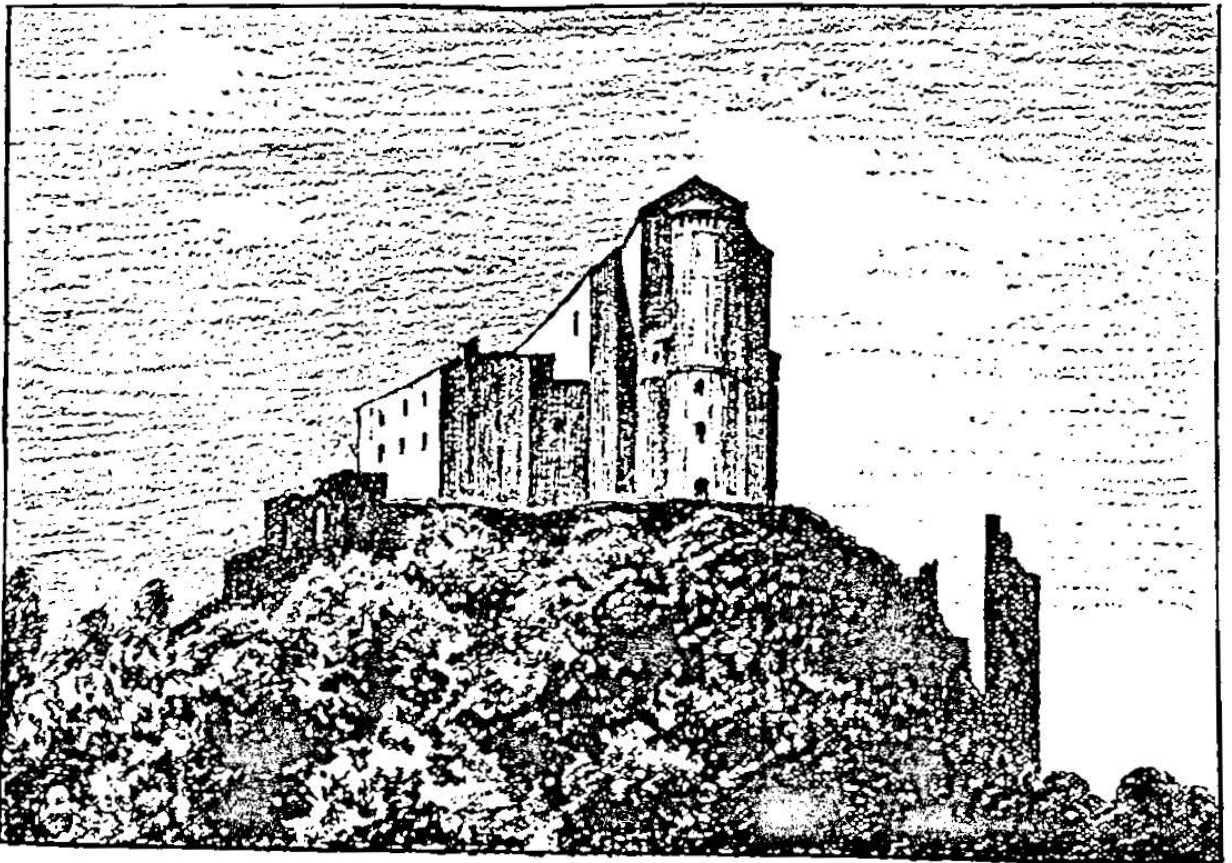
8ves. . . . .

This system also consists of two staves. The notation includes quarter notes and half notes. Below the bass staff, the instruction '8ves.' is followed by a dotted line.



*S Butler & C Gougeon - No. 1117 - 1850*

GARDEN AT THE SANCTUARY OF S. MICHELE



AVOGADRO'S VIEW OF S. MICHELE



Il discorso descrittivo e valutativo si fa più complesso ovviamente quando Butler si trova davanti a quei luoghi di culto che hanno un loro sviluppo storico più articolato, una loro forza aggregatrice di devoti e curiosi: i Santuari appunto di cui si legge nel titolo. Il primo di questi grossi edifici che egli studia è il monastero di S. Michele della Chiusa, che abbiamo già ricordato per l'associazione di scheletri, neve e musica händeliana. Lo affascina la severità imponente delle strutture, nel fondersi di pareti di roccia e muraglioni di sostegno; la descrizione interna, puntigliosamente attenta a particolari architettonici di rilievo, lo porta in posizione polemica con il Murray<sup>21</sup>, sia per la datazione di parti dell'edificio, sia per l'attribuzione delle sue parti a stili architettonici diversi (*Alps*, pp. 112 - 14).

Non v'è dubbio che lo stile architettonico che egli predilige è il romantico, in sintonia del resto con le sue scelte pittoriche, ed è pronto quindi a mettere in rilievo ogni sia pur minima traccia di tali strutture e a ribadire la inimitabile bellezza di S. Michele a confronto, per esempio, con il santuario del Sacro Monte di Varese, dove domina il barocco per non dire il rococò (*Alps*, p. 332). Eppure il barocco qui è bello e sembra sedurlo, con tipica inversione butleriana, percepito come forma di vita, nel complesso della scena di un giorno di festa: la chiesa, la folla, i colori, gli standardi, la musica nell'aria e nella luce: la banda suonava musica barocca, sulla piazzetta barocca, 'and we were all *barocco* together' (*ALps*, 1924, p. 232).

Ad un gusto di illusionismo teatrale barocco sono d'altra parte riconducibili gli altri Sacri Monti<sup>22</sup> di interesse eccezionale per Butler: Oropa, Graglia, Orta, Varese, Locarno, e in primo luogo Varallo, hanno intorno all'edificio centrale o lungo la via che ad esso conduce, una serie di cappelle all'interno delle quali statue di grandezza naturale sono poste a rappresentare episodi sacri della vita della Madonna o della vita di Cristo. Gli artifici di queste cappelle hanno unito pittura e scultura in una disposizione scenografica che mira alla compenetrazione dei diversi elementi: le figure in terracotta o in legno 'painted up to nature', rivestite di abiti reali, con capelli di lana o di stoppa, sono disposte in gruppi con un impianto scenico che li fa 'entrare' su uno sfondo a sua volta affrescato, con una collaborazione tra scultura e pittura del tutto originale. Le cappelle sono numerose quasi che gli autori non

contenti di un'unica realizzazione di quel tipo abbiano deciso di trattare la montagna come un libro da riempire di illustrazioni. Dirà poi in *Ex Voto* che un'idea così originale potrebbe essere attribuibile solo ad un artista della statura di Leonardo.

Egli studia attentamente ciascuna cappella, il soggetto, la realizzazione: fa confronti valutativi fra le diverse cappelle e i diversi santuari. Si tratta sempre di valutazioni relative, secondo il suo principio estetico già menzionato. Insiste sul realismo degli artefici in funzione didattico-religiosa pienamente legittimata innanzitutto relativamente all'utente semplice ed incolto che ne è stato il primo destinatario. Realismo e profondità morale collocano queste cappelle fra i più ricchi esempi di quella bontà dell'arte spontanea e genuina che egli va difendendo in opposizione al detestato accademismo. A Varese, ad Oropa, ad Orta, come poi sistematicamente per Varallo in *Ex Voto*, Butler ci propone una sfilata di statue, personaggi e situazioni descritte con scrupolosa attenzione al minimo dettaglio, spesso con la serietà e il rigore critico adeguati ai grandi capolavori d'arte, lasciando altre volte spazio ad un malizioso sorriso iconoclasta: se i santi sono figurativamente sciocchi, insignificanti, i cattivi o gli indifferenti sono ben più espressivi e drammatici; i ritocchi successivi a queste statue sono a volte disastrosi, come a Varese dove il restauratore ha peggiorato l'aria sciocca dei buoni 'by giving them all pink noses' (*Alps*, p. 239).

Virginia Woolf scrive che il rancore dei contemporanei nei confronti di Butler è simile alla reazione di scolari chiusi in una squallida aula a far di conto che vedano un loro coetaneo passare davanti alla finestra con un retino a caccia di farfalle, con il solo impegno di divertirsi. I luoghi di questa caccia sono per Butler il British Museum e l'Italia<sup>23</sup>. Possiamo accettare l'immagine e vederla confermata in particolare in *Alps and Sanctuaries*: la varietà capricciosa, la coloritura verbale, musicale, grafica, la serena vivacità polemica, le figurine che animano il contesto geografico e narrativo e pittorico sono le coloratissime farfalle di una raccolta fatta con un puntiglioso e pragmatico impegno di fedeltà innanzitutto verso se stesso.

Se possiamo definire *Ex Voto* uno studio monografico centrato sul Sacro Monte di Varallo, pur con tutte le sue divagazioni umoristiche o aneddotiche, rimane invece più difficile dare una

definizione per *Alps and Sanctuaries*: l'opera non è più una semplice guida e non è ancora un libro di viaggio in senso tecnico moderno. In *Alps* c'è un pò dell'una e un pò dell'altro, con una mescolanza capricciosa e imprevedibile: potremmo forse definirla uno *holiday book*. Come uno scrittore di viaggi Butler possiede una filosofia di vita e il coraggio di esplora e di metterla alla prova, in termini qui sommessi e rilassati in quegli abbozzi di saggi che l'osservazione del mondo esterno sollecita in lui: riflessioni molto personali, sentimenti erratici, dai quali emerge a frammenti anche il suo pensiero estetico; un viaggio interiore infine, che procede parallelamente a quello esteriore. Con spirito festivo, perchè l'Italia è per lui vacanza della mente e dell'animo, egli compie un viaggio in un mondo dove è tuttora presente ciò che altrove è già passato, recuperabile perciò solo in chiave utopica: un mondo preindustriale, abitato da una bella, sana popolazione sincera, inconsapevole e pertanto onesta in ogni sua espressione. Non vi è nota elegiaca di rimpianto in Butler, ma semmai a volte in distacco analitico dello scienziato o più sovente il compiacimento vagamente paternalistico difronte alla sanità fisica e morale di questa piccola Italia tutta sua. Gli altri non ne hanno saputo o voluto vedere la ricchezza, e con questi egli non vorrebbe dividerla, se non con i più intimi: come avviene per un'opera d'arte che trae ragion d'essere innanzitutto da e per il piacere dell'autore, senza concessioni e compromessi con il pubblico.

## Notes

1. Si veda l'edizione completa delle opere di S. Butler: *The Works of Samuel Butler*, The Shrewsbury Edition, 20 vols., (J. Cape, London, 1923 – 1927). Per i dati biografici limitatamente alle esperienze italiane si veda: Attilio Sella, *Un inglese fervido amico dell'Italia*, ((Miglio, Novara 1916); H.F. Jones, *Samuel Butler author of Erewhon (1835 – 1902), A memoir*, 2 voll., (Macmillan, London 1919); J. Fort, *Samuel Butler en voyage*, "Revue Anglo-Americaine" n.6, 1927, pp. 520 – 26; Elena di Carlo Seregini, *Un romanziere e biologo inglese, amico dell'Italia: Samuel Butler*, S.A. Edizioni Athena (Milano 1933); Alberto Durino, *Samuele Butler e la Valle Sesia*, (Testa, Varallo Sesia 1940); G.D.H. Cole, *Samuel Butler*, (Longman 1952); Claudio Vita-Finzi, *Samuel Butler and Italy*, 'Italian Studies', vol. XVIII, pp. 78 – 100.

2. Lo stesso avvenne in Sicilia dove egli si recò dal 1892 fino agli ultimi mesi di vita nel marzo del 1902 e dove elaborò la sua rivoluzionaria interpretazione della questione omerica che ebbe immediati ed entusiastici sostenitori locali, cf. Vita-Finzi, *art. cit.*, *passim*, e E.S. Shaffer, *Samuel Butler's fantastic maps: Erewhon, the New Jerusalem, and the periplus of Odysseus*, *Word and Image*, vol. 4, n.2., April – June, 1988, pp. 516 – 22.

3. cf. Samuel Butler, *Alps and Sanctuaries of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino* (David Bogue, London 1882), p. 67. Le citazioni nel presente saggio sono tratte da questa edizione, se non diversamente indicato. Le edizioni successive sono: *Alps and Sanctuaries, A new and enlarged addition with the author's revisions and index, and an introduction by R.A. Streatfield* (London 1913); *The Works of Samuel Butler cit.*, vol VII (London 1924); nella introduzione a questa edizione si afferma che l'opera pur essendo datata 1882 di fatto apparve alla fine del 1881; del alcune copie datae 1882 portano sul frontespizio la dicitura "Second Edition". La riproduzione anastatica dell'ed. 1881-82 è apparsa presso Alan Sutton Publishing (Gloucester 1986). Per una traduzione parziale in italiano si veda: Samuel Butler, *Son Piccola ma son Gustose*, a cura di Piero Bianconi (Mazzucconi, Lugano 1945).

4. df. Samuel Butler, *Ex Voto: an account of the Sacro Monte or New Jerusalem at Varallo-Sesia*. With some notice of Tabachetti's remaining work at Crea, and illustrations from photographs by the Author (Trubner, London 1888). Vi fu una seconda edizione dell'opera nel 1890 (With additions and Corrections, Longmans and Co., London and New York 1890). Le citazioni nel presente studio sono dell'edizione in *The Works of . . . cit.*, vol IX (London 1924). L'opera fu tradotta in italiano a pochi anni della prima edizione. *Ex Voto, Studio artistico sulle opere d'arte del S. Monte di Varallo e di Creca*. Edizione italiana tradotta per cura di Angelo Rizzetti (Miglio, Novara 1894). Butler scrisse una introduzione in italiano da premettere a questa traduzione.

5. cf. *Ex Voto*, tr. Rizzetti, p. xi.

6. Si veda anche: Ralf Norman, *Samuel Butler and the Meaning of Chiasmus* (Macmillan, London 1986).

7. cf. H.F. Jones, *A Memoir cit.*, II, p. 58.

8. Da Prato a Faido, ad esempio, Butler riconosce di paesaggio attraverso la vegetazione: rododendri, primule, castagni, fichi, gelsi. Quanto agli animali troviamo cani assunti al rango di personaggi, volatili di vari tipi, galline, falchi, pappagalli, passeri, e insetti.

9. La sua sensibilità linguistica si manifesta nell'attenzione ai valori semantici peculiari di termini quale *alpe*, *monte*, *rascana*, *minestra*, *grissino*, si estende alla riflessione sulla ricchezza semantica dell'escamazione *ciao o sciau (sic)* o del termine disgrazia, che ritroviamo nel X capitolo di *Erewhon*. Le formule di saluto sono spunto di riflessione linguistica quando un vecchio gentiluomo, stupito per l'abbandonante colazione che l'inglese sta consumando, commenta con iterati "Oh bel!" per poi accomiatirsi con una sequenza di questo tipo: "La! Dunque! cerrea! Chow! stia Bene!" (*Alps*, p. 170). Egli propone una ipotesi di derivazione della interiezione *uoeti* (ehi tu), dall'inglese 'wait' cui si sarebbe aggiunta la finale lunga ee, per l'avversione degli italiani alle finali di parola in consonante; a vede una analogia di struttura fra l'italiano 'tirar giù' per indicare l'azione di abbozzo o di schizzo di un disegno e l'inglese corrispondente 'draw down', considerazioni queste ultime influenzate da una certa conoscenza della lingua inglese da lui rilevata nelle zone del Canton Ticino, per via probabilmente di un forte fenomeno di emigrazione, al punto che Butler si lancia nella visione profetica di una lingua inglese diffusa quanto la materna almeno presso queste popolazioni. Butler è affascinato dall'uso del diminutivi: "The delicacy of expression which their diminutives and intensives give is untranslatable" (*Alps*, p. 214). La gestualità è altrettanto inimitabile: da "the pretty little way in which they say 'no' by moving the forefinger backwards and forwards once or twice" (*Alps*, p. 215) alla piccola pantomina dell'albergatore di S. Ambrogio (*Alps*, pp. 155 - 56) che Butler descrive con estrema e divertita esattezza.



10. cf. *Alps*, pp. 181 – 82, C'è in Butler palese ammirazione per la bellezza fisica della popolazione maschile e gli dà senso di sicurezza la prestanta fisica dei postiglioni e delle guardie addette alle slitte per l'attraversamento del S. Gottardo in inverno (*Alps*, p. 11 – 12); sa cogliere con altrettanta ammirazione l'enorme sforzo fisico degli uomini che portano a spalle a valle il fieno, con un carico di due quintali ciascuno su sentieri altrimenti impraticabili; così tesi nella fatica che non è nemmeno il caso di dire loro buongiorno per non distrarli: "This is how the people get their 'corpo di legno e gamba di ferro'. But I think they rather overdo it" (*Alps*, p. 29), è il suo commento bonario, quasi di affettuosa ironia. L'attenzione agli uomini italiani non è solo un aspetto della sua velata omosessualità: risponde ad un più profondo criterio di vita, perchè la loro forza e salute fisica sono le premesse per 'a good breeding', per la continuità di una buona razza. Cf. G.D.H. Cole, *Samuel Butler and the Way of All Flesh* (Home and VanThal, London 1947), p. 35; Thomas L. Jeffers, *Samuel Butler Revalued* (*The Pennsylvania State University Press, Univ. Park and London 1981*), p. 117.

11. Le illustrazioni di *Alps* vennero citate come titolo preferenziale in una lettera di presentazione di Butler per la Slade Professorship nel febbraio 1886: 'The illustrations to his Alps and Sanctuaries, and very many passages in the text, evince his remarkable faculty of suggestiveness, and power of expressing much in little with pen and pencil . . .', Letter from Richard Garnett, Testimonials, Samuel Butler, *To the Electors of the Slade Professor of Fine Art*, [Privately printed, London 1886], p. 3. Sull'attività artistica di Butler si veda l'ampio studio di Elinor Shaffer, *Erewhons of the Eye, Samuel Butler as printer, photographer and art critic* (Reaktion Books, London, 1988).

12. Butler si cimentò anche nella composizione musicale insieme con l'amico Festing Jones, pubblicando una raccolta di pezzi per piano, una cantata, *Narcissus*, è un oratorio, *Ulysses*.

13. Samuel Butler, *Notebooks, The Works of. . . cit.*, Vol. XX (London, 1927), p. 131.

14. H.F. Jones (*A Memoir cit.*, I, indice nelle viste prospettiche dell'alto di queste valli del nord Italia e nella loro configurazione i modelli del mondo di Erewhon come esso si presenta per la prima volta a Higgs: così come gli Erewhoniani sono modellati sulla popolazione rurale italiana dalla quale Butler è affascinato per i motivi già citati. Si veda anche E.S. Shaffer, *art. cit.*, p. 513.

15. Ci sono due personaggi che assumono per Butler una fuzione apparentemente iniziatica, l'uno è il vecchio incontrato davanti al fuoco nei pressi di Cadana e che sembra scatenare in Butler la visione händeliana di cui si è parlato, l'altra è questa vecchia abitante di Ronco che fila alla finestra dominando tutto il paese: 'The old lady . . . would make a perfect Fate: I saw her sitting at her window spinning, and looking down over the Ticino valley as though it were the world and she were spinning its destiny. She had a somewhat stern expression, thin lips, iron-grey eyes, and an aquiline nose . . .'.

16. E nota la faticosa e modesta carriera di Butler come pittore; si veda in particolare E Shaffer, *Erewhons of the Eye cit.*, passim.

17. Butler aveva già scritto su questo artista un lungo articolo in *The Drawing-room Gazette*, 30 settembre 1871, c.f. Samuel Butler, *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement and Other Early Essays, The Works of. . . cit.*, vol. I. 1923, pp. 242 – 45. Anche in *Ex Voto* ritorna sul Dedomenici con grande ammirazione (pp. 209 – 10).

18. cf. H.F. Jones, *A Memoir cit.*, II, p. 382.

19. cf. H.F. Jones, *A Memoir cit.*, II, p. 382.

20. Vi è un edificio non sacro a cui Butler dedica grande spazio: il castello di Angera sul Lago Maggiore, l'interesse per il quale sembra fosse arricchito da una presenza femminile, risoltasi poi, come ovvio, in una pavida fuga del nostro. cf. H.F. Jones, *A Memoir cit., passim*.

21. John Murray (1808 – 1892) fu l'ideatore dei famosi *Murray's Handbooks for travellers* fra i quali quello per l'Italia del nord cui si riferisce Butler.

22. Si veda anche E.S. Shaffer., *art cit.*, p. 510 – 22.

23. cf. Virginia Woolf, *Contemporary Writers* (Harcourt, New York, 1965), p. 29.

### *Didascalia per le illustrazioni.*

*Le illustrazioni (1 – 11), tratte da Alps and Sanctuaries 1882*, sono relative al santuario di S. Michele della Chiusa, e sono disposte nell'ordine qui rispettato, inteso a riprodurre gli effetti delle successive fasi di avvicinamento. Il brano musicale corrisponde idealmente al tempo di attraversamento della chiesa, necessario per giungere al piccolo giardino che si trova all'uscita sul fondo della stessa.

*Università Cattolica di Milano*

## DOCUMENTS

Edited by Edward Chaney

It is our intention to include in this *Journal* a short section entitled simply 'Documents'. This, we hope, will provide a venue for the publication of the widest possible range of primary material of relevance to post-Renaissance Anglo-Italian cultural relations. Please submit contributions to *J AIS*, 40 Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1NZ adopting the house style of the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (published at the rear of every issue). There is no need for detailed introduction or annotation. It is vital, however, that the documents themselves should be accurately transcribed. By way of initiating the series I begin with a sixteenth-century subject and an early seventeenth-century one, both of an art-historical nature and both made possible by scholarly collaboration.

### **A Miniature of the Magi for King Philip of England**

Compiling 'A Calendar of Royal Taste' for the National Gallery's Royal Collectors exhibition, I thought I would investigate a reference in Lewis Einstein's pioneering work, *The Italian Renaissance in England* (New York 1902), which had long intrigued me. On page 206, having referred to the Duke of Urbino's gift of Raphael's St George to Henry VII (which provenance is now doubted), Einstein writes that 'Presents of a similar nature were made from time to time. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, for instance, sent Queen Mary a miniature of the Three Magi'. The relevant footnote refers the reader to 'Guardaroba Medicea, Florence, filza 34'. Not being able to get to the Archivio di Stato in the short term, I wrote asking my old friend and one-time protectress at the University of Pisa, Professoressa Anna Maria Crinò to look up the complete reference for me. As the world authority on the Anglo-Italian contents of the Archivio, she was able to send back the following transcription by return:

Quadro di minio di Don Giulio de tre Magi con ornamento d'ebano a uso di sp[h]era mandato al Re d'inghilterra con ordine della Sig.ra Duchessa portò Don Hernando de Sylva.

It was immediately evident that this was a miniature by the celebrated Giulio Clovio, protégé of the Medici, friend of Vasari (and subject of one of his *lives*). It was not sent by the Grand Duke (who was in any case not yet 'Grand'), but by his wife, Eleanor of Toledo, and was sent not to Mary Tudor, but to her husband, Eleanor's cousin, Philip II of Spain, now King of England. Professoressa Crinò not only supplied a date for this reference but very kindly added transcriptions of two related entries from the list of what was acquired by and left the Guardaroba between the years 1554 – 55:

#### ENTRATA

Tre quadri di pittura di mano di Don Julio miniator, uno fornito d'Ebano entrove la historia de tre magi, li altri due forniti di noce, in uno il Crocfixso et nell'altro la Pietà. (ASF Guardaroba Medicea 30 [*Giornale della Guardaroba*], fol. 40 verso).

On fol. 43 recto of the same filza, headed 'USCITA', is the following confirmation of the above:

Un quadro de Magi di minio di mano di Don Giulio con ornamento d'ebano al Re d'Inghilterra a di 22 d'aprile 1555 con ordine della signora Duchessa portò don Hernando de Sylva.

#### **Two unpublished Letters by Sir Henry Wotton to Vincenzo I Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua (Archivio di Stato di Mantova AG. b. 1538)**

It would seem appropriate to include in the first issue of this series, two hitherto unpublished letters written in 1606 by Henry Wotton, the first post-Reformation English ambassador in Venice. These letters were first brought to my attention by Dr D.S. Chambers (Warburg Institute, London), author of that fundamental study of Anglo-Italian relations: *Cardinal Bainbridge and the Court of Rome, 1509 to 1514* (Oxford 1965), and widely published expert on Venice and Mantua. He not only supplied me with photocopies of the original texts but, on one of his frequent visits to the Mantuan archives, checked my readings against the originals. I am very grateful to him for his help. The only published reference to either of these letters I have found is in note 1, page 175 of A. Luzio, 'I carteggi dell'Archivio Gonzaga riflettenti l'Inghilterra', *Atti della Reale Accademia delle Scienze*, liii, 1, 1917 – 18, pp. 167 – 82. In view of Wotton's crucial importance in the belated but rapid

growth of interest in art under the early Stuarts, and the fact that the acquisition by Charles I of the Mantuan collection may have begun after Wotton helped entrepreneur the Countess of Arundel's visit to the Mantuan Court in 1622 (with Van Dyck), this early Anglo-Mantuan contact is of great interest.

Reference to Oduardo Fialetti in the second letter is especially interesting here. Born in 1573, Fialetti was a Bolognese artist, who studied under Tintoretto and remained in Venice for the rest of his life. He was much patronised by Wotton who may have introduced him to Inigo Jones, as well as to Edward Norgate, Lord Roos and the Earl of Arundel, to whom he dedicated an etching. Jones was influenced by Fialetti, perhaps in person, but certainly by *Il vero modo et ordine per disegnar*, an illustrated treatise on drawing, published in Venice in 1608, thus five years before Jones's last visit to Venice. In 1615 Fialetti illustrated Gigli's poem on Andrea Schiavone: *La Pittura trionfante scritta in IV capitoli*. Wotton acquired several pictures by Fialetti which he bequeathed to Charles I (now at Hampton Court and Kensington Palace). He left Fialetti's great bird's eye view of Venice to Eton College, of which he became Provost in 1624. [E. Chaney, 'From Pilgrims to Pictures,' *Country Life*, 4 October 1990, pp. 146 – 49, forthcoming article on 'Inigo Jones in Naples' and L. Pearsall Smith, *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 2 vols., Oxford 1907, passim].

[On verso: 'Al Serenissimo Signore il Duca di Mantova . . .']

#### SERENISSIMO SIGNORE

Io stavo apunto insul' risolvermi d'ispedire alla Corte della Gran Bretagna fra pochi giorni un gentilhuomo mio parente<sup>1</sup>, quando mi sopragionse la l[ette]ra di V. Alt<sup>zza</sup>. Serenissima con le annesse Onde, per maggior sicurta ho preso la presuntione di ritinere da me cosi cari pegni della gratia et dall'affetto suo verso le Maestà loro insin' alla partenza di detto gentilhuomo et in tanto (accioché Lor Maestà sieno quanto prima raggualiate di questa congiontione delle Serenissime Case di Gonzaga et di Lorena da che riceveranno particolar consolatione, et anche augmento) Io feci l'ufficio hieri per la via ordinaria conforme alli commandamenti di V. Alt<sup>za</sup> Ser.<sup>ma</sup> et conforme a quella benignissima confidentia che la s'e degnata d'havere nel mio povero servitio: obliigo veramente supremo sopra tutti li altri.

Quanto poi a quelli due ufficii impostimi qua dal Sig<sup>r</sup> Residente di V.A. in nome d'Essa. La si compiacerà di riceverne particolar risposta dal sudetto mio parente, che per questa occasione haverà l'honore di visitar la Corte di V. Alt<sup>zza</sup> Ser.<sup>ma</sup> di passaggio, et potrà (occorrendone) ricevere anche lo gratia di portar a lor Maestà li piu freschi commandamenti suoi. Finirò per ora col pregarlee dal summo Dio a questa presente allegrezza una perpetua successione delle altre, et col dedicarmele per

di V. Altezza Serenissima  
eterno servidore

Di Venetia alli 25 di  
Marzo 1606

Arrigo Wottoni

## Notes

1. This is almost certainly Edward Partheridge, or Partridge, from Eridge, Kent, whom Wotton advises Lord Salisbury 'will arrive with other matter of much consideration through the way of France' in a letter dated 22 April 1606 (L. Pearsall Smith, *op. cit.*, i. p. 346; see also *ibid*, p. 347 and ii p. 476. That Partridge was a nephew through Wotton's sister's marriage is suggested by a family letter dated 25 September 1590, in which he mentions having written 'to my sister Partridg'; *op. cit.*, i, p. 240). On 16 June 1606, Salisbury wrote to Wotton of Partridge's arrival in England (p. 346n). Confirmation is to be found in his appearance in the 'list of English knights and gentlemen who were in Italy' during Simon Willis's visit there, dated to circa 1608 but in the light of the above, perhaps earlier: 'Mr Partherydg. A Kentyshe gent, allyed to Sir Ha: Watton, his Ma<sup>ty</sup> Ambassador at Venice' (HMC Salisbury MSS, xxiv, 1986, p. 147). Partridge evidently met Tobie Matthew in Florence in 1605 after a visit to Naples. In A.H. Mathew's edition of *A True Historical Relation of Sir Tobie Matthew* (London 1904, p. 8n), Matthew's original identification of the 'English gentleman' has evidently been mistranscribed as: 'Mr. Partridge, Sir Henry Weston's nephew'. Though described as 'a Protestant . . . of the purer sort', it is ironic that Partridge unwittingly encouraged Matthew's journey to Naples and subsequent conversion (which Wotton loudly deplored), by his presumably enthusiastic account of the liquefaction of San Gennaro's blood. The following letter is clearly that which Wotton's 'parente', now defined as his 'nipote', presented to the Duke of Mantua.

[On verso: 'Al Serenissimo Prencipe et Signore il Duca di Mantova & Signor mio Oss<sup>mo</sup>]

### SERENISSIMO PRINCIPE

Questo gentilhuomo mio Nipote presenterò a V[ostra] Altezza la mia divota servitù et particolar zelo verso la sua Serenissima persona, et insieme quelli ritratti che la si degnò di comandare quando questa povera casa fu honorata con la sua presentia. La cagione di non haverne ubidito prima alli suoi commendamenti è stata in vero una lunga infirmità dell'Odoardo Fialetti pittore qua di che mi soglio servire non volendo commetter la cosa a persona incognita che ne potesse forse haver fatto una copia per se, poi che pare che convenga alla Maestà di Prencipi che ne anche lor ritratti siano troppo familiari: Ma se ben gli ho mandati a V. Alt<sup>zza</sup>, così tardi mi rallegro pure di pensare che arriveranno in Corte sua sul giorno destinato costi al Sponsalio della Prencipessa sua figliuola: et che per questa congiuntura d'accidenti la Regina della Gran-Bretagna col suo primogenito si ritroveranno presenti alle allegrezza della Serenissima casa Gonzaga almeno in ombra non potendovi essere in persona. Quanto alli altri commandamenti suoi. Io ho già raggualiato la Maestà del mio Signore dell'affettuoso Voluntà di V. Altezza Serenissima Verso essa, et delle sue lettere che per maggiore sicurtà mi risolvevo di mandare per questo mio Nipote a chi m'e passo anche convenire il presentarsele ora di passaggio, acciò che la si degni d'honorargli di quanto più gliene occurrera di comandare. Et così priegandole dal Cielo continuate allegrezza et consolationi con ogni debita riverentia le bacio le mani

Di Venezia alli 22  
d'Aprile 1606

Di V<sup>m</sup> Altezza Serenissimo  
eterno servidore

Arrigo Wottoni

### BULLETIN

Please also submit relevant information on work in progress, theses completed and recent (or forthcoming) publications; for example: Much Anglo-Italian material is to be found in doctoral dissertation just passed by the University of Adelaide by Sara M Warneke: *A Ship of Shadows. Images of the Educational Traveller in Early Modern England*.

New publication: Mario di Cesare ed., *Milton and Italy* (MRTS, Binghamton, New York, 1991).

## FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION

ALFONSO SAMMUT

### **Bibliography of Anglo-Italian Comparative Literary Criticism 1800 – 1989**

This bibliographical survey comprises criticism relating to Italian literary influence on English literature from 1800 to 1989. It is divided into three main sections: the first is dedicated to the following topics: Renaissance, drama, language, poetry and prose; the second deals with criticism related to the *fortuna* in England of individual Italian authors in alphabetical order and the third consists of a miscellany under which are enlisted titles of essays regarding other cultural relations such as music, fine arts, history arts, history and politics.

Some entries are accompanied by brief annotations and contents of monographs strictly related to the subject are reproduced. The compiler would be very grateful to interested scholars if they could send details of their publications to be listed or updated in this bibliography.