RIVISTA

2016-2017

75th Anniversary Issue

Shakespeare's Italian Journey

Sicily on Show

In the Age of Giorgione

Mazzini's Free Italian School

On the trail of Ariosto

The Magazine of

THE BRITISH ITALIAN SOCIETY

Dear readers

In this issue we mark a number of anniversaries. It's 500 years since the publication of Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso* in 1516, and Shakespeare's death followed a hundred years later in 1616. In the pages that follow you will be able to pick up traces of Ariosto's legacy in London, as well as consider the tantalising question of whether Shakespeare ever visited Italy. The British-Italian Society is now in its 75th year, having been founded during the Second World War, and the British Institute of Florence, established during the First World War, celebrates its centenary in 2017. The articles about these institutions make reference to the great British historian GM Trevelyan, underlining his strong connections with Italy and the contribution he made to British Italian understanding. GM Trevelyan makes a further appearance in the article about the First World War at page 16. It is fitting that Sicily also features prominently in this issue, given the two excellent exhibitions held at the Ashmolean and at the British Museum during 2016. We also visit a castle in Tuscany, home for a while to the eccentric Sitwell siblings, look back to a lesser known aspect of Mazzini's stay in London and consider the brilliance of Venice through the work of one of its greatest painters, Giorgione, and the exploration of its archives by the Victorian Rawdon Brown.

Vanessa Hall-Smith

Linda Northern

As always, we would like to extend grateful thanks to our contributors and all those who have helped with the production of this 75th anniversary issue.

Buona lettura

Linda Northern and Vanessa Hall-Smith

Cover photo: Perseus with the head of Medusa, bronze statue created by Benvenuto Cellini in 1545 and standing in the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence

Back cover photo: The Trinacria - the three-legged symbol of Sicily.

The Editors regret that visuals of playing cards in the feature Dealer's Choice in the last issue were erroneously captioned as Neapolitan when in fact they were from a Spanish pack.

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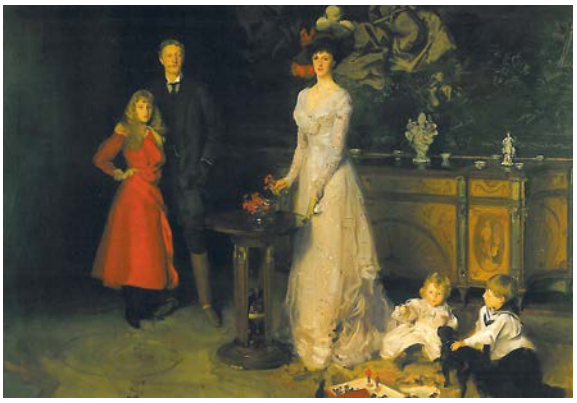
In this issue


FEATURES

REVIEWS

BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY YEAR

TALKS




British-Italian Society: The Early Years

by Richard Northern

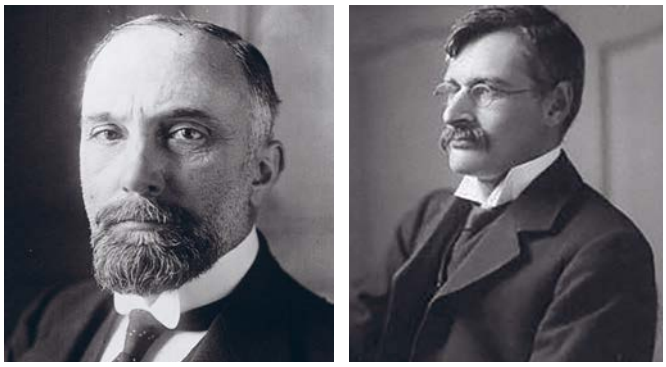
As we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the British-Italian Society in 2016, it is fascinating to recall the Society's origins, which are quite different from those of other bilateral cultural societies in the UK.

In 1940, when Mussolini led Italy into the War on the side of the Nazis, a group of prominent individuals in London, who knew Italy well, felt a duty to promote the overthrow of the fascist regime and to remind the British people of the true Italy and its deep-rooted friendship with the United Kingdom. This group, which comprised academics, politicians, broadcasters, journalists, members of the London Council of the British Institute of Florence and former British residents of Italy began to meet regularly for discussions. In Spring 1941, in the darkest days of the War, they formed the *Friends of Free Italy* (echoing the *Friends of Italy* founded by Mazzini in London in 1851). They appointed scholars of international renown, Sir Frederick Kenyon, Sir David Ross and Professor GM Trevelyan, as President and Vice-Presidents to serve as figure-heads. But the moving forces, and the first Chairmen, were Ivor Bulmer-Thomas, who was elected to Parliament shortly afterwards, and Hugh Wyndham (who later became Lord Leconfield), President of the London Council of the British Institute of Florence. Although the membership included Italian exiles and Anglo-Italians, the group deliberately portrayed themselves as British, in order to demonstrate that Italy still had British friends.

// Many of the Italian members were also members of a separate Free Italy Committee, later renamed Movimento Libera Italia, in London.

Many of the Italian members were also members of a separate Free Italy Committee, later renamed *Movimento Libera Italia*, in London. This movement was not harmonious, and eventually fell prey to self-destructive arguments between the Socialist and fiercely anti-clerical majority and Catholic followers of the Partito Popolare, forerunner of the Christian Democrat Party.

When the fascist regime was overthrown in 1943, the *Friends of Free Italy* felt vindicated. They began planning to transform their activities and attract wider membership. Ivor Bulmer-Thomas launched an Anglo-Italian Parliamentary



(left) Count Sforza (right) GM Trevelyan

Group and invited the same speakers to address this group inside Parliament and the *Friends of Free Italy* outside. This latter group developed close ties with Count Sforza, the anti-fascist former diplomat and Foreign Minister (1919-21), who was living in exile in London from 1940 but returned to Italy in 1944 (and became Foreign Minister again in 1947); and they maintained a firm policy of rejecting any Italians who had compromised with fascism. This caused some friction with the British Government. The Foreign Office was sceptical about exiled politicians: it doubted whether they would be accepted back in Italy after the War. In addition, Churchill had been keen that the King should remain on the throne, in spite of his earlier collaboration with Mussolini.

The Foreign Office also feared that the *Friends of Free Italy* might publish articles at variance with Government policy. They did distribute a series of pamphlets during the war: *The Problem of Italy* (1943); *A Free Italy in a Free Europe* (1944), a plea for a united Europe; *Italy Works for her Passage* (1945), an account of support given by partisans to the Allied cause; and finally *The Question of Trieste* (1945), a scholarly and balanced study of a burning and controversial issue at the time.

At a general meeting on 3 March 1945, the *Friends of Free Italy* decided unanimously to change their name to the *British-Italian Society* and to adopt a new constitution. Their new aims were: 'to increase understanding in Great Britain of Italian history, Italian institutions, the Italian way of life and the Italian contribution to civilisation, to encourage and promote knowledge of the Italian language in Great Britain and to encourage and promote the traditional friendship between Great Britain and Italy'. Membership was open to British and Italian nationals who shared these objectives, *provided that* the Executive Committee was satisfied as to their suitability. Clearly the Society remained wary of infiltration by former supporters of the fascist regime!

Once the War was over, neither the British nor the Italian Governments had any qualms about endorsing the Society. Sir Percy Loraine, former British Ambassador in Rome, and Count Carandini, Italian Representative (later Ambassador) in London, readily agreed to become Patrons. Membership of the Society was boosted by the return of members of the armed services, some of whom had served in Italy and formed a lasting attachment to the country and its people, and by those engaged in the UK in propaganda or other clandestine wartime activity to liberate Italy.

Three episodes highlighted the Society's role in the 1950s. The first was the Italian Representative's decision to seek the Society's advice on, and help with the inauguration of, a new Italian Institute in Belgrave Square in 1950. From the outset - until a reorganisation of Italian Cultural Institutes in the 1970s - the Society and the Institute cooperated closely and offered reciprocal membership. The second was a well-publicised visit to the UK by five former partisans, which the Society organised later in 1950, to reward them for their courageous help to the Allied cause. Then, in 1953, it organised a repeat visit for a similar group of ex-partisans from Northern Italy to coincide with the Coronation. These visitors were astonished to witness an example of English eccentricity, Lord Leconfield travelling in his full robes to the Coronation at Westminster Abbey on the London Underground!

// Having spent the war trying to counter anti-Italian feeling in Britain, the Society faced a different challenge in the following years.

Having spent the war trying to counter anti-Italian feeling in Britain, the Society faced a different challenge in the following years. Resentment at the terms of the Peace Treaty, and over the Trieste issue, produced a wave of anti-British feeling, and even riots, in Italy. By the end of 1954, however, with the Trieste issue resolved, the departing Italian Ambassador was able to ask rhetorically, in his farewell address to the Society, whether there was any further need for a British-Italian Society. He wondered whether the Society might have proved a victim of its own success. The founders strongly believed that the Society did still have an important role to play. It was not until well into the 1950s that they felt confident that democracy was firmly established in Italy.

As the political and economic relationship between Italy and the United Kingdom grew closer, the Society's role evolved to focus more on celebrating cultural links and on friendship. From the beginning, the programme had been based on a mix of scholarly lectures on political, cultural, economic, and social themes and social gatherings, including an annual dinner dance at the Savoy. In the 1960s the Society offered a platform for visiting Italian statesmen to meet and address British audiences. In 1963 the then Chairman, Sir Ashley Clarke, inaugurated the annual Leconfield Lecture, in memory of Hugh Wyndham, to be given by a speaker (invariably from Italy in the early years) of particular distinction.

Rivista began as a roneoed monthly bulletin for members, *Notiziario Italiano*, in August 1946. It was transformed into a bi-monthly printed magazine, and renamed *Rivista*, in 1963. The original newsletter carried the texts of lectures, occasional contributions from members and re-published articles and editorials from Italian newspapers.

The Society has always taken its role as a charitable donor seriously. It began in 1948 by adopting a war-damaged village in Southern Italy, Palinuro, and building an *asilo* there for war orphans. Since then, it has contributed to relief activities after several natural disasters in Italy, including the earthquakes in Friuli in 1976 and in the South in 1980. Sir Ashley Clarke, and his predecessor as Chairman of the Society, Lord Hastings, organised the national committees which provided help in response to the damage caused by the terrible floods in Northern Italy in 1966. This resulted in the creation of the 'Venice in Peril Fund', with which we retain strong and valued links.

The British-Italian Society may no longer have a vital role to play in keeping alive friendship between Italy and the UK; but we do, happily, face growing interest in our programmes, partly generated by a much wider appreciation in the UK of the attractions of Italian lifestyle, history and culture, by easier travel between the two countries and by a huge increase in the size of the Italian community in Britain and the number of British nationals with homes in Italy. The appetite for knowledge of Italy and its culture (popular and traditional) in the UK has never been greater, as the number of major Italian-themed exhibitions and cultural events in recent times shows. The Society has a small role to play in satisfying this appetite. We should not forget that real challenges remain: Italian studies in academic institutions in the UK are under constant pressure from cuts in funding. The Society continues to do what it can to counter this, for example through the Rooke Prizes and other initiatives.

After 75 years, a strong sense of friendship and common interest (without ideological purpose) continues to bring members, British, Italian and other, together to celebrate and take shared pleasure in our complementary cultures, histories and characters.

The author is indebted to several founding members of the British-Italian Society, who published their reminiscences in 1981 in a booklet to mark the Society's 40th Anniversary.

Richard Northern is the Chairman of the British-Italian Society. A former Ambassador, he served as a diplomat in Rome (83-87) and Milan (2001-06). Richard is now a Consultant.

The 1976 earthquake in Friuli

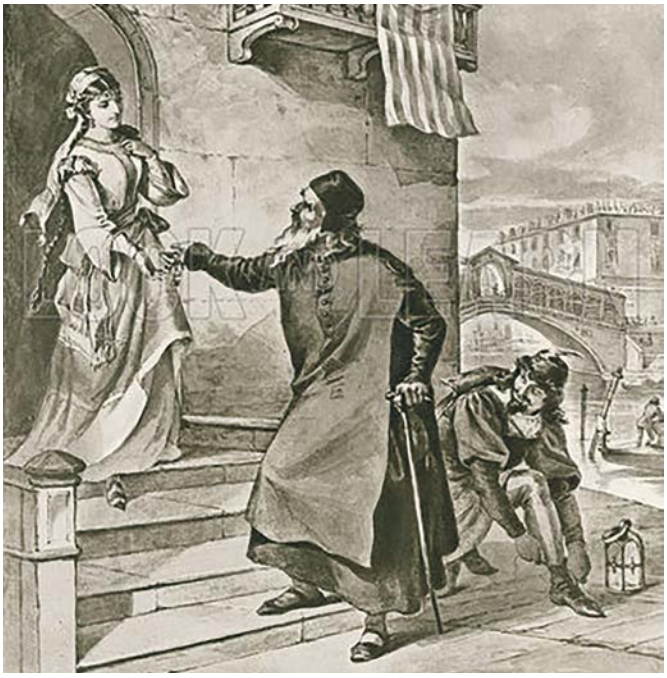
Shakespeare's Italian Journey

by Jonathan Keates

For would-be biographers, William Shakespeare is a veritable Cheshire cat, a now-you-see-him-now-you-don't figure *par excellence*. The mirage of his life, alternating occasional vivid images with areas of utter blankness, helps the man himself to stay tantalisingly out of reach and keeps the questions coming. Who was Shakespeare, what was Shakespeare and, most often of all, where was Shakespeare? Somewhere between 1585, following his marriage to Anne Hathaway, the life-record goes dead, not to pick up again until 1592, when we find him among a company of London stage-players, making his debut as a dramatist with the *Henry VI* trilogy and *Titus Andronicus*. These uncharted 'Lost Years' have set theorists of all kinds busily to work. Was the up-and-coming Bard serving as a soldier, a sailor or an apprentice butcher?

Did he, as one scholar has suggested, take refuge with crypto-Catholic gentry in a Lancashire castle under the alias 'Will Shakeshaft'?

I believe there is a simpler answer altogether. Far from square-bashing, meat-cleaving or reciting his rosary, 'sweet Master Shakespeare' was off on his travels, perhaps in the entourage of an English aristocrat or maybe, more hazardously, journeying with secret agents, some of whom were among the vast network of information-gatherers employed by Queen Elizabeth's spymaster Francis Walsingham. A few, at least, of those lost years were surely spent in northern Italy - Venice and the Veneto, to be more exact - and the plays he wrote on his return are resonant with echoes of this intense Italian encounter.



Shylock and Jessica *Merchant of Venice* Act II, scene V

The idea of an Italianised Shakespeare is scarcely new. Scholars and critics have been fighting against it for years but their weapons are often surprisingly blunt and they consistently fail to confront the richly-detailed evidence available in the play texts. Their basic argument is that the theatrical Italy of *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew* or *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is essentially no different from the Italian settings of other contemporary English dramas, John Webster's The White Devil, say, or Thomas Middleton's Women Beware Women. In truth there's a striking distinction to be made between the generic Renaissance world of plays like these and the specific localised ambience of Shakespeare's Italian comedies. For most Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, Italy is a place of unfathomable sensuality, sophistication and violence, where the goings-on within the private apartments of psychotic dukes or wanton countesses are calculated to raise a thoroughly English 'how unlike us' frisson of self-righteousness in their audience.

This menacing otherness of Italy and Italians isn't something which interests Shakespeare. The internecine brawls between Montagues and Capulets in Verona's streets or the diabolical villainies of Iago as he sets about destroying the happiness of Othello and Desdemona are each elements in a tragic story which, as successful modern stage productions or film and TV versions have demonstrated, could take place anywhere else in the world. These things don't happen *because* the protagonists are Italian, with some notional propensity to homicide locked within their DNA. What absorbs their creator is the business of locating such universal stories within a place he had discovered for himself, resulting in a much more precise, nuanced and detailed perspective than any afforded us by other English playwrights of the period giving an Italian setting to their plays.

An obvious pointer towards Shakespeare's first-hand acquaintance with 'the garden of the world, fair Italy', as he calls it, is his focus on one particular region. Venice and its mainland territories provide the background for five of his plays. Admittedly he was sometimes vague as to giving his Venetian characters authentic-sounding names. 'Brabantio', for Desdemona's father, has a decidedly homemade ring to it, as do 'Salerio' and 'Solanio' for friends of the eponymous Merchant, but not much else is out of place among the *calli* and *campi* of the Shakespearean Serenissima. The playwright knows exactly how Venice and Venetians live. He puts poor little rich girl Portia in a villa on the terraferma and gives her 'sunny locks', the fair hair familiar from Titian's female portraits. Lorenzo and Jessica elope in a gondola after a masquerade and the two Gobbos, Lancelot and his 'stone-blind' father, are named after *il Gobbo di Rialto*, the kneeling figure beneath the steps next to the ancient church of San Giacometto where the Venetian Republic's

decrees were publicly proclaimed. What's more, Old Gobbo, arriving from his country village, follows a time-honoured Italian custom of bringing a present for his son's employer, in this case 'a dish of doves', a basket of pigeons for cooking.

From a dietary aspect the choice is entirely suitable for Lancelot's master Shylock, an observant Jew, well-versed in the scriptures, conversant with the law both religious and secular, and a better father than his callous and undutiful daughter Jessica deserves. Clearly Shylock, for Shakespeare as for us, is the single most interesting character in *The Merchant of Venice*, a figure of genuine substance and stature whose abrupt removal following his tragic humiliation in the trial scene, accentuates the heartless triviality of the play's last act. How had Shakespeare come across an active, thriving Jewish community if not in the Venetian ghetto, where, as we know from other contemporary sources, foreign visitors could enter the synagogues and discourse with the rabbis?

For persistent deniers of an Italian Shakespeare the devil is in the detail. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for example, Valentine makes his journey to Milan by ship. Ah, cry the gleeful sceptics, so the Bard thought Verona was a sea port? Well no, actually. He would have known that the city's trade up and down the Adige was linked to other rivers by a network of canals and that water transport for travellers into Lombardy was safer than riding along brigand-infested roads. A similar misreading trips up many a reader of *The Taming of the Shrew*. An infuriated Vincentio, unmasking the wily Tranio as an impostor, exclaims 'Thy father ? He was a sail maker in Bergamo!' Once again the doubters are ready to pounce. Ha ha, Bergamo *sul mare*! Not a bit of it. Shakespeare knew, as few do nowadays, that this fine old mountain town was surrounded by fields of hemp, grown for the local industry of making the canvas needed to waft the great galleys of the Serene Republic.

This same play, perhaps more than any other in the canon, reveals just how deeply a hands-on experience of Italy could inspire Shakespeare. Its bolted-on 'Induction', set in England, merely enhances the authenticity of the Paduan world to which the author shifts us, one he himself surely remembered with delight. These characters, Hortensio, Lucentio, Bianca and the rest, not to speak of tempestuous Kate herself, are Italian to the marrow of their bones. Why, for goodness' sake, did Shakespeare bother to give her harassed father Baptista the Paduan surname Minola and to christen a cheeky young page Biondello, 'the little blond', one of a kind Veronese liked to include in his altarpieces and mythologies, if not as reminiscences of a place he knew ? The intricate subplot, full of identity-swaps and subterfuges, comes straight from Italian romantic comedy of the period, whose stock characters include the hapless Pedant bribed by Tranio into impersonating Lucentio's father.

The argument that Shakespeare could get all the information he wanted from books or travellers' reports goes only so far. Certain details in *Othello* show that

Lorenzo, Jessica and Launcelot *Merchant of Venice Act* III, scene V

he read Lewis Lewkenor's treatise *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* pretty thoroughly but that volume could give him no hints as to the authentically Venetian atmosphere conjured up to such brilliant effect in the play's opening night scenes. The fact that the original tale of the jealous Moor and his Desdemona, a novella by Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, was unavailable to Shakespeare in English forms part of wider evidence, throughout his works, that he both read and spoke Italian. My own theoretical outline of the fledgling dramatist's journey across northern Italy includes a crucial encounter with Italian theatre in the shape of everything from Torquato Tasso's tragedy *Torrismondo*, a plausible influence on Hamlet, to Vincenzo Giusti's romantic adventure story *Fortunio*, whose male-disguised heroine foreshadows Rosalind and Viola.

Does any of this honestly matter? 'Others abide our question: thou art free' begins a famous sonnet to Shakespeare by Matthew Arnold. Its tone of mildly exasperated admiration for the Bard's ability to wriggle clear of his biographers' clutches is widely shared. He has shrugged off successive attempts to turn him into Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe and the Earl of Oxford and resisted bizarre efforts by various continental European cultures at altering his English nationality. The idea of an Italian journey however, somewhere between 1587 and 1590, offers itself far more robustly as a candidate for this kind of biographical kite-flying. Shakespeare, in my view, never lost a profound nostalgia for those days in the Veneto. Memories of it hang around plays like *Twelfth Night*, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, not to speak of *The Tempest*, where Ariel's pranks played on Trinculo and Stefano recall the *lazzi* of the Commedia dell'Arte. The real Italy, rather than a fantasy land mapped from the library, was a lifelong inspiration.

Jonathan Keates is the Chairman of Venice in Peril

L'eccentrico Trio del Castello di Montegufoni

by Serena Cenni

Forse non molti sanno che lo splendido castello di Montegufoni, che si erge nelle vicinanze di Montespertoli, in pieno Chianti, e che, dal 1972, è di proprietà della famiglia Posarelli appartenne, per almeno sei decenni del Novecento, ad aristocratici inglesi che, affascinati dalla sua storia e dalla sua bellezza, ne fecero la loro residenza alternativa all'altrettanto splendido maniero di Renishaw Hall, nel Derbyshire.

Risalente al XII secolo e poi passato, nel Quattrocento, nelle mani della ricca e potente famiglia Acciaioli che lo possedette fino al 1823 e che, nei secoli, lo restaurò dotandolo di stupendi affreschi, una grotta con statue, una cappella e giardini a terrazze, il Castello di Montegufoni fu comprato, nel 1910, da Sir George Sitwell che riuscì dopo anni di restauri, per le condizioni di abbandono in cui l'aveva trovato, a riportarlo all'antica bellezza, a cui aggiunse un tocco di modernità: lo splendido studiolo affrescato da Gino Severini negli anni Venti del Novecento con i personaggi della Commedia dell'Arte, e da allora chiamato *Sala delle Maschere*.

Abitato nei mesi invernali, primaverili e autunnali da Sir George e dalla sua famiglia fino allo scoppio della seconda guerra mondiale, il castello (che dal 1942 al 1945 ospitò e nascose 261 opere d'arte, tra cui la *Venere* del Botticelli, per salvarle dalle razzie tedesche), passò, nel 1943, al figlio Osbert che, con la morte del padre, ereditò anche il titolo di baronetto. Secondogenito di Sir George, Osbert condivise fin dall'adolescenza con la sorella Edith, maggiore di tredici anni, e il fratello minore Sachaverell, lunghi soggiorni nel castello toscano aprendolo ad una selezionata aristocrazia internazionale e alla migliore *intellighenzia* cosmopolita.

Colti, raffinatissimi e snob, i tre fratelli Sitwell formarono fin dall'infanzia un trio unico e affettivamente molto unito, vuoi per la rigida educazione tardo-vittoriana che prevedeva un 'aristocratico' distacco parentale dai figli, vuoi per l'anaffettività dei genitori (preda del gioco, di ingenti debiti e vittima di ricattatori, Lady Ida), rivolto solo ai propri studi o ai propri *hobbies* come un vero gentiluomo di campagna (Sir George).

Il cognome che portavano fu in grado, però, a partire dal 1916, di aprire al loro trio le porte di Londra, accolti nei più bei salotti e corteggiati sia da artisti della vecchia generazione che dai giovani che si muovevano sulla scena inglese desiderosi di sperimentare nuove tecniche pittoriche o nuovi virtuosismi lirici, come Wyndam Lewis o Ezra Pound. La non avvenenza ma l'indubbio glamour che emanavano - in particolare Edith, sempre avvolta in lunghi

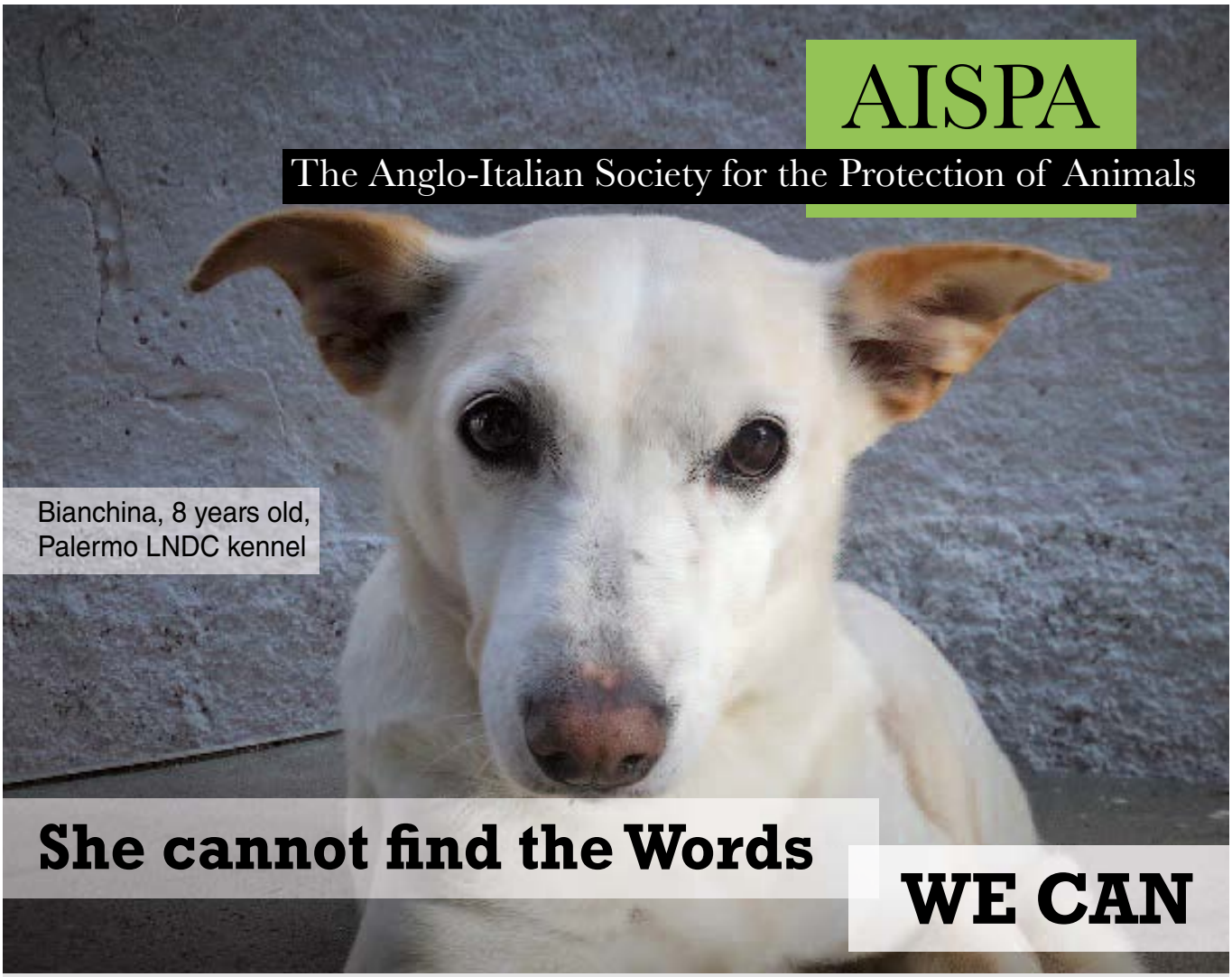
John Singer Sargent portrait of the Sitwell Family from left Edith, Sir George, Lady Ida, Sacheverell and Osbert

abiti che ne accentuavano l'altezza e la sottile ieraticità, con le mani affusolate cariche di giganteschi anelli e le sparute chiome nascoste da turbanti, veli e cappelli neri - spinsero pittori come Roger Fry e fotografi di chiara fama come Pavel Tchelitchew, Cecil Beaton e Herbert Lambert, a ritrarli frequentemente insieme, in pose bizzarre, quasi a sottolinearne l'innata eccentricità.

Dei tre, Edith fu la più dotata e se i romanzi di Osbert e di Sachaverell soffrono a tutt'oggi di un lungo oblio, le poesie di Edith sono ancora oggetto di investigazione da parte dei critici; in particolare la raccolta intitolata *Façade*, composta da trentasette testi sperimentali giocati sulla ricerca di assonanze e dissonanze ritmiche, che sollecitarono l'allora giovane compositore William Walton ad accompagnarli con musica di sua creazione.

Fu Violet Trefusis, ultima icona della colonia di espatriati britannici in Toscana e di intellettuali cosmopoliti, e nella cui villa L'ombrellino i tre fratelli, quando a Montegufoni, soggiornarono molteplici volte, a sottolineare l'amicizia che la legava a loro dicendo: 'Che gli snob e gli americani corteggino pure Berenson; io ho i Sitwells!'.

Serena Cenni was Professor of English at the University of Trento from 2000 to 2012. She has written extensively on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, romantic poetry and modernist and postmodernist narrative.



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The Free Italian School of Hatton Garden: An experiment in Mazzini's pedagogy of action

by Andrea Del Cornò

Few perhaps, of the readers of the *People's Journal* know anything of the Italian Gratuitous School' William J Linton – Chartist, republican and fervent admirer of Giuseppe Mazzini – noted in 1842.

Located on the first floor at 5 Greville Street, Hatton Garden, in the heart of London's Little Italy, the Free Italian School had opened its doors to the many illiterate Italian immigrants on 10 November 1841. The premises were strikingly modest, briefly described by Linton: 'two rooms thrown into one. […] There was not much outward grandeur: […] a few chairs for the more distinguished visitors, and forms [1] for the rest, with no ornaments, except a few maps hung on the walls, and a bust of Dante over the fire-place'. The area was one of the most deprived in London and the neighbourhood where Charles Dickens placed Fagin and his cohort of young pick-pockets. The School continued to function – although in a more limited capacity – quite possibly until the 1860s, offering destitute Italians free primary education.

Mazzini (Genoa 1805-Pisa 1872) had arrived in London on 12 January 1837. To the Italian patriot, England offered the opportunity to leave behind a life spent in hiding and on the run, whilst still remaining actively involved in revolutionary activities. Soon after his arrival, he wrote to Quirina Mocenni Maggiotti, *la donna gentile*, who had charitably supported Ugo Foscolo during his London exile, 'here I have come across entire districts crowded with Italians from all regions, scraping a living with all sort of jobs, in a state of complete savagery; I shall not say that they were unable to read: I shall say that they were unable to speak, and that I tried in vain to understand their parlance, a mishmash of *comasco* dialect – the majority of them being from the Lombardy region – and English. Italy to them was the name of a foreign country and nothing more'.

// The scandal of what he called the 'white slave trade' received ample coverage in the English press

And it was in London that an outraged Mazzini witnessed first-hand the plight of the many young Italian children who, lured away from their native country and sold into a life of semi-slavery, were exploited mercilessly as beggars or street musicians. The scandal of what he called the 'white slave trade' received ample coverage in the English press and, at times, the authorities were compelled to intervene. Mazzini first mentioned his idea of setting up a school in a letter to his beloved mother, dated 3 September 1841. The school, Mazzini envisaged, would be free and open to 'workers, young organ-grinders, those selling plaster figurines, etcetera'. Classes were held in the evening to encourage attendance. Subjects included Italian grammar, history and geography which drew pupils to the concept of 'Italian unity' and, at the students' request, English. On Sundays, general lectures on moral principles, patriotism and *italianità* were offered to a wider audience. Students were provided with all necessary materials, including paper, pens and ink to write with. Primers and other textbooks were supplied by the Italian bookseller Pietro Rolandi. Running costs were met by voluntary subscriptions, donations and fundraising events, including an annual musical concert.

Blue plaque at 185 North Gower Street

Two magazines were printed with a view to providing additional reading and educational material. *Il Pellegrino* - the title being a clear reference to a journey of learning, but also evocative of the exiled condition of many Italian *émigrés* – and the subsequent *L'Educatore* were both inspired by pedagogical motives. With their publication, the Board of the School intended 'to complement with its articles

(1) form was a long wooden bench

the teaching of love, education and specialisation, which the School gives to the students. [And] present to those Englishmen, who are sympathetic towards Italian affairs, the progress, the achievement, the objectives of the education process in Italy'.

Mazzini, at first, remained in the shadows to avoid any possible association between the School and the revolutionary political organisation of which he was leader. The teachers were unpaid volunteers. Among them were such prominent figures as Gabriele Rossetti, Carlo Pepoli, Joseph and George Toynbee. The renowned American writer and journalist Margaret Fuller addressed the students on more than one occasion. Mazzini himself did a share of teaching, primarily history and geography, which he considered vital in reinforcing the students' sense of being Italian. The popularity and success of the School surpassed all expectations. Fifty-one students enrolled on the first evening, a figure rising to sixty-five on the second. Mazzini was struck by this enthusiasm; he acknowledged that for '[these] poor souls [who] work or carry street-organs about all day … it costs a lot to devote two hours to studying', adding that 'if they come of their own will, this shows their typically good Italian character'.

The number of students increased to 230 in the following year, even including a few female pupils. Following the example of the London Free Italian School, similar institutes were established by Italian exiles in Paris, Marseilles, Boston, New York, and also in South America, in Buenos Aires and Montevideo - geographical areas that were traditionally destinations of Italian emigration.

From the pages of the *Apostolato Popolare*, one of the Mazzinian journals printed in London, Mazzini spread his message outlining the importance of education, not as a privilege for the few but as an undeniable right 'the example of London is merely indicating the path to follow. Free primary schools must be opened; free because today people cannot afford to pay for education, free because in the society of our future providing primary education will be a duty that Society as a whole owes to all its members'. Poignant words which continue to resonate today.

The School, however, had many opponents and detractors too. Sir Anthony Panizzi, eminent Italian exile and Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, expressed his disapproval and even grave concern. Thomas Carlyle cautioned his wife not to get involved with what he called 'a nest of young conspirators'. Many saw in the School an excuse to indoctrinate children and teach them the four Rs: 'reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic and revolution'. Even stronger opposition came, as Mazzini had foreseen, from the students' *padroni*, the Piedmontese authorities in London and the Catholic Church. An Italian priest, the Jesuit Reverend Angelo Maria Baldacconi, warned of excommunication of all those who attended. In Mazzini's mind, however, the School never had a political agenda. Its primary purpose was to educate and ameliorate the conditions of Italian immigrants in London.

Once again from the columns of the *Apostolato Popolare*, the Genoese exile defended the institution and, with his

Mazzini teaching at the Free Italian School from Jessie White Mario, Della Vita Giuseppe Mazzini (Milan, 1886)

usual political acumen, criticised not only the action of Reverend Baldacconi, but the entire Church establishment which had deviated from its evangelical mission and fomented what he referred to as 'all the Baldacconis of London and the thousand Baldacconis of Italy'. Several English newspapers published articles in defence of the educational institution and the *Weekly Dispatch* coined a new word, 'Maldacconi', to emphasise the malevolence of the Italian clergyman. In 1847 from Geneva, Mazzini lamented the lack of support among Italians resident in London, which he found shameful. In 1853 he wrote 'we have decided to close the School, but we aim to maintain the Sunday lectures, still extremely valuable'. Mazzini's last reference to the institution is included in a letter dated 27 December 1860 in which he reported that the School had 'twelve students every night'.

The vicissitudes of the School are recalled in two novels. In *Morello, or, the organ-boy's progress*, published in London in 1846, Antonio Gallenga, himself a teacher at the Free Italian School but later in life dissenting from Mazzini, recounts the misadventures of the young Morello, an Italian child and native of the Parmesan Apennines region. Brutally beaten by his master, hungry and cold, Morello, in despair, found himself in the proximity of Blackfriars Bridge and driven to an act of self-destruction. He was saved, but the reader is reminded of the many forlorn Italian boys who 'drop dead in the London streets', their young lives cut short by consumption. Most interestingly, the School is recalled prominently in Cesarina Lupati's *I monelli di Londra (The rascals of London)*. It is significant that the novel was published as late as 1927: Mazzini's Free Italian School and the succour it had provided were still deeply imprinted in Italian collective memory.

To Mazzini education had both a pedagogical and political meaning. Education was 'the bread of the soul' and conducive to moral and spiritual regeneration. The Free Italian School, the Union of Italian Working Men (set up by Mazzini in 1840) and the four journals produced and printed in London between 1840 and 1859, were all part of a single, moral, educational and philanthropic project. Though not a systematic or coherent thinker, Mazzini, the Apostle of

continued over

Young organ grinder taken from The Blackdown Papers by Antonio Gallenga

Italian nationalism, was an acute and perceptive interpreter of the political passions which eventually led to a unified Italy, although as a monarchy, under the House of Savoy, rather than the republic he had fought for. A precursor of his time - a 'contemporary to posterity' according to prominent republican Giovanni Bovio's definition - Mazzini saw education for the lower classes as an inalienable right and a way, perhaps the only way, to achieve emancipation and acquire full consciousness of belonging to a spiritual community, transcending geographical and political borders - a Nation. The anti-fascist historian Gaetano Salvemini, himself a political exile and ideological disciple of the Genoese patriot, when questioned as to how he wished to be remembered, replied unhesitatingly 'as a teacher, an educator'. I like to think that the same answer would have been given by his *maestro*, Giuseppe Mazzini.

Andrea del Cornò is an Italian specialist at the London Library

See further:

Del Cornò, Andrea 'Un ritrovato giornale mazziniano: "Il Pellegrino"', in *Le fusa del gatto: libri, librai e molto altro* (Torrita di Siena, 2013), 191-208

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Hunting for Captain Hardcastle

by Alexandra Richardson

He rarely wrote letters home. His occasional articles in the press largely remained unsigned. As an adult in Italy, he eluded the photographer's lens as best he could. When he elected to put down roots there, it was behind a high-walled compound concealed from curious eyes. And when the heir to the Italian throne paid an official visit in the 1920s to his adopted shores on the southern side of Sicily, it was Prince Umberto of Savoy who called on him, Captain Alexander Hardcastle, and not the other way around.

For all these furtive tactics, however, this limelight-shy Englishman did not manage entirely to cover his tracks. The official archaeological archives of Agrigento, Palermo, Rome and Viterbo, for example, house most of the tattered and yellowing correspondence between Hardcastle and the authorities of those days. The handsome Villa Aurea – his home for nearly 14 years -- *still* stands. Outside the perimeter walls of the Valley of the Temples, one of Western Europe's largest Greek sites, the city of Agrigento has dedicated two localities to his memory: a *piazzale* and a street. While never knighted by his own country, the title of Commendatore della Corona d'Italia was conferred on him by Italy in tribute to the work that he conducted both in Sicily and in Lazio's Etruria area. And there is his simple grave in a far corner of the Bonamorone Cemetery on the Via Demetra in Agrigento, where a ceremonial bouquet has been place regularly every June for the last 84 years since his death.

It was to take much more sleuthing to get beyond these bare facts and to build a fuller picture of the man, the dedicated work that he instigated fostering the cultural bonds between England and Italy, his role in enhancing the landscape and, most importantly, his financing of the excavations and restorations in an era of threadbare budgets for archaeology throughout Italy. The hunt for Captain Hardcastle would entail a far different sort of digging in Italy, England, Ireland and even Texas! At the end of the tunnel, it was all hopefully leading to a book about this remarkable man.

Alexander Hardcastle was born in 1872 in London into a gifted and well-to-do family (he was one of eight siblings) of astronomers, mathematicians, linguists, suffragettes, prelates, politicians, soldiers and brewers. Following schooling at Harrow, he chose the military path with the Royal Engineers which was to take him to Singapore and, later, to South Africa for the Boer War. The lure of Italy came much later, even though the seeds must have been sowed early on: Harrow no doubt steeped him in the Classics, while engineering courses at Chatham surely whetted further curiosity about early building history. And at home, he had only to delve into the carefully conserved trove of letters of his maternal grandfather, John Frederick Herschel, back to his family in England, with their vivid first-hand accounts of travels through Sicily and especially the leisurely stopover at Girgenti, as Agrigento was then called, marvelling at temples, pillars and sculptures across the Valley site.

(left) Henry Robert Hardcastle and (right) Alexander Hardcastle in 1915 Courtesy DH Perceval

It was, however, only when Alexander Hardcastle turned 48, his military career concluded and his bank account in florid health, that he decided to take off for Italy with his witty but hapless younger brother, Henry Robert Hardcastle, to keep him company. While it was a bit of a dive into the dark (he had never been to Sicily before, spoke no Italian and counted scarcely one local contact), Alexander immediately liked what he saw. Within four months, he had bought his home and named it after the fourth gate into the Valley site. From the windows of what would become his sitting room, there were grandstand views hardly to be believed: to the left stood the Temple of Concordia intact, while to the right was one single Doric column still upright of the 6th century BC remains of the Temple of Herakles. Straight in front, beyond the relics of the

continued over

so-called Tomb of Theron and, beyond that, the Temples of Aesculapius, lay the glimmering Mediterranean Sea.

Not one to sit still for long, Alexander got to work within weeks of the house purchase. He wrote to the Central Department of Fine Arts in Rome offering – for starters – to part-finance out of his own pocket, no strings attached, the resurrection of three or four of the 33-foot high fallen columns of the Temple of Herakles. Rome rarely received such letters from total strangers and their stunned disbelief was entirely understandable. But such an offer was not to be lost in the bureaucratic shuffle and they speedily consented…*whoever* this Captain Hardcastle was! The remaining prone columns soon followed, this time wholly at the Captain's expense. Before long, all eight pillars were upright, handsomely aligned, a new spectacle to delight the visitors, as they still do.

The people of Alexander's inner sanctum, those who mattered and whose fraternity and collaboration he needed if he were to continue his involvement in the excavations and restorations in the Valley that he envisioned, were a vital quartet. Two of them came from the north, one was a Roman and the fourth a local *agrigentino*. Most important to befriend was the top man in Rome, the Director General of Antiquities and Fine Arts for all Italy, the man who gave 'the green light' (or indeed the red one) to all archaeological work in the country. This was Arduino Colasanti at the outset; by 1928, Roberto Paribeni took over the reins. Both Romans were on very cordial terms with their foreign benefactor judging by the friendly back and forth correspondence that still survives. The next in pecking order was the Syracuse-based Paolo Orsi whose specific role was to keep an attentive eye on all of Sicily. Orsi had trained in Padua, Vienna and Rome and prided himself on an ascetic lifestyle, camped out on a cot bed in his Spartan Syracuse hotel for the long period he worked there. Orsi was velvety and skilled in smoothing over the occasional flare up of tempers, negotiating compromises when required. Barely one rung lower on the ladder was another northerner, the handsome young Pirro Marconi who was based in Palermo as assistant inspector of archaeological sites, the man who worked most closely with Hardcastle. Marconi also kept a sharp watch over and a tight rein on his parish, for the Englishman was headstrong in his manner and ever eager to keep on forging ahead with yet more projects. Marconi *had* to be vigilant about how digs were conducted: any missteps would fall squarely on his shoulders. Lastly, there was Francesco Sinatra who lived in Agrigento, more of a 'Go To' man than a trained academic.

It was thanks to the camaraderie and respect that they had for one another that this foursome worked together as harmoniously as they did. It enabled Hardcastle to propose and nudge along the discovery and revival of an ancient Greek road paved in black and red bricks and still bearing the original indentation of old chariot wheels. It allowed him to carry out vital strengthening of parts of the miles long perimeter walls enclosing the Greek city which had fallen victim to rampaging goats, sheer age and farmers' pillaging of building materials. Hardcastle brought to light further worship sites of Akragas, the name given to Agrigento by the early Greek settlers, and took on civic improvements as well. He had water pipes run down to the Valley from the town above, to quench the thirst of the labourers, putting in troughs, too, to relieve the parched throats of the donkeys. He planted lovely trees to enhance and soften the harsh landscape, trees which still survive today. He persuaded the city fathers to remove unsightly billboards. And he paid, also, to upgrade the sorrowful local museum (where relics were displayed) by repairing the leaking roof, replacing broken glass in the windows and installing sturdier locks.

His attention was focussed elsewhere as well. Stymied by his lack of success in discovering the whereabouts of a Greek theatre, which he felt certain must exist in a city of such importance, he poured money and determination into the revival of and improvements to the existing Roman theatre at Ferento, near his summer villa outside Viterbo. He dabbled in digs around the Etrurian countryside there as well, incapable of slowing down. Hardcastle's endeavours continued year after year throughout the 1920s until one event occurred, affecting the whole world, himself included: the 1929 stock market crash on Wall Street. Suddenly, his frenzy of projects slowed to a trickle. His bank in England collapsed and his entire wealth evaporated. In desperation, he sold off what he could – a car here, a riding horse there – to fund more modest initiatives. Local friends advanced him what they could. But they, too, were in a precarious situation.

Hardcastle and his brother stumbled along as best they could. But the strain eventually wore him down and his mental faculties abandoned him completely. He was admitted to the local insane asylum and administered the prevalent quackeries of the times. But nothing seemed to work and in June 1933, aged 60, he died, mourned by the local citizens who had come to love this outsider in their midst. He was buried there in Agrigento, leaving behind a legacy of generosity and altruism and a love for the city that he made his own.

Alexandra Richardson is the author of Passionate Patron: The Life of Alexander Hardcastle published by Archaeopress, Oxford (2009)

Temple of Herakles Agrigento as it looks today

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Grande Guerra: perchè gli Inglesi ignorano la partecipazione dell'Italia?

by Fabrizio Biscotti

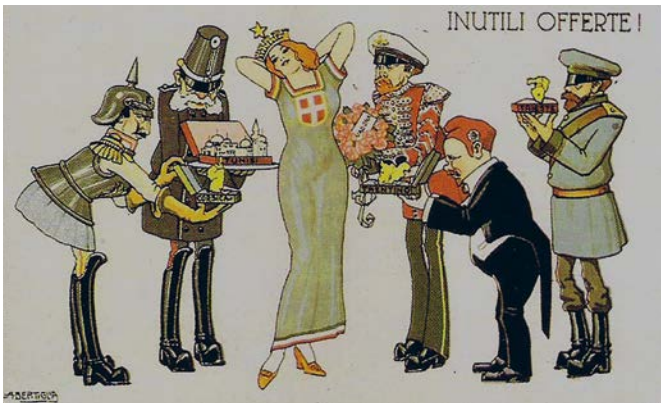
Perchè gli inglesi e la loro ricerca storica ignorano la partecipazione del Regno d'Italia nella Grande Guerra? Se chiedete all'inglese della strada neppure sa che l'Italia ha combattuto (al loro fianco) nella Grande Guerra. No, non stiamo scherzando. Se poi portate un amico britannico a fare un'escursione sulle Alpi e gli mostrate le trincee e gallerie scavate in quota, probabile che cada dalle nuvole quando gli spiegate come mai qualcuno s'era preso la briga di fare queste opere a duemila metri d'altezza e lungo un fronte di centinaia di chilometri.

Peggio, negli ambienti accademici o della storiografia ufficiale è di fatto rarissimo che si consideri l'Italia nella Prima Guerra Mondiale. Basti pensare che la recente pubblicazione curata dall'università di Cambridge sulla storia della Grande Guerra, tra le migliaia di pagine dedica all'Italia solo uno striminzito capitolo. L'unico momento in cui vagamente i britannici si ricordano del contributo italiano è quando, al *pub*, scappa la battuta derisoria sullo '*switching sides*' ovvero il cambiare alleanze con l'Armistizio del 1943 e prima col Patto di Londra nel 1915; come a dire che di quelli sotto certe latitudini non ti puoi fidare.

Per inciso, nella Grande Guerra il contributo di sangue sul piano militare è stato simile: la Gran Bretagna ha avuto 700 mila morti (900 mila se si includono i territori dell'Impero) e l'Italia 650 mila. Senza contare che l'Italia oltre ai morti militari ha dovuto contare migliaia di morti tra i civili (per lo più friulani e veneti) deportati dagli austroungarici nei campi di prigionia durante l'anno di occupazione dopo Caporetto, che la Gran Bretagna non ha dovuto soffrire. Questo ignorare l'Italia e una questione storica ma soprattutto culturale, di non poco conto.

A livello di ipotesi, una spiegazione che è stata data durante una discussione all'Istituto Italiano di Cultura a Londra nel 2015 da un relatore inglese è che quando le truppe britanniche arrivarono in Italia si era già sul Piave (novembre 1917 - novembre 1918) e la guerra dell'Italia era ormai una guerra difensiva con relativamente poca azione ad esclusione delle tre battaglie decisive inclusa quella finale di Vittorio Veneto. Quindi, rispetto al fronte occidentale della Francia e del Belgio, fatto di continui massacranti attacchi e contrattacchi, il Piave del 1917-18 era visto dagli inglesi come un fronte decisamente più tranquillo. Questa sorta di relativa tranquillità è poi stata trasmessa nei resoconti in patria con il risultato che lo sforzo bellico dell'Italia fu pressoché ignorato dagli Alleati inglesi, americani e francesi al tavolo di pace a Versailles (tragicamente memorabile la scena del primo ministro Vittorio Emanuele Orlando che, per la frustrazione, esce piangendo dalla sala riunioni).

Nel mondo anglosassone sia l'esercito austro-ungarico



Un celebre disegno satirico sulla neutralità dell'Italia del 1914 che riassume lo spirito del tempo: tutti vogliono l'Italia come compagna d'armi. Tra i corteggiatori c'è anche re Giorgio d'Inghilterra.

che quello italiano vengono dipinti come due formazioni militarmente inferiori se non addirittura marginali nel contesto bellico. Peraltro sono pochi gli storici anglosassoni che si siano occupati del fronte italiano; infatti, solo del 2000 è il primo libro sul tema per il grande pubblico: *Isonzo: The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War* di John R. Schindler che comunque mantiene un atteggiamento ipercritico riguardo la capacità e le operazioni sostenute dell'esercito italiano. Una mera cronaca degli eventi la fa Irving Root in *Battles in the Alps: A History of the Italian Front of the First World War* ma è nel 2009 che lo storico inglese Mark Thompson pubblica *The White War* che per la prima volta affronta, con il puntiglio tipico di uno storico di professione, le vicende sul fronte italiano. Però gli studiosi italiani sono divisi tra chi ritiene che sia uno tra i più realistici racconti e che andrebbe fatto leggere nelle scuole italiane, e chi ne sottolinea le posizioni erroneamente troppo critiche nei confronti della tattica militare italiana. Anche se è stato pubblicato un numero discreto di altri volumi per il Centenario, il fronte italiano continua ad essere visto come uno di quelli marginali.

C'erano pure scrittori di tutto rispetto che inviavano descrizione dal fronte ma nessuno di loro rese giustizia alla natura terribile del conflitto ed alle dimensioni delle sofferenze dei combattenti. Notiamo che il grande scrittore e all'epoca inviato del *Daily Telegraph*, Rudyard Kipling, fu mandato sul fronte alpino italiano e ne descrisse alcuni aspetti. Il problema a livello di 'immagine' di questi racconti è che forse hanno dato al pubblico inglese una visione edulcorata della guerra dell'Italia: gli Alpini che scalano una montagna con corde e piccozze ovvero, come intenti semplicemente a fare 'alpinismo', uno sport all'epoca appannaggio delle élites aristocratiche e borghesi (in buon numero proprio inglesi!), più che a morire sotto il fuoco nemico in sanguinosi scontri. Tra l'altro, a livello di morti in battaglia il fronte del Carso avrebbe falciato ben 22% dei combattenti mentre sul fronte alpino 'solo' l'11% (il resto, pur numeroso, dei

caduti in montagna fu vittima di valanghe, congelamento e malattie legate all'esposizione ad intemperie). Insomma, quello che descrisse Kipling non era il fronte 'giusto' per dare un'immagine di quella che fu la guerra dell'Italia, ovvero il Carso: una distesa di rocce da percorrere in salita in cui era impossibile usare il badile per scavare trincee, soggetto ad una cronica mancanza d'acqua potabile, con pietre le cui schegge moltiplicavano l'effetto delle esplosioni e senza ripari naturali di fronte alle moderne mitragliatrici da 400 colpi al minuto. Francamente uno scenario infernale che non ha nulla da invidiare al fango del Western Front!

Paradossalmente, non aiutano neppure le pagine di Ernest Hemmingway che arrivò in Italia nel 1918 inquadrato nella Croce Rossa Americana alle falde del Pasubio (nelle retrovie) e poi, brevemente, sul Piave dove fu ferito. Le informazioni che ha sul fronte più cruento, quello dell'Isonzo del 1915-17, sembrano essergli arrivati dall'infermiera inglese Agnes Conway. Informazioni che poi utilizzò per alcuni stralci del romanzo *A Farewell to Arms*. Assegnata a un'ospedale della Croce Rossa Britannica a ridosso del fronte a Gorizia, la Conway avrebbe appreso le informazioni sugli scontri sanguinosi sull'Isonzo dai barellieri e da vario personale di prima linea oltre che all'aver vissuto in prima persona lo sbandamento e la ritirata di massa dopo lo sfondamento tedesco/austroungarico a Caporetto. I dettagli dell'attraversamento del ponte (sul fiume Torre) sono poi ripresi nel romanzo da Hemingway con rilievi molto verosimili che però lui non avrebbe verificato in prima persona ma, , avrebbe ripreso dai racconti (evidentemente dettagliati) della Conway. Però anche qui le vicende sono state mostrate al pubblico anglosassone con la formula molto addolcita del romanzo d'amore e per di più in chiave antimilitarista, che altro non fa che sminuire l'idea di un contributo importante dell'Italia alla causa degli Alleati.

A questo punto entra in gioco il 'pezzo da novanta': il capo dell'Ospedale tale GM Trevelyan uno dei più conosciuti e rispettati storici inglesi e dall'esperienza sul fronte italiano durante la guerra, trasse il libro *Scenes from Italy's War.* Ebbene, c'è da chiedersi come mai uno storico così importante non abbia elaborato ulteriormente sulla guerra in Italia. Come mai negli anni del primo dopoguerra non è andato oltre il suo libro sul fronte italiano con studi più approfonditi e magari divulgativi? Grazie ai contatti che aveva stabilito in Italia tra i militari e probabilmente anche con i borghesi, avrebbe avuto materiale di prima mano per descrivere gli eventi. Il solo monte San Michele (in realtà un colle di 275 metri), alle porte di Gorizia, costò la vita a 20 mila italiani. Carneficine del genere sono pari a quelle del Western Front. Cos'è mancato in termini di dedizione ed eroismo agli Italiani di fronte a certi numeri? Sebbene con molte pecche sul piano della tecnica militare degli Alti Comandi, c'erano state pure vittorie con la conquista di Gorizia e l'avanzata verso la Bainsizza. Perché limitare la narrazione di questi eventi?

Aggiungiamo poi che esistono moltissime lettere dal fronte italiano inviate dagli inglesi che combatterono in Italia (ad esempio quelle depositate all'Imperial War Museum di Londra) e sono lettere lusinghiere nei confronti dei locali fratelli in armi. Tuttavia non pare siano state mai raccolte in pubblicazioni specifiche. Si può comunque citare il diario di guerra di un combattente inglese che effettivamente riconosce l'importanza del fronte italiano, e che in questo senso è senz'altro controcorrente: Hugh Dalton *With the British Guns in Italy, a Tribute to Italian Achievement*. Da sottolineare che Dalton fu parlamentare del Labour Party nel primo dopoguerra e che quindi doveva essere egli stesso un nome noto al grande pubblico britannico.

L'immagine dell'Italia come nazione marginale nella Grande Guerra da parte dell'opinione pubblica e degli storici britannici, sicuramente è figlia di tanti fattori. Di certo dobbiamo tener conto che gli interessi di politica estera ed economica che Regno Unito e Francia avevano nel primo dopoguerra spingevano a sottovalutare artificialmente, e quindi nel far sottovalutare, il contributo dell'Italia alla guerra, per facilitare il ridimensionamento delle richieste italiane (in particolare per l'Inghilterra non era accettabile una eccessiva espansione dell'egemonia marittima italiana sul Mediterraneo). Inoltre, verosimilmente si tratta di una questione legata agli anni Venti e Trenta, in concomitanza dell'ascesa del regime fascista, ma la cui onda lunga probabilmente si è ripercossa nella cultura e nella storiografia ufficiale degli anni successivi, peraltro tenendo anche conto che nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale l'Italia era avversaria dell'Inghilterra e quindi c'erano motivi ulteriori per sminuire il contributo dell'ex alleato.

Tant'è che per un secolo fior fiore di giornalisti e storici britannici non son riusciti a testimoniare equamente lo sforzo italiano nella Grande Guerra, sia militare che sociale. L'opera monumentale di Mark Thompson e i vari libri pubblicati in occasione del Centenario si spera siano solo l'inizio. ma toccherà ai nostri storici (e diplomatici?) contribuire a interrompere un secolo di oblio tra gli anglosassoni sull'argomento. Dopotutto, 650 mila morti, caduti al fronte anche per compiacere gli allora piani dell'Impero Britannico, lo meritano.

Fabrizio Biscotti is an Industry Analyst for a US based IT Research Company

British Red Cross presso la Villa dei Conti Trento a Dolegnano
Cortesia di Gaspari Editore

An Ariosto Walk in London

by Jane E Everson and Stefano Jossa

2016 marked the fifth centenary of the appearance in print of one of the most important and stimulating works of Italian literature – the *Orlando Furioso* of Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533). In Britain the work was particularly popular in the 19th century when a desire to read the poem was often the principal motive for English speakers to learn Italian. In April 2016 a conference was held at the British Academy in London to mark the centenary and stimulate new interest in Ariosto in 21st century Britain.

London has been a pole of attraction to European travellers at least since the days of the Tudors. All sorts of objects including money, jewels, artworks, books and furniture, have travelled to London in various ways throughout history to join private collections, museums, libraries, or relatives' family memories, so we can easily find traces of a variety of people who were never actually there. Ludovico Ariosto never travelled to London and only reluctantly and briefly left his native Ferrara, yet he has left his traces in many locations in the city, so much so that we want to suggest, in this centenary year, an Ariosto walk, to join the many other walks dedicated to key figures of European and non-European culture.

His first journey was in the form of a book: *Orlando Furioso*, first published in Ferrara in 1516 and later in an expanded version in Venice in 1532 (with a 1521 edition in the middle). It was translated into English as early as 1591, when Sir John Harington produced the first English version entitled *The Frenzy of Orlando*. The story goes that his translation of the tale of Astolfo, Giocondo and Fiammetta from canto 28 made Queen Elizabeth so furious with him for endangering the virtue of her ladies with so bawdy a story that, by way of punishment, she ordered him to retire to his seat at Kelston, in Somerset, until he had completed the translation of the whole of Ariosto's poem. Who knows whether the Queen truly wanted to punish him with such a challenging task or rather was curious to read the full story? Be that as it may, the first step on our walk should certainly be the Palace of Whitehall where Harington was a courtier at the Queen's court.

William Shakespeare was influenced by Ariosto's poem in his conception of *Much Ado About Nothing*, the plot of which is clearly inspired by the story of Ginevra and Ariodante in canto 4, in which Ginevra is accused of infidelity as the result of a night-time trick by a jealous suitor. The second step of our walk might then be to the Globe on the South Bank, the modern reconstruction of the theatre used by the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare's company, where the play may have been performed. The tale of Ginevra and Ariodante, and other sections of the poem were later turned into operas by Handel, to be performed first at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket and a few years later at the then Theatre Royal Covent Garden. And so our walk would continue to the Haymarket Theatre and to the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden.

Dish depicting Gryphon and Orgilla, Deruta, mid 16th century, tin-glazed earthenware © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Ariosto's influence can also be traced in the works of other major authors, including Spencer, Milton, Scott, Byron, up to, in modern times, the playwright and poet Samuel Beckett and the novelist David Lodge. A more intriguing and perhaps less physically taxing itinerary might include objects that relate to and have been inspired by this masterpiece. Starting with the *Orlando Furioso* itself, the first edition of which survives in only 12 copies in the world, the best preserved and most elegant exemplar being that owned by the British Library. Once the property of the eminent bibliophile Thomas Grenville, this magnificent copy was acquired for the British Library (then in the British Museum) by Sir Anthony Panizzi, the Italian exile who had risen to become the head of the Library. A stop there is absolutely compulsory for bibliophiles and even for the merely curious. This version of the poem has been critically edited by Marco Dorigatti, an Oxford-based Italian scholar, who was among the speakers at the Ariosto conference organized at the British Academy.

Ariosto's presence is also felt in another of the great cultural institutions in London: the National Gallery where we have the opportunity to see two portraits associated with Ariosto. Titian's *Man with a Quilted Sleeve* was long considered the only surviving portrait of Ariosto. In the recent exhibition *Painters' Paintings* at the National Gallery it was shown as having once been in the possession of Van Dyck whose inventory listed it as *'L'Ariosto Poeta'*. The sitter has since been identified as a member of the Venetian Barbarigo family and the painting has been retitled Portrait of Gerolamo Barbarigo. Palma Il Vecchio's *Portrait of a Poet*, showing a young man holding a book and whose head is framed in laurel leaves (the traditional crown of a poet), was painted at about the time that *Orlando Furioso* was published suggesting that it may refer to Ariosto, even if it is not his actual portrait. The National Gallery also owns the stunning *Angelica saved by Ruggiero* (from canto 10) by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. Delacroix too depicted this scene in his *Ruggiero rescues Angelica* (on display in the National Gallery's 2016 Delacroix exhibition), one among

several episodes he took from Ariosto's poem.

A few miles away from the National Gallery, the collections of the V&A demonstrate the extent to which *Orlando Furioso* penetrated and permeated daily life through objects in common use. In addition to some print portraits of Ariosto and two 16th-century bronze medals, there are some striking maiolica plates: one showing Astolfo chasing the Harpies, a subject derived from canto 34; another representing the magician Atlante flying down on the hippogriff and ready to attack Bradamante, from canto 4; and another, representing two characters from canto 16, the faithless Orrigille and the all-too faithful Gryphon – all evidence of the popularity of the poem and its presence in 16th-century daily life. The V&A collections also feature an 18th-century watch case decorated with the scene of Angelica and Medoro carving their initials on a tree, taken from canto 23, and the watercolour by Angelica Kauffmann representing Angelica and Medoro with the shepherd who helped them to fulfil their love. Another must-see for Ariosto aficionados as well as for all those who love art history and beautiful craftsmanship.

London has thus, perhaps, become the third or fourth *città ariostesca* in the world, even though Ariosto was never there and did not know much about the British landscape. Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentine writer (1899-1986), presented Ariosto as travelling the roads of Ferrara and, at the same time, walking on the moon. Yet Ariosto is now certainly travelling and walking the streets of London too, rubbing shoulders with other perambulating London *genii loci* – Shakespeare, Handel, Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens and Virginia Woolf.

This article first appeared (in slightly different form) as a blog on the website of the British Academy
www.britac.ac.uk

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100 years of the British Institute of Florence

by Julia Race

In the drawing rooms and libraries of early 20th century Florence, local residents, among them the Irish poet Herbert Trench, the writer Lina Waterfield, literary critics Guido Ferrando and Aldo Sorani and library director Guido Biagi discussed the idea of a reading room, library and space for cultural exchange between Britain and Italy. After Italy's entry into the First World War in May 1915, British propaganda to promote Italian entry into the conflict and encourage the population to support the Allied cause gave a sense of urgency to what had been a peacetime project. When the Institute was founded in 1917, it was with the support of John Buchan at the new Ministry of Information in London and of Rennell Rodd, British Ambassador in Rome.

The Institute, now a UK registered charity with no public funding, was the first of the British cultural institutes to operate overseas and served as a model for the establishment of the British Council in 1934.

In its early years, leading up to the granting of the Royal Charter in 1923, this fledgling institution was supported both locally and in London by, among others, Arthur Acton (father of Harold Acton), Walter Ashburner, writers Edward Hutton and Edmund Garratt Gardner, historian GM Trevelyan and his wife Janet Trevelyan, Gaetano Salvemini (later to become a prominent anti-fascist forced into exile by Mussolini) and Sir Israel Gollancz, a founding member of the British Academy. By 1923 the Institute had begun courses of lectures, published a journal, *La Vita Britannica*, and was in the process of building its library. The Institute's objectives today remain as defined in the 1923 Charter: to promote understanding between the citizens of Italy and the countries of the British Commonwealth through the maintenance of a library in Florence illustrating Italian and British culture and through the promotion of study of both the English and Italian

The Palazzo Lanfredini, designed by Baccio D'Agnolo with its decorative sgraffito façade by Andrea Feltrini commemorating the election of Pope Leo X.

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"To see the sun sink down, drowned in his pink and purple and golden floods, and overwhelm Florence with tides of color that make all the sharp lines dim and faint and turn the solid city to a city of dreams, is a sight to stir the coldest nature, and make a sympathetic one drunk with ecstasy."
Mark Twain "Autobiography"

language and the cultures of both countries.

In the 1920s and 1930s the Institute developed its language teaching and became responsible for teaching English to all the students of the University of Florence, thus producing a generation of English language teachers for Italian schools. The growth of the Library in the same period was largely thanks to donations from individuals and publishers. Summer schools were organised, taking Italian students to London and bringing British students to Florence. In May 1940, following Italy's entry into the war, the Institute was forced to close. In a letter to *The Times* published in July 1940, Janet Trevelyan spoke of 'some far distant date' when 'in a different Italy' the British Institute, with its 'magnificent library might still find work to do.' And this it did. The Institute reopened formally in 1946, with its Library intact, having been protected by the Librarian Giulietta Fermi and the Swiss Consulate.

In early 1966 the Library moved to its current home in the Palazzo Lanfredini on the south side of the Arno which, a few months later, burst its bank and flooded the ground floor. Fortunately the damage was limited; many of the books had not been moved to the ground floor and although some that were there were soaked through, only about 40 disintegrated completely.

Today, in two imposing Renaissance *palazzi* either side of the river Arno, the British Institute of Florence is a vibrant bi-cultural institution offering educational and cultural programmes for students, residents and visitors from all over the world, with nearly half of its 2000 student body Florentine state school students.

On the south bank of the Arno, the Palazzo Lanfredini houses the History of Art Department and the Harold Acton Library, named after the writer and aesthete who gifted the rooms. With over 53,000 volumes, it is one of the largest lending collections of English books in mainland Europe and membership is open to all. On the other side of the river, a stone's throw from the Piazza della Signoria, Palazzo Strozzino, begun in 1457 by Michelozzo and furthered by Giuliano da Maiano, hosts the teaching of English and Italian.

For the centenary in 2017, and in the spirit of Boccaccio's Decameron, the British Institute is offering a special ten-session course to celebrate 100 Florentine masterpieces, combining visits to museums and monuments with illustrated lectures in the Harold Acton Library. *100 Treasures in Florence* will include special consideration of the Institute's own treasure, the *Warrior with Shield* bronze, bequeathed by the widow of the sculptor Henry Moore.

The programme for the 100th birthday of the Institute will include an event in London in early 2017, in partnership with the British Italian Society. There is much to celebrate.

Julia Race is the Director of the British Institute of Florence

The British Institute offers a 5% discount on courses and library membership to members of the British Italian Society. For more details about the Institute, see www.britishinstitute.it

Piazza del Duomo in November 1966

In the Age of Giorgione

by Sheila Hale

In the first decades of the 16th century a young generation of painters in Venice discovered that by mixing their colours with oil rather than the more traditional egg tempera they could achieve effects that had never been seen before. Tempera, which dries quickly, must be applied with small, precise brush strokes that lend themselves to the drawn outlines characteristic of Florentine Renaissance painting. Oil, by contrast, dries so slowly that it can be manpiluated with large brushes or even with rags or fingers, or applied with smaller strokes to blend one colour into another. Eschewing the mathematical perspective that had been invented in Florence, the Venetians drew the eye into the far distance of their landscapes by means of subtle transitions of tones and colours. They breathed life into their portraits by modelling the features with light and shade, blending their outlines into dark backgrounds so that they appear to stand out in relief.

This style, with its informal grouping of figures and sometimes enigmatic or idiosynchratic subject matter, is often labelled 'Giorgionesque', after the mysterious artist Giorgione (Great George) of Castelfanco, who died young in 1510. Unfortunately for art historians and museum curators interested in secure attributions, Venetian collectors and their heirs did not always name the artists who had painted pictures listed in their wills and inventories. It is therefore not possible to say for certain which, apart from a small handful of extant 'Giorgionesque' paintings that are documented or that bear inscriptions giving them to Giorgione, are actually by the hand of Giorgione; which by Titian with whom he worked very closely and whose early paintings were often confused with his by contemporaries; or which may be by other artists whose identities are lost to us.

Over succeeding centuries the paucity of hard evidence combined with story of Giorgione's life as told by the not always reliable Giorgio Vasari to create an irresistibly romantic myth. According to Vasari Giorgione, although of humble origins, had such courteous and gentle manners and played the lute so beautifully that he charmed everyone. He was also very amorous and died of the plague which he caught from his mistress. Vasari described about twelve Giorgiones, none of which seems to have survived. In the next century another biographer mentioned sixty-five. By the early 19th century something like two thousand 'Giorgiones' passed through the London sale rooms.

Terris Portrait of a Man

La Vecchia

Although modern scholarship has reduced the candidates to numbers more realistic for an artist who died in his prime, the uncertainty surrounding the Giorgione Question remains a temptation for dealers, a minefield for scholars and connoisseurs, and a subject of exhibitions, the most recent of which, *In the Age of Giorgione* ran at the Royal Academy from 12 March to 5 June 2016.

Here we had the opportunity to view the work of some of Giorgione's older and younger contemporaries – including Giovanni Bellini, Albrecht Dürer, Lorenzo Lotto, Sebastiano del Piombo, Domenico Mancini, Giovanni Cariani, and Titian – as well as a selection of paintings that have been or still are attributed to Giorgione. It was organised room by room into unhelpfully artificial categories: portrait heads, portrait busts, landscapes, devotional works, and allegorical portraits.

The lodestar of the show was the so-called *Terris Portrait of a Man* (it was once owned by Alexander Terris, a Scottish coal merchant) from San Diego, which is one of the few extant paintings that can be confidently attributed to Giorgione, in this case by an inscription on the back which gives its date as 1506, or possibly 1508 (the final digit cannot quite be deciphered). It was hung in the first room between two fine portraits by Dürer, both dated 1506 when the great German artist was in Venice. All three are executed in oil on panel. But the Giorgione, which is one of the most compelling masterpieces of Renaissance portraiture, makes the Dürers look flat by comparison.

Another masterpiece on view was *La Vecchia*, an unflinching but tender portrait, realised with breathtaking subtlety and skill, of a very old woman, from the Accademia Gallery in

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Venice. The portrait of toothless old age bears the monitory inscription *Col Tempo*, With Time, which is presumably why the organisers placed her amongst the allegorical portraits, even though she is obviously a real person. *La Vecchia* was first mentioned in an inventory taken in the late 1560s, fifty years after Giorgione's death, as a 'portrait of the mother of Giorgione by the hand of Giorgione'. By the end of the 18th century she was described as the 'mother of Titian in the manner of Giorgione'. Although very few art historians have ever doubted that this wonderful work is by Giorgione, it does look very different from the Terris Portrait mainly because it is executed with tempera as well as oil and on a canvas rather than panel support. The organisers of the exhibition, in any case, seem to have encouraged the comparison by hanging it next to a door through which one could see the Terris Portrait at the same time. Unfortunately, the other paintings either given or attributed to Giorgione are are not in the same class and don't look much like either.

Elsewhere there were some treats and some disappointments. Among the former were Lorenzo Lotto's St Jerome from the Louvre, in which the saint's tiny, vulnerable figure is dwarfed by an awesomely forbidding rocky landscape reminiscent of Giovanni Bellini's *St Francis in the Desert* in the New York Frick Collection. Another, attributed to Giovanni Cariani, was the fine *Portrait of a Young Man with a Green Book* from San Francisco, a reminder that small portable books were invented in Venice by its most successful publisher Aldus Manutius.

Giovanni Bellini, the teacher of many Venetian painters of the younger generation and the first to experiment with the use of oil paint, is not well represented; nor is his greatest pupil Titian. Titian's *Jacopo Pesaro Being Presented by Pope Alexander VI to St Peter* from Antwerp, an unconvincing composition with pedantic passages, was hung on one end wall of the room allocated to devotional works opposite the awkward *Christ and the Adulteress* from Glasgow, a painting that has been given over the past two centures to a number of other artists including Bonifacio de'Pitati, Giorgione, Domenico Campagnola, Domenico Mancini, and an anonymous artist.

The catalogue, which includes many pictures that were not actually shown, describes the exhibition as 'highly experimental', its aim being 'to present "the case of Giorgione" in the jumbled state in which we see it, without concealing any of its complexities'. This justification may explain why some members of the public found the experience both rewarding and confusing.

Sheila Hale is the author of many books including Titian: His Life and the Golden Age (2013). She is a trustee of Venice in Peril.

Sicily on Show

by Susan Kikoler

Sicily, the island in the heart of the Mediterranean and once the centre of its maritime cross-roads, was the subject of two major UK exhibitions in 2016: *Sicily Culture and Conquest* at the British Museum and Storms, *War and Shipwrecks: Treasures from the Sicilian Seas* at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. (A further tiny exhibition Drawn to Sicily at the British Museum presented sketches of its monuments by early visitors on the Grand Tour intrepid enough to venture there.) The two major exhibitions complimented each other in subject matter and it was heartening to hear all the curators praise the excellent collaboration they had received from the *Regione Siciliana*. Furthermore the Ashmolean exhibition, first seen in Amsterdam, had been organised by COBBRA, a new European Museum consortium.

Quadrilingual tombstone of 1149

The Ashmolean Exhibition, although small, offered a kaleidoscope of Sicilian history from the Phoenicians to the Arab conquest, and was a fascinating insight into the development of marine archaeology and the role played by a redoubtable Englishwoman, Honor Frost, whose first dive was down a garden well in Wimbledon in 1948, and whose Foundation first applied the scientific disciplines of land archaeology to marine exploration.

The sea brought Sicily its myths and its conquerors. Its coasts are an underwater museum. Relics from important wrecks off the Sicilian coast demonstrated the sea's creative power – a Roman wine jar invaded by coral became an *objet d'art*. The marble figure of a warrior half embedded for centuries in sand emerged with buried limbs new-born and smooth, exposed limbs pitted by molluscs like a stone sponge.

Fleets sailed for trade or war. Clever animation set the scene for the engraved battering rams used in the sea battle off the Egadi Islands in 241 BC when Rome defeated Carthage. Cargoes changed with the market; cheap Southern Italian terracotta wine cups brought to replace expensive Greek luxurious artefacts, including a Northern European inlaid perfume jar with swans-head handles or a Hercules table

Christ crowing King Roger II Mosaic in the Martorana of Palermo

support, transported to grace richer Sicilian households. New crops were introduced – the Arabs brought sugar to Sicily transported in terracotta cones.

Small portable ovens and musical pipes showed everyday life aboard. Merchant vessels often had a crew of only three or four to keep down costs. There were amazing Byzantine flat-packed 'build your own chapel' cargoes of columns and pulpits designed to spread Christianity in the time of Justinian. But the Mediterranean remained treacherous. Voyagers travelled with altars and votive figures like the tiny statue of Reshef, the Phoenician god of storms, who in this case, singularly failed to keep his believer safe.

The British Museum exhibition focused on the Greek and Norman history of Sicily, limited space and the difficulties of transporting key objects were overcome by imaginative use of photos showing objects within their landscape and the selection of representative treasures – the temple remained in Sicily but its Gorgon-headed roof-tile grinned impishly at visitors. It was also a valuable reminder of the wealth of treasures in Sicily's museums still rarely visited by tourists.

Beginning with the *Trinacria*, the three-legged symbol of the island, and objects from a sophisticated early civilisation, including a Picasso-like phallic carved hidden doorway from Castelluccio, we are presented with an altar with three goddesses which points to the cult of Demeter and Persephone in Sicily's rich agrarian tradition. Sicily was famous for its horses, represented by a magnificent equine head, and the figure of a charioteer, here fashioned to praise the victorious participation of a mighty Sicilian tyrant in the Pan-Hellenic games. In the third century BC, the tyrant Hieron II of Syracuse, uniting much of Greek Sicily, befriended the Romans to negotiate a degree of independence. Archimedes designed for him the *Syracusia*, believed to be the greatest Greek ship ever and later given to Ptolemy III. Hieron II's head adorns one of the assembled coins as does the image of his wife, Philistis, the first Sicilian woman to be so honoured.

Sicily had to import its marble and silver so bronze coins were first developed here and limestone quarried for statues and temples. Some painted metopes still exist in Sicily, having disappeared in Greece, and an original metope from Selinunte is finally displayed here for the first time abroad. (In 1822 Samuel Angell and William Harris, two English visitors to Selinunte, had arranged for the metopes to be shipped to the British Museum but a local mayor intervened. Angell subsequently sent their casts instead).

If Greek Sicily is sculpture and exteriors, Norman Sicily is ornament and interiors, dominated by the figure of Roger II, seen both as Byzantine Emperor and Caliph, whose tolerant multi-ethnic court fostered Sicily's Golden Age of science and art, evidenced by the magnificent mosaics of the Palatine Chapel for which Roger brought experts from Istanbul, an ivory casket with Christian symbols carved by North-African Moslem craftsmen and the quadrilingual tombstone of 1149 on which the date is given in the language of each religion according to the calendar of that faith. Other treasures on display include the oldest surviving paper document from 1109 written by Roger's mother, Adelasia del Vasto, telling Moslem officers to protect the Greek Orthodox population at Enna. A bust of Frederick II, *Stupor Mundi*, represents the end of the dynasty and the exhibition ends looking towards the early Renaissance with a jewel-like Madonna and Child by Antonello da Messina.

Silver coin of Syracuse showing Hieron II
© Trustees of the British Museum

It is to be hoped that these wonderful examples of the rich heritage of its culture and history will encourage more visitors to Sicily and that they will explore inland as well as the main centres. Even today each area has a distinctive character – Greek, Arab, Norman, Spanish – as captivating as the words in the exhibition of Abd ar-Rahman, a twelfth-century Arab poet from Trapani in the court of Roger II:

> *The oranges of the island are like blazing fire among the emerald boughs*
>
> *And the lemons are like the pale faces of lovers who have spent the night crying....*

Susan Kikoler is a writer and public speaker and Honorary Director of the British-Italian Society. She lived in Sicily from 1972-1977 and has regularly visited the island ever since.

Chairman's Review
September 2015 – July 2016

by Richard Northern

A group of members and friends spent a wonderful afternoon at Petworth House on the South Downs in May 2016. Following a guided tour of the house, and its outstanding collection of art and sculpture, Lady Egremont showed us the private gardens, which she has carefully restored, and gave us tea on the terrace. Lord Egremont's great uncle, Hugh Wyndham, had been the first Chairman of the British-Italian Society. So this outing was an appropriate and enjoyable way to mark the Society's 75th Anniversary this year. We are very grateful to Lord and Lady Egremont for their generous hospitality.

The Trustees decided to continue the policy adopted in 2012/13 of devoting up to £5,000 (the investment income from the major Hawkins legacy received in 2012) to the The speaker at our annual Leconfield Lecture in November 2015 was Sir Timothy Clifford who gave an informative and entertaining talk on 'Il Museo della Ceramica di Casteldilago' in Umbria. We organised eight other lectures during the year on a range of themes from Sardinian poetry to the Tiepolo family, from Italian ocean liners to the Jews in Sicily and from a hidden and historic garden in Venice to the experiences of post-war Italian migrants in the UK. There was something for everyone, as the separate reports on each talk in this edition show. We also enjoyed a convivial informal Christmas dinner at Li Veli restaurant in Covent Garden.

We are encouraged by the success of initiatives to market our events more widely online and to allow non-members to take part (for an extra charge). This has already resulted in greater awareness of, and participation in, our programme, which augurs well for the future. One couple even flew from New York to attend Susan Kikoler's lecture on Sicily in April!

Petworth House Garden Tour

Lord and Lady Egremont © Elisabetta Murgia

A study day, which we organised at Kew together with the National Archives and the Venice in Peril Fund in November, was also a great success. A series of expert talks and discussions on Rawdon Brown, his associates in Venice and the Anglo-Venetian relationship were followed by a wonderful display of illuminated manuscripts and diplomatic correspondence between the royal courts of Europe from the Venetian collections at the National Archives.

The Trustees made a number of grants during the year to support worthy artistic, academic and other projects in line with the Society's aims. These included:

- A grant towards the cost of completing Dr Charles Avery's book on Joseph de Levis & Co, Renaissance Bronze Founders in Verona (£500).
- A donation towards the costs of events to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Arandora Star (£300).
- A grant towards the costs of holding an exhibition of paintings by Marco Lusini at the Fiumano Gallery in London in July 2015 (£100).

We also gave non-financial support to a number of events by partner organisations in return for promotion by them of the BIS and its events and discounted access for our members. A good example was a superb performance by the Monteverdi String Band at the London Festival of Baroque Music in May.

This has been a year of significant changes for the Society. Sadly, Charles de Chassiron stood down in summer 2015 after almost ten years as Chairman following a spell of ill health. We are delighted that Charles, who has made a tremendous contribution to the Society in that time, will continue to serve as a Trustee.

We thank our two Secretaries, John Jinks and Elisabetta Murgia, for their dedicated work during the year. John retired in May 2016 as Membership Secretary and IT Manager after more than ten years of service in the role. He deserves warm thanks for serving the Society so diligently, and for seeing it through a period of considerable change and development, including the introduction of our website and online payment systems. We are grateful to

Elisabetta for taking on the combined role of Membership and Events Secretary from now on.

Sivia Pierretti Malim joined us as our new Treasurer and Trustee in September 2015. We are grateful to her for the expertise and energy she has brought to both roles, and to the other Trustees, and the Rivista editors, who all devote so much time and effort to ensuring that the Society is able to provide such a varied and stimulating offering to its members and that it meets its statutory obligations.

As always, we are indebted to our Patron, Ambassador Terracciano, and his diplomatic colleagues at the Italian Embassy, and offer them our warmest thanks for their unstinting support during the year. We also thank Marco Delogu, the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, not least for hosting the Leconfield Lecture and for his generous support in making a room available for regular Trustees' meetings.

Meanwhile, there is much to look forward to, as we approach the climax of our 75th Anniversary year and an exciting programme for 2016-17. *Buon proseguimento!*

Welcome to new members

Ms Antonella Anedda Anjoy
Mr Michael Burgoyne and Ms Maria Avino
Ms Ann Canning
Ms Rita Christensen
Sir Timothy Clifford
Dr Marco Delogu
Ms Maureen Dowthwaite
Mr and Mrs Justin Ellis
Mrs Anna Feritti
Ms Annemette Fogh
Mr Alessandro Gallenzi and Ms Elisabetta Minervini
Mr John Jinks
Mr and Mrs Huw Jones
Mr David Lane
Ms Mara Luongo
Dr Marta Maretich
Ms Catherine Marriott
Mr Jamie McKendrick
Ms Anna Meadows
Ms Nadia Ostacchini
Ms Jola Pellumbi
Mr Riccardo Tordera Ricchi
Mr Gary Salamone
Ms Carolina Sciplino de Burgh
Mr and Mrs Mark Simpson
Dr Margherita Sprio
Mr and Mrs Nigel Stapleton
Mr Antonio Tasso
Mr Ivo Wiesendanger
Ms Kate Young

A Ferret in the Archives: Rawdon Brown and the Anglo-Venetian Relationship

by John Easton Law

This joint event with Venice in Peril took the form of a 'study day' at the National Archives (TNA) in Kew. It focused on the figure of Rawdon Brown (1806-83), a Victorian antiquarian who lived in Venice for almost 40 years and delved extensively into the rich Venetian archives. He located and subsequently translated the reports sent by successive Venetian ambassadors to the English Tudor court. He was a good friend of John Ruskin and Effie Gray – or 'Fifi' as Brown perceptively nicknamed her. The footnotes in studies on Ruskin and the Ruskins in Venice by Mary Lutyens, Robert Hewison, and Sarah Quill rightly present him as a guide, confessor, host, companion and an important point of contact to Venetian society. It was Brown who facilitated Ruskin's contacts with archivists, librarians, photographers and craftsmen, all of whom were key in Ruskin's closely observed studies of Venetian sculpture and architecture.

Brown's great work, *The Calendar of the State Papers in the Archives of Venice*, together with many of the documents and Venetian family papers which he acquired, are now kept in the National Archives, in line with his will. They number over 900.

Rawdon Brown came to Venice in a period of transition in Anglo-Italian relations. The largely aristocratic Grand Tour became more 'democratic' with the increasing participation in travel by the growing middle classes – encouraged no doubt by the relatively rapid expansion of the railways and a rise in the number of acceptable hotels. However, the personal reasons for Brown's arrival in Venice in 1833 and his virtually unbroken residence in the city until his death there in 1883 remain to be further explored. He later claimed that he had come to Venice to find the tomb of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, whose death in the city is mentioned in Shakespeare's *Richard II*. He did in fact, in quite remarkable circumstances find hidden in the courtyard of the Palazzo Ducale, not the tomb, but a memorial to Mowbray which he had shipped to a descendant of the Duke. Unfortunately, it is hard to gain access to the memorial, now in Corby Castle, Cumbria and the casts Brown had made of it in Venice are now lost.

As has been recognised by John Pemble and John Julius Norwich, a much more accessible legacy of Brown's indefatigable work as an archivist and historian is his writing on a wide range of Venetian sources accompanied by the purchase of manuscript collections and his research in the Marciana (then located in the *Palazzo Ducale*), and other Venetian libraries. He appreciated the value of the prolific Venetian historian and diarist, Marino Sanudo (1466-1536), drew on sources and collections outside Venice and gained increasing access to the Venetian state archives located at the Frari. A circle of appreciative and influential friends in the United Kingdom helped secure recognition of his accumulation of expertise, and eventually, in 1862, Brown

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Venetian Manuscripts Doge's Commission Alvise Contarini, Governor of Oderzo, 1543 PRO 3025_104_5 Courtesy The National Archives

was appointed by the Master of the Rolls to calendar Venetian documents relating to the British Isles.

Brown had a close association with foreign scholars and Italian archivists and librarians in Venice and elsewhere. One of these archivists was Luigi Pasinini, who in 1875 received a considerable reward from the British government for breaking Venetian diplomatic ciphers. This was an achievement that had defied more recognised cryptographers and which was acknowledged as being of contemporary significance. Brown's Venetian connections and the sheer scope of his research led to a plaque being placed in his memory in the National Archives (this is currently rather obscurely located but there are plans to move it to the main reading room) while a portrait of him exists in the office of the director of the Marciana.

After Brown's death, material relating to this ambitious project together with much else from his collection passed to the Public Record Office, now TNA, representing one of the largest collection of Venetian and related source material outside Venice. This archive was the focus for the study day.

Proceeding were opened by Ruth Selman of TNA and Richard Northern of the British Italian Society. Jonathan Keates, Chairman of Venice in Peril, then spoke on 'Venice Austria - Venice Italy: the Worlds of Rawdon Brown'. Venice was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire for much of Brown's residence in the city but he does not emerge from what survives of his correspondence as an enthusiast for the 'New Italy'. The present author discussed 'Rawdon Brown in Venice' as summarised above. ,

Ruth Selman spoke on 'The Anglo-Venetian relationship documented at the National Archives'. She drew attention to the guides to the 'Brown archive' that are available in hard copy and on-line and escorted her audience to a specially curated exhibition with its focus on some of the illuminated *commissioni* issued to Venetian nobles taking up office outside the city. It was notable that the fine examples came from Brown's own collection and included some of Brown's translations of the *relazioni* or final reports sent back by ambassadors to the Signoria. A later document reported on English preparations for fighting the Armada. The final documents shown were much more recent and not from the Brown archive: a report by Sir Ashley Clarke describing the terrible flood damage in 1966 in both Venice and Florence, and the origins of the Italian Arts and Archives Rescue Fund (AARF) which he was instrumental in setting up. The IAARF was the direct predecessor of Venice in Peril. But the most moving document was the letter in Latin from Queen Mary herself announcing to the Doge the imminent birth of her heir – which for obvious reasons was never actually sent.

Sarah Quill then spoke on Brown's friendship with the Ruskins – at times a difficult relationship but on the whole an extremely positive and long lasting one. The new edition of her *Ruskin's Venice*. *The Stones Revisited* illustrates this point well.

The Ruskins helped Brown publish with Smith, Elder and Company, his *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII* in 1854. These were the dispatches sent to Venice by the Republic's ambassador, Sebastiano Giustinian. As Sheila Hale pointed out in her contribution, 'Andrea Badoer: the First Venetian Ambassador to Henry VIII', the Republic, in a threatening and changing world, became increasingly aware of the importance of effective diplomacy. This Brown well realised, considering the extensive record of Venetian diplomacy a key source, not only for the history of the Republic, but also for that of Europe - and beyond.

Perhaps because of a reluctance from British publishing houses to publish his early archival findings, Brown could be rather self-deprecating, describing himself as a 'ferret' in the archives, and his discoveries as 'bricks'. In the longer term there is often an assumption that once documents have been published, they have been studied. Hence Brown's Calendars and many other similar series can languish under-consulted on library shelves.

More recently priorities in historical research can seem to be obsessed with narrow and unimaginative interpretations of 'outreach' and 'relevance'. A large collection of Venetian material in a British archive is regarded as not 'British' enough', while in Venice there can be a disheartening under-valuation of the use made by foreign scholars, particularly those of the 19th century, of sources in the city's libraries and archives.

In an attempt to remedy this in the 'Brown connection', conferences were held at TNA in 2001 and in Venice in 2003 . It is to be hoped that the study day described here illustrating the extent of the 'Brown archives' and their importance will be noted. By drawing attention to, and conserving, some revealing documents, further study of the 'ferret's' remarkable legacy should be encouraged.

Venetian Manuscripts Doge's Commission Bertuccio Contarini, Governor of Cittadella, 1548, PRO-30_25_104_7 Courtesy The National Archives

John Easton Law is a Reader in History at Swansea University, with a particular interest in Italian late medieval and renaissance history and the reception of these periods in the 19th century.

The Adventure of Perseus

In September 2015 the historian and art critic Margherita Calderoni returned to the British-Italian Society to kick off a new season of talks with an account of the colourful life of the Florentine sculptor Benvenuto Cellini and his masterpiece, a bronze statue of the mythological hero, Perseus. In a richly-illustrated talk, she focused on Cellini's life and the challenges he faced while modelling and casting his Perseus.

Cellini was born in Florence in 1500. His father, a musician and maker of musical instruments, wanted his son to follow in his footsteps; but Benvenuto decided instead to become apprentice to a goldsmith, Antonio di Sandro. This was the start of an eventful life, during which Cellini achieved both fame and notoriety. Margherita described how he moved from city to city in Italy and abroad in search of artistic commissions, but also to keep ahead of the law. At various times he faced charges of murder, sodomy, robbery and violence, and spent time in prison. He was 'a man on the run, living through eventful times, with a quick temper and a passionate enthusiasm for his job'.

Cellini turned to sculpture while working for King Francis I in Paris (1540-45). On his return to Florence, he was commissioned by Cosimo I, Duke of Tuscany, to carve *Perseus and the Medusa*. Cosimo wanted the statue to stand in the Loggia dei Lanzi in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence close to Michelangelo's David, Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* (which had not been well-received) and Donatello's *Judith and Holofernes*. We do not know whether Cosimo I was entirely satisfied with the finished statue. He recognised that it was a masterpiece, but was slow to pay Cellini for it.

Margherita showed detailed slides of the statue. It portrays Perseus beheading Medusa, the hideous female Gorgon, with snakes for hair, who turned all who looked upon her into stone. Cellini gives Medusa a strikingly beautiful face. Perseus stands on Medusa's sensuous body and holds her decapitated head up by her hair. The statue is mounted on a square base with a bronze relief panel depicting the story of Perseus and Andromeda. Perseus is thought to represent the Medici, who had just defeated their Republican enemies. The sculpture is deemed to be the first statue since the classical

Perseus with the Head of Medusa

Margherita Calderoni

age, in which the base included a figurative sculpture as an integral part of the work.

Cellini's decision to cast the statue in bronze was a brave one. Bronze had not been used for a monumental work of art for almost fifty years. Cellini (a religious man) decided to use this medium, because for him pouring molten metal into the cast was like pouring blood into a creation and bringing it to life. The most difficult challenge was completing the entire cast at once. Donatello's bronze, *Judith and Holofernes*, had been cast in separate sections. Cellini wanted to rival Michelangelo's David and stake a claim as a technical and creative master. Disaster almost struck: at one point, his assistants failed to prevent the metal clotting. If Cellini had not been present to rectify this, the work would have been ruined. But he managed to re-melt the bronze and resume the casting process successfully.

In addition to Grand Duke Cosimo I and King Francis I, Cellini worked for two popes (Clemente VII and Paolo III), an array of Cardinals, Princes and gentlemen, who often boasted of their generosity but turned out to have tight purses. Some of Cellini's work has been lost, but much survives, including the *Saliera* or *Saltcellar*, made in Paris for King Francis I. It is gold, partly covered in enamel, with an ebony base, and is displayed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. This is Cellini's only fully authenticated work in precious metal, and is a supreme example of his work as a goldsmith. Another example of Cellini's art is the marble Escorial Crucifix (1556), which was destined for his own tomb, but now stands in the church of the royal monastery of the Escorial in Spain.

Perhaps Cellini's greatest claim to fame is his notorious autobiography, which he started writing in 1558 but left unfinished. He died in 1571 and was buried in the Chapel of the Painters in Santissima Annunziata in Florence.

Linda Northern

Two Poets in conversation: Antonella Anedda Anjoy meets Jamie McKendrick

21 October 2015 saw a small but select gathering at a joint event of the British Italian Society and The Friends of Italian at the Institute of Modern Languages Research which took place at the University of London. Having walked through the grandeur of Senate House, we found ourselves in the slightly less grand surroundings of committee room 104, where the ever-faithful Dr Katia Pizzi (herself a popular performer at past BIS events) introduced the two poets.

Antonella Anedda was born in Rome but has close links with Sardinia, whence her family comes: she told me afterwards that she is in fact distantly related to the Sardinian patriotic hero, Giovanni Maria Anjoy. In particular, she has spent much time in and around the northern archipelago of La Maddalena, whence the name of her 2014 volume Archipelago, itself translated into English by Jamie McKendrick and published in a bilingual edition by the stalwart poetry house, Bloodaxe Books. When young, Anedda was exposed not only to Italian but to the dialect of La Maddalena, to the species of Catalan spoken in Alghero and to Logudorese, the dialect of northern central Sardinia said still to be very close to Latin. Some of her poems in Archipelago are indeed written in Logudorese. Archipelago is only the latest in a series of prize-winning volumes of verse, though Anedda has also written prose, including La Vita dei Dettagli a fascinating-sounding work on details from famous paintings.

Jamie McKendrick was born in Liverpool and is not only a poet but also a distinguished translator, both of prose and verse: he has for example translated both The Garden of the Finzi-Continis and The Gold-Rimmed Spectacles by Giorgio Bassani and he won the John Florio Prize in 2009 for his rendering of The Embrace: Selected Poems by Valerio Magrelli. He also won the Hawthornden Prize for his own Out There in 2012.

The two poets clearly know each other well and the conversation, both between them and later with the audience, was wide-ranging. They discussed particular aspects of Anedda's style (lots of nouns and few adjectives, which she referred to as her 'thingishness'). We heard also of McKendrick's fascination with literary 'echoes': he read to us his lovely sonnet We that have been hunting all the day, inspired by a line in Thomas Heywood's A woman killed with kindness. It is presently only available in the archive of The London Review of Books but finishes:

We that have been hunting all the day
Will keep on hunting through the night
For finer creatures than the forests hide,
Through forests deeper than the ones of day.

Probably best of all, however, for a British-Italian audience were Anedda's poems on La Maddalena, including Santo Stefano, the nearby island which, incidentally, saw Napoleon's first battle and first defeat by the British, and which was for long a NATO base:

questa piccola isola forata sott'acqua dai sommergibili americani,
dove mio bisnonno piantò viti e agrumi
costruì stalle e portò dieci vacche dal Continente.
I loro zoccoli tremanti sulla barca, il vento sui dorsi
colpiti fino allora solo dalle piogge del nord.
Sono ancora lì, le corna miste a sabbia
gli scheletri profondi, stretti agli scogli senza piú paura,
senza piú distinzione tra i pascoli e il mare.

After a debate on whether the translation of poetry is ever truly possible (somebody proffered the view that it was 'like a kiss through a silk handkerchief'!), we turned to the joys of the vine.

Ian Grainger

The 2015 Leconfield Lecture: The Ceramic Museum of Casteldilago

The 2015 Leconfield Lecture that took place at the Italian Cultural Institute in Belgrave Square served as a double introduction for the incoming Director, Marco Delogu, as well as our own new chairman, Richard Northern. Both made a brief and passionate declaration of the aims of their respective residencies before Richard introduced the main act of the evening, Sir Timothy Clifford, best known as the director of the National Galleries of Scotland from 1984 to 2006.

Sir Tim is a great raconteur and it caused some amusement in the room when he began his presentation by telling us he was going to talk about a load of rubbish, before going on to explain his journey of discovery through the archaeology of Casteldilago in southern Umbria and the establishment of a small museum there.

Sir Timothy Clifford
© Georgina Gordon-Ham

The village of Casteldilago is a small *borgo* in the Valnerina, close to the town of Arrone and near to the

Cascata delle Marmore, the highest man-made waterfall in Europe. It was the furthermost point in the diocese of Spoleto and on the edge of the border of the Kingdom of Naples. In the course of renovating an ancient cistern in one of the houses of the *borgo*, workmen discovered a trove of pottery fragments which had been jettisoned there. The cistern may have become contaminated at the time of the Black Death (1347-8) and continued in use as a rubbish pit. There were a great deal of fragments of Deruta pottery dating to the 1520s, which is consistent with the despoliation of the village in 1527, just after the Sack of Rome. The marauding *Landsknechte* (mercenary soldiers) also sacked nearby Terni but were to be eventually paid off by the city of Spoleto itself.

Although there were fragments from various recognised pottery centres, a group of wares remained unidentified until compared with other fragments in the museums of Narni and Spoleto. Coats of arms on the pieces, predominantly jugs, were identified as being those of prominent local families such as the Lauri and the Clementini. The pieces were further defined by similar ribbon-like decoration to the sides resembling *pince nez*

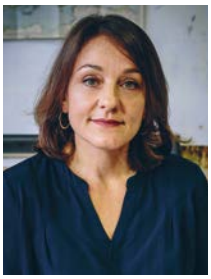
Once all the unidentified pieces were considered to be a coherent group, further research uncovered a contract in 1540, between Mariotto di Cristoforo from Deruta and Tommaso di Pietro from Faenza, to make vases in Spoleto dating from 1540. After the discovery of similar kiln wasters (defective pottery discarded after firing) in the Via dell'Anfiteatro in Spoleto, the full story began to emerge. The combination of fragments and wasters, together with the archival evidence and the local coats of arms decorating the pieces, pointed to a previously unsuspected production of pottery in Spoleto itself. Cipriano Picolpasso, in *I Tre Libri dell'Arte del Vasaio* (written around 1557 and the first European description of the manufacture of tin glaze pottery), makes specific mention of the fine clay that was collected at Spello a few kilometres down the road. Influenced by the ceramic production of both their birthplaces, Mariotto and Tommaso seem to have created a manufacture that catered for local demand and had a good degree of success in the years after its foundation. Large quantities of animal bones, glass, metalwork (including cannon balls, keys, knives, fragments of armour and coins) were also found within the cistern. These form part of the displays and provide a wonderful insight into the way the locals once lived.

Jugs in the Museo della Ceramica Casteldilago

Sir Timothy himself collected the fragments, washed them and reassembled them in readiness for the foundation of the new *Museo della Ceramica* in Casteldilago. The Spoleto pieces, along with the other discoveries from Deruta and Orvieto as well as various centres in Lazio, are presented in a dedicated exhibition space that was inaugurated by the Presidente della Regione Umbria, Catiuscia Marini and the mayor of Arrone, Loreto Fioretti in May 2014. The lecture concluded with an entertaining question and answer session.

Justin Raccanello

Giambattista Tiepolo: Painting in Context



Marta Maretich

Marta Maretich's latest novel *Merchants of Light* tells the story of the Tiepolo family, the celebrated painting dynasty of 18th century Venice, and their links to historical figures of their day – a colourful cast of characters skilfully brought to life in her beautifully illustrated talk held at the University Women's Club in January 2016.

Giambattista Tiepolo was born in the Castello district of Venice in 1696. The death of his father plunged the family into debt but Tiepolo showed artistic talent from an early age, was taken on as a pupil in the studio of Gregorio Lazzarini and rapidly made a name for himself. He married Cecilia Guardi and the couple went on to have eleven children; seven survived to adulthood and two sons, Lorenzo and Domenico, were to join their father as his assistants. Cecilia was the daughter of an artist, Domenico Guardi, and sister of painters Antonio and Francesco Guardi, whom Marta described as living close to the poverty line and never achieving the success of their brother-in-law during their lifetime.

Cecilia was the model in many of Tiepolo's paintings; for example in the Rape of Europa she appears as the central figure and again, somewhat scandalously for the time, in *An Allegory of Venus and Time*. A later painting, by her son Lorenzo, shows her wearing diamonds, fur and lace, a reflection of her status as the wife of a successful artist.

We were also introduced to the dashing and cosmopolitan Count Francesco Algarotti, a Venetian whose circle included many of the great minds of the Enlightenment. Algarotti was a close friend of Frederick the Great (the

continued over

nature of their relationship is something of a mystery), and it was Frederick who conferred the title of Count on him. Algarotti was interested in the physics of light and when he came to England was inducted into the Royal Academy. He was a prolific writer on literary and scientific subjects, and his slim volume *Newton for Ladies* makes an appearance in *Merchants of Light* when it is given by the Count as a present to Cecilia. Algarotti had developed a perfect memory for images when still a young boy and his involvement with Tiepolo began when he went to Venice as agent for Augustus III, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, to commission works for the King's famous collection at Dresden. Although Algarotti failed in his quest to commission any new work, he was able to purchase *The Banquet of Cleopatra* directly from the artist. Once again Cecilia appears in the painting, this time as Cleopatra.

In 1750 Tiepolo, together with his sons Lorenzo and Domenico, travelled to Würzburg in Germany having accepted a commission from the Prince-Bishop Karl Philip von Greiffenclau to paint the ceiling of the Imperial Hall in the Prince-Bishop's residence. The Prince-Bishop was so delighted with the fresco of *Apollo Conducting Beatrice of Burgundy to the Genius of Empire* that he commissioned Tiepolo to paint the entrance staircase to the hall. The work, the *Allegory of the Planets and the Continents*, took 3 years to complete and is considered to be Tiepolo's masterpiece. It is the largest surface area covered by fresco painting in the world and shows Apollo with deities around him representing the planets. Alligators and cannibals represent America, camels and pearl-traders Africa, obelisk and slaves Asia and Europe is represented by the arts with portraits of the Prince-Bishop, as well as of Tiepolo and Balthasar Neumann, the principal architect of the *Residenz*.

Tiepolo died in Madrid at the age of 74 having travelled there with his sons to undertake commissions for Charles III. Domenico returned to Venice after his father's death and began to develop his own style moving away from the mythological and allegorical subjects of his father. Lorenzo remained in Spain, producing pastel portraits on a more domestic scale, and died there at the age of 40.

The concluding part of the talk brought us out of the 18th century and into the 20th with the arrival in Würzburg of American Monuments Specialist Officer, John D. Skilton. He had been sent there to assess the damage to the *Residenz* caused by a devastating allied bombing raid in March 1945. The roof had been destroyed and much of the interior ravaged by the ensuing fire but by no small miracle Tiepolo's frescoes were undamaged. The summer of 1945 was one of the wettest that Germany had ever known and the roof had to be repaired quickly if the frescoes were to survive the elements. Skilton set to the task like a man possessed and, despite the shortage of manpower and materials, the new roof was completed by September of that year. Tiepolo's magnificent frescoes had been saved and in 1981 the Residenz became a UNESCO world heritage site.

Marta's enthusiasm for her subject together with Tiepolo's clear blue skies and billowing clouds certainly cheered the BIS audience on a cold January evening.

Vanessa Hall-Smith

Italian style goes to Sea

Anthony Cooke, a seasoned marine historian, author and lecturer on the subject of Italian shipping, gave us a remarkable insight into the history and development of Italian ships and shipping. 19th century Italy was a period of change and many of the victims of this turmoil, particularly in the impoverished South, sought to escape by emigrating to the New World. This emigration was fuelled by agents of the steamship companies travelling round the villages encouraging the inhabitants to seek new lives in the United States and South America, particularly Brazil and Argentina.

In the 1850s, the journey across the Atlantic took between 30 and 50 days; the travellers endured terrible conditions, sleeping in dormitories in the cargo holds.

After 1880, the pace of emigration increased and in the period between 1880 and 1914, it is estimated that some 14 million Italians left their homeland.

Improvements in the design of steamships and increasing demand from a more wealthy class of traveller led to the growth of the big shipping lines. One of the first belonged to Raffaello Rubattino, based in Genoa. A respected figure in 19th century Italy, Rubattino had provided Garibaldi with the ships to transport his Thousand. Later, when Rubattino was in financial difficulties, the Italian Government lent money to the company and it eventually merged with the Palermo-based Florio Line to form the Navigazione Generale Italiana.

Anthony Cooke
©Georgina Gordon-Ham

Separate classes developed on ocean-going ships and by th1890s, electricity was introduced to First and Second Class. In 1907, Piaggio built the first true Italian luxury liner, the *Principessa Jolanda*. A luxury hotel company from Genoa was employed to manage the First Class, which was decorated in the rather overblown Grand Hotel style of the period. Sensationally, the ship capsized immediately after being launched but nevertheless she signalled the new interest of the Italian companies in the luxury market.

The sinking of the *Titanic* and the First World War presented the industry with major problems. There were lengthy construction delays as safety concerns meant changes in design. The end of the War and the start of the Twenties brought further changes to design and to how life on board was lived. First Class passengers now enjoyed deck games, dancing and fancy dress parties.

In 1927, the launch of the French liner *Ile de France*, designed

in the modern Art Deco style with furnishings in the same style, caused a sensation. Out went the heavy palatial furnishings from Palermo and Florence in favour of the clean fresh lines of Art Deco. By this time, migration to America had more or less ceased and tourism was where the growth was. The transatlantic crossings started to take longer as a result of using more sunny routes giving First Class passengers, who now included celebrities, the opportunity to take advantage of the new cabin balconies and swimming pools on deck.

Mussolini, ever keen to show the greatness of the Italian nation, wanted an Italian ship to win the coveted Blue Riband prize, the *Nastro Azzurro*. The Rex, one of the finest of all liners, was built with a view to winning the prize. Unfortunately the Rex broke down on its maiden voyage but honour was saved when it won the following year. It was such a national triumph that when the Peroni brewery introduced a new premium beer they called it *Nastro Azzurro*.

War again disrupted the industry, and in 1944 the Rex was bombed off Trieste. In the years immediately after the War, there was chaos with much shipping and many shipyards having been destroyed. But the industry gradually began to recover, and the large Monfalcone shipyard of Trieste, which had been destroyed in the War, was rebuilt. Private companies such as that owned by the Costa family provided ships, this time for migrating refugees, many of whom wee heading for South America. They converted anything they could and, with US money and assistance, the shipyards and shipping began to recover. New designers such as Gio Ponti, were employed, creating a more sparse, modern style.

The arrival of jet airliners from the end of the 1950s caused more changes in travel. The growing demand for leisure travel increased the need for cruise ships, and today these form the basis of work for the Italian shipyards.

Anthony's talk, which stimulated some lively questions, was beautifully illustrated and delivered with wit and panache.

Diana Darlington

The Fashion of These Times: How Italian style conquered the world

In focusing on Italian Style in his talk and most recent book, the author and journalist David Lane uses his experience of living and reporting in Italy to provide an historic perspective on Italy's artisan craftsmen and women and how they came to shape the modern world. He described how Italy's importance as a trading nation ensured that her rich cultural heritage spread its influence over the whole of Europe and America, and how 'Italian Style' – immediately recognisable but hard to define – only started to become all-pervading from the end of the Second World War.

Certain key individuals seized the moment. For example, Giovanni Battista Giorgini, an Italian business man from Lucca, who saw the potential for Italian fashion in the post-war market – not just as a marketable commodity in its own right, but also as a way of promoting the thousands of craftmen working in family businesses across the regions, many of whom had developed specialist skills giving Italy a name for quality and good design.

Giorgini had made his name promoting and exporting fine gifts to the big department stores in New York. After the war, he was able to make use of his contacts and to persuade them that it wasn't only the French who could lead the fashion world. In 1951, Giorgini held the first ever fashion show in his house, the Villa Torrigiani in Florence. Emilio Pucci, Emilio Schuberth, Simonetta Visconti and Roberto Capucci were among those whose designs were shown. American buyers and journalists, including those from Vogue and Tatler came. Giorgini's instinct had been correct, and hard work and enthusiasm combined to make a great success. He very quickly followed this with shows at the Palazzo Pitti and the names that we are all so familiar with now: Missoni, Ferragamo, Valentino, Gucci and Ermano Scervino, were promoted in this spectacularly stylish venue.

David Lane

Alongside this passion for Italian fashion, the film industry had discovered Rome, and during the 1950s and 60s the term 'Hollywood on the Tiber' was coined to describe how the Italian capital emerged as a major location for international film-making, attracting a large number of foreign productions to the Cinecittà studios. Successful films like *Quo Vadis, Cleopatra, Roman Holiday* and *Three Coins in a Fountain* promoted fashion and lifestyle and ensured that Italy became a tourist destination for a new post-war generation who saw the possibility that they might 'have it all' and who weren't so constrained by the pre-war class systems that had confined ways of thinking.

The fashion industry is just the top of a vast mountain of people working in connected activities: designers, manufacturers, models, publishers, journalists, caterers, exhibition organisers, flower arrangers, set designers, lighting engineers and hoteliers. As a result, Italian Style extended from the luxury market to the mass market with the aid of popular performers like Dean Martin and Perry Como. Fashion, perceived to be of the moment, came to be synonymous with Italian Style, something much more enduring and all pervading. From *gelati* to Bugatti, these days, if it's Italian there's no need to ask.

continued over

David Lane referred to the V&A's exhibition: *The Glamour of Italian Fashion 1945-2014*, with slides demonstrating examples of haute couture including a glorious fuchsia and green silk dress by Roberto Capucci, a silver sequin dress by Mila Schön, superb men's tailored suits by Gianni Versace and luxury leather goods and shoes by Salvatore Ferragamo. He noted the significant contribution made to the economy by the Italian fashion industry and how the show underlined the way in which Italian Style had indeed conquered the world.

There are challenges to this success story: the world is changing and technology has had an effect on traditional craftsmanship and the wealth of experience built up in workshops. In the 1920s Borsalino employed 3,000 people to produce 2 million hats, nowadays it takes 75 people to make 200,000 of their hats. There are, however, still some small units operating in the industry which are flexible enough to meet the renewed popularity of hats as a fashion item

Moreover, producers of jewellery in Valenza and the finest silks in Como face competition from the Chinese. But for every challenge there is a solution, and the encouragement of regional specialities and entrepreneurship by people like Romano Prodi has had a positive effect. In recent years high fashion, particularly couture, has received recognition as an art form, a particularly multi-skilled art, using different luxury materials in innovative ways to produce wearable works of art.

David Lane also mentioned other aspects of outstanding Italian design - if you see a Ferrari from Maranello or a Maserati from Modena in an English town, you feel that the town has truly arrived! Food is another success story. Not only do we eat out in the numerous Italian restaurants in any sizeable town throughout Europe, but we are also likely to buy Italian ingredients to cook for ourselves, and it is a mystery what children ate before the arrival of pasta.

What better place to end than with the impressive rise of prosecco in the market place. According to the New York Times, global sales have grown by double digit percentages since 1998 with approximately 150 million bottles being produced annually.

Thank you David Lane for a fascinating and information-rich talk.

Rachel Grimmer

The History of the Jews in Sicily

Susan Kikoler, Honorary Director of the British Italian Society, began her talk by telling us that there were 30,000 Jews in Sicily in 1492: more than on the whole of the mainland and constituting one fifth of the island's population. They came originally from the Eastern Mediterranean, possibly with the Phoenicians or the Greeks, and were attracted to Sicily because of its central position in the Mediterranean and an ideal point from which to conduct commerce with Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. By the time of the Romans, Jews were long settled in Sicily and, as Cicero witnessed, were exempted from certain taxes normally paid to Rome.

The redoubtable St Paul stayed in Syracuse for three days, and in the Catacombs there are some frescoed motifs which could equally be Jewish or Christian. Other traces of Jewish life include the so-called *Grotto of the Artichoke* in Noto, which in fact depicts a menorah, and in the Castello Ursino in Catania a builder left a menorah in some plaster rendering as a secret sign during the 13th century. Syracuse also has an area called the Giudecca, where ritual baths for purification were carved into the living rock in the 7th century. In 1147 the Norman King Roger II conquered Corinth and brought Jews back with him on account of their skill in weaving silk and even had them manufacture his Christian coronation robes. Indeed, a common Italian Jewish surname is still 'della Seta' – of the silk. The Normans granted Jews full civic rights and Jewish law was recognised as one of the four codes of law. Multi-ethnic Sicily has its

Susan Kikoler

own version of the Rosetta Stone called the *Stone of the Four Languages* (1149). It is inscribed with statements in the Greek, Latin, Arabic and Judeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew letters) languages.

Groups of Jews from Jerba settled on the island of Favignana, off the north-west coast of Sicily, where they were known for dyeing cloth with henna and indigo. But both industries died with the 1492 Expulsion, when it is assumed those Jews chose to flee, rather than convert. Western Sicily has some of the best preserved archives for notaries' papers, which show that Jews in Sciacca and Trapani were allowed to act as witnesses for legal documents. In general, Jews on the island were not segregated into a ghetto, but lived side by side with Christians and even traded in partnership with the local nobility.

The Jews in Sicily were allowed to undertake any kind of work they wished and not limited to money-lending and rag-picking as was the case in 16th century Italy. Many were good goldsmiths and *Aurefice* became a common Jewish name. They also specialised in carving coral: indeed, out of 30 master carvers listed on the island, 27 were Jewish. Exceptionally, this speciality continued even after 1492. In Syracuse the Jews were also involved in the slave trade. Some Jews were allowed to call themselves bankers, rather than money-lenders, a more respectable calling, and it was one Samuel Sala who arranged the ransom for the Archbishop of Syracuse from Arab pirates.

They were also heavily involved in the sugar-cane and tuna-fish trades; in the latter case credited with inventing the preservation of the fish in oil, after cooking. The wine trade was also important, as they needed to produce their special kosher wine. Indeed they made a lasting culinary contribution in Sicily: for example, a famous street-food in Palermo today is *pane con la milza* - bread filled with offal. This was a Medieval Jewish invention to use up the parts of the animal not allowed to be eaten under kosher law, and so was cooked and sold on to the Gentiles. Jews also introduced aubergines to mainland Italy and made *caciocavallo* cheese – so popular with non-Jews that special laws were passed to reserve a portion for the Jews themselves.

Jewish doctors were highly regarded. In Polizzi Generosa in the 15th century, out of 6,000 inhabitants, no fewer than 1,000 were Jewish. Jewish people were not allowed to attend university, but could learn by apprenticeship and then take an examination to be licensed. Several Sicilian kings had favourite and trusted Jewish doctors, while in the enlightened city of Catania, Verdimura became the first Jewish woman doctor in 1376.

The Emperor Frederick II positively encouraged Jewish and Arabic scholars to come to his court as translators, as he wanted to open up the study of Aristotle's philosophy. Some of the great Jewish scholars owned significant libraries of classical manuscripts and they led circles of poets, mathematicians and philosophers.

During the Early Renaissance, Pico della Mirandola, leader of the Neo-Platonists, read texts brought over by visiting Sicilian Jews and was particularly dependent for his studies on translations made by Flavio Mitridate, one of the most shadowy, yet fascinating, figures of this period. The first person to translate the Koran into Latin and to translate three books of the Jewish mystical teachings of the Kabbala for Pope Sixtus IV, Flavio Mitridate was in fact born a Jew, Shmuel ben Nissim, in a village near Sciacca..

A brilliant mind, he converted to Christianity, taking the name Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada, after his aristocratic patron. After moving to Rome, he eventually had to flee to Germany, perhaps after being involved in a murder plot. He returned to Italy under the name of Flavio Mitridate but was imprisoned in Viterbo and then disappeared. So many mysteries surround him and Andrea Camilleri, author of the Inspector Montalbano stories, has recently written a novel, *Inseguendo un'ombra*, in which he imagines the life of this complex and influential character.

Thus, the Jewish communities of Sicily were commercially thriving and intellectually vibrant. But this happy situation was broken by the Spanish Edict of Expulsion in 1492. There were appeals against it even by non-Jews, but King Ferdinand allowed them merely a few more months of residence. At least 7,000 fled East, via Dalmatia, then Greece, to Salonika, and then even further on to the Middle East. The Inquisition did not take action against the remaining Jews until 1510, but within a generation the community had disappeared forever leaving the island all the poorer, from food and textile production to classical learning and philosophy.

Charles Avery

The Garden of Eden: A Secret Garden in Venice

It could only happen in Venice. You go to visit your friends and come across the gates of Eden. However, things are not always what they seem and finding the key proved to be quite a challenge. This secret garden in the Giudecca near the Redentore church was too intriguing not to be drawn into it. But it took the Danish translator, writer and lecturer, Annemette Fogh, two years and over a thousand emails to gain access.

With a touch of magic, she transported us from the heart of Mayfair to the heart of Venice, with the fascinating tale of the Garden of Eden and a wonderful evocation of a special place and time. We could vividly see a multitude of writers, poets, artists and royalty populating the garden. We could almost hear their conversations.

But let's take a step back to the beginning of this adventure. It all started in 2008. A chance encounter of Annemette Fogh with a mysterious gate, bearing the number 138 on Fondamenta Rio della Croce and giving a tantalising glimpse into a secret world. The very long red brick wall turned out to be the boundary of the Garden of Eden, a nine-acre garden/jungle completely inaccessible and entirely closed to the public, a national monument but a private property. It was not easy to understand who owned it and what its history was. This fascinating tale, accompanied by beautiful pictures, is narrated in her book *The Garden of Eden – A Secret Garden in Venice*.

Hearing the tale directly from the person who managed to get access to this extraordinary place was intriguing. We learnt that this garden – located on the island of Giudecca between the Redentore and Zitelle churches - was created from 1884 onwards by an English couple who lived in Venice for 50 years, Frederick and Caroline Eden (née Jekyll). They never actually lived in the *palazzina* at the side of the garden but used to go to the garden every day by gondola from their apartment in Palazzo Barbarigo on the Grand Canal. The former orchard turned garden, became - throughout the *Belle Epoque* – a meeting place for artists of all kinds and the centre of anything cultural in Venice. Henry James, Robert Browning, Marcel Proust, Rainer Maria Rilke, John Singer Sargent and Claude Monet were all frequent visitors to this place as was Baron Corvo, Gabriele D'Annunzio and Eleonora Duse were well acquainted with the garden where D'Annunzio was inspired to write his novel *Il Fuoco* .

Frederick Eden died in 1916 but Caroline stayed on until 1920. In 1928 the garden was bought by Major James Horlick who was close to the exiled Greek royal family and gave it to Aspasia Manos, the former princess of Greece. She lived in the *palazzina* for most of the rest of her life. During the 1930s, Aspasia employed the well-known designer Norah Lindsay to make improvements to the garden, which was visited by many European royals.

Annemette Fogh

Aspasia's daughter, Alexandra, returned to live there after the war with her husband the former King Peter II of Yugoslavia and remained there after their divorce until 1970.

After suffering severe damage from the 1966 flood the garden was never the same again. The American scholar Elisabeth Gardner began the restoration of the garden in 1970 and tried to do her best to return it to its former glory.

In 1979 the well-known Austrian architect and artist Friedensreich Hundertwasser, who knew Aspasia, bought the garden having been approached by the legal representatives of Alexandra asking whether he wanted to take it over.

Hundertwasser had an ecological mindset and approach and believed nature should be left to take its course. When he took over the garden he ordered that nature should not be interfered with and that the garden be allowed to grow wild. He never spent long periods of time there and did not live in the *palazzina* but in the small gardener's old cottage that our speaker described as 'frozen in time' when she eventually visited the place.

He died in 2000 and the garden is now owned by the Hundertwasser Foundation in Vienna. Its doors are closed to the world and this 'sleeping beauty' is left undisturbed. Annemette Fogh had the privilege (but described by her as a 'sad and melancholic experience') of being allowed to stroll in the garden and imagine its golden era, a privilege she shared with us.

Eugenio Bosco

Migrant Memories: Cultural History, Cinema and the Italian Post-War Diaspora in Britain

Margherita Sprio

Following the Society's AGM on 30th June 2016, members and their guests were given a talk by Dr Sprio of the University of Westminster. In her research for her book: *Migrant Memories* she interviewed 200 first- generation Italian immigrants who had left southern Italy for Britain in the 1950s and 60s, and a few of their children (second-generation British-born Italians like herself), and their grandchildren (third-generation). The interviewees had mainly settled in southern Britain in and around Bedford, Bletchley and Peterborough, although around 3000 men from southern Italy were also employed in the London Brick Company between 1951 and 1955. The acrid smell of sulphur from the factory could hardly have been more gratifying than the poverty and hunger they had suffered in Italy, but at least the workers were guaranteed a wage and the certainty of a brighter future for their children.

It was especially in the smaller communities such as Bedford that the question of identity arose. This was less relevant in large cities such as London and Glasgow, where the development of a more confident expatriate community, with its own sense of identity, was more likely even if it did not extend as far as assimilation and integration. For Dr Sprio's interviewees, many of them in their 60s and 70s at the time of her research, it was their memories of the Italy they had left behind that gave them a sense of identity.

The memories were essentially visual, as most of these Italian economic migrants were almost illiterate, had not travelled within Italy, and often spoke only the local dialect rather than Italian. And the memories were anchored in their experience of films - it's important to remember that cinema-going was at its height in the 1950s, when so many Italians emigrated. But the films recalled by the interviewees were not the ones we associate with the history of cinema, in which Italian Neo-Realism, as epitomised by Vittorio de Sica's *Ladri di Biciclette,* played such a pivotal role. After all, Neo-Realism offered no uplifting hope for the future.

It was to Italian melodrama that the migrant turned to cement their sense of identity. These films, based inevitably on the theme of redemption after a series of vicissitudes or at least disruptionand pervaded by a feeling that sacrifices have to be made for life to be fruitful, were brought to a happy conclusion by the undying love of the hero, and/or the passivity of the heroine. They presented an ideal aid to first-generation Italian emigrants to teach their children how to behave and how to view themselves as Italians in a foreign land. Raffaello Mattarazzo (1909-66) was the first director who didn't make his popular audience feel patronised, in films such as *Tormento* (1950), *Vortice* (1954) and *Angelo Bianco* (1955). Amedeo Nazzari (1907-77) was an actor of easy good looks, who turned down quality roles to play the leading man in many of Matarazzo's films and became the hero of both men and women cinema-goers. The Greek-born actress Yvonne Sanson (1926-2003), with her rather coarse but expressive, pretty face and voluptuous figure, appealed to the ordinary Italian woman. Together, they coloured the storytelling and behaviour, and crystallised the identity, of Italian émigrés to Britain.

These melodramas, which never gained an international reputation and were mostly forgotten even in Italy, were repeatedly quoted by Dr Sprio's interviewees, though their recollection of one film would often merge with details of another, similarity in plot and emotion being a constant in this genre. The storytellers amongst Italian immigrants were mostly men, as only in large cities did women go to the cinema in 1950s Italy. And even the men would probably have gone to the cinema only when they were sent away from home on military service. Many recalled the posters advertising the films and one interviewee broke down in tears when presented with a poster of the actor Amedeo Nazzari. Nostalgia, self-identification, hopes and regrets, all re-lived decades later.

Inevitably, though, second-generation, British-born Italians identified neither with their parents' evocation of an Italy they didn't recognise when they did eventually visit their ancestral homeland, nor with their status as British citizens. It fell to the third generation to feel at home in Britain, though retaining that 'otherness' which characterized them. One only need think of Anthony Minghella, one of the first to go to university and then to become one of the most outstanding film directors of his generation.

Dr Sprio's talk highlighted the complexities of cultural history and migration at a time when a debate about immigration in Britain (and elsewhere) has become politically and culturally urgent.

Patrizia Dina

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