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RIVISTA

No. 395 2012/13 The Magazine of the British-Italian Society

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EDITORIAL

Dear Members

Once again, The British-Italian Society has had a busy and varied calendar of activities over the past twelve months. Attendance at events has been good, we are pleased to report. Without a doubt, the highlight was the 10th November 2011 celebration of the Society's 70th birthday carried out in tandem with a fund-raiser. You will see some photographs of this soirée in the centrefold of Rivista. We could not have been luckier than in having the generous offer of the Tomasso Brothers Fine Arts gallery as our hosting venue. This hidden gem just off the Pimlico Road is an intriguing warren of multi-level spaces, each with its own stunning complement of bronze and marble statuary, paintings and *objets*. The two charming brothers were on hand to greet guests, mingle and tell us about their collection. Given this most theatrical setting for a party, it should come as no surprise that 110 guests came to the party. Further funds that evening – which all go towards our charity's educational and cultural initiatives -- were collected from the busy sale of raffle tickets for the eleven prizes handed out to the lucky winners. Canapés and aperitifs got things off to a good start and had everyone in the mood for a bouncy jazz concert on the ground floor, courtesy of the Tommaso Starace Quartet. Guests then returned to the upper floor for a delicious buffet dinner. Our Chairman Charles de Chassiron then invited Signora Lidia Pontecorvo, wife of the Deputy Head of the Italian Embassy, to help cut the celebratory birthday cake.

In this issue, we open with a descriptive rundown of many of the BIS lectures over the last 12 months, before moving on to a wide range of other topics. We offer you David Lingard's sombre piece on the state of bird life throughout Italy, another one on the story on The British School at Rome. Others are on Italian Gold Medallists of the Royal Geographical Society, a cultural "double-hitter" from Mantua, something on an unlikely attraction in Bari, Ugo Foscolo's life in London, Italian athletes at the summer Olympics in London, a touring forkful of Piedmontese cooking and some thoughtful reflections on and comparisons of two recent films from England and Italy sent to us by perhaps our youngest contributor, Guglielmo Tosato. Once again, you will see that we've given you something in both languages.

No editorship is all plain sailing. Each year has been a new challenge. Editorially speaking, we are trying to head off in as many directions as we can: sports, history, art, music, humour, literature, food and nature. Personally, we would like to see science, medicine and business added to that mix to make the magazine truly rounded. So, any members who feel grounded in those fields please come forward with proposals!

You may be wondering why on earth a chair has landed up on the front cover of RIVISTA this time. Samuel Johnson, paraphrased, thought this item of furniture "the throne of human felicity". A perch on which to rest weary limbs. A place to read a good book in comfort. A plinth for contemplation. All of these things, of course. But look carefully at "our" chair. It's different, probably like no design you have ever seen before. Note that curious line of arches. This chair was created by Duilio Cambellotti, one of Italy's finest and most inventive artists of the early twentieth century who was given the bold commission to shape one of Puglia's most interesting sites. For our back cover, we feature a nostalgic tinted postcard view of Genoa's Piazza del Banco San Giorgio, today's Piazza Caricamento. Half way along the row of buildings is a crenellated tower, the focal point of our article by Massimo Bacigalupo, entitled "Pavane for a Defunct Hotel."

We have welcomed your contributions all along. The deadline for final submissions is the end of April. We would also welcome your thoughts on where we have succeeded and where we could be stronger. Our contact details appear on this page. In the meantime, we take this opportunity to wish you a Buon Natale and a Happy New Year.

Alexandra Richardson and Georgina Gordon-Ham

PRESIDENT NAPOLITANO'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MESSAGE FOR HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano was the guest of honour of Ambassador Christopher Prentice at a reception held at Villa Wolkonsky in Rome on the day marking the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne on 6th February 1952 (her coronation took place on 2nd June 1953). Prime Minister Mario Monti and Lord (Douglas) Hurd were among the guests. These were the beginning of a series of events celebrating the 60 years of The Queen's reign.

President Giorgio Napolitano sent the following message to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II:

"Nel corso del Regno di Vostra Maestà, la nazione britannica ha raggiunto straordinari traguardi di progresso civile e sociale, contribuendo attivamente al rafforzamento della comunità internazionale, alla solidarietà atlantica e alla costruzione europea. Nello spirito della salda amicizia tra i nostri popoli, testimoniata anche dai nostri graditi incontri - a titolo personale e a nome di tutto il popolo italiano formulo a Vostra Maestà i piu' fervidi auguri di serenita' e benessere, e sinceri voti per la felice prosecuzione del proprio Regno e per la prosperità della Famiglia Reale e di tutto il popolo britannico".

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Miss Selenas Afilani
Ms Roberta Artioli
Mr Jonathan D. Astbury
Ms Primrose Bell
Mrs Rosalind Brooke Ross
Mr Charles Burdett
Mr A. Caprarica
Ms Merces Castro
Ms Claudia Ciampoletti
Ms Susan Connolly
Miss Irene Fuchs
Dr William Grech
Ms Helena Henderson
Ms Kirsty Hudson
Mr M. Jakubowski
Mrs Annie Lanigan
Mr Gordon Lazenbury
Dr Lidia Lonergan
Mr Davide Lovato
Mr Francesco Maroso
Mrs Mary Ellen Mathewson
Mr Meyer
Mrs Anna Mondavio
Mr and Mrs Martin Owen
Mr F. Petteni
Ms P. Pieretti
Ms Sarah Quill Life
Ms Elsa Ravazzolo
Ms Y. Rouholamin
Mr Luigi Sasso
Mr Christopher Schultz
Mr L. Seralvo
The Tomasso Brothers
Mr & Mrs M. Trowell
Mr Verdon
Ms Whitney

Seasons' Greetings

TO ALL, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING CORPORATE MEMBERS:

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and also to all the organisations which have contributed towards Rivista, with a special thank you to The Italian Cultural Institute and The Italian State Tourist Board ENIT.

For THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY EVENTS

Venues and exact dates had not been finalised at the time of going to press. This information will be supplied by Elisabetta Murgia, the Events Secretary, closer to the date(s) of the events.

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NATIONALISM IN 19th CENTURY ITALIAN PAINTING

By Alexandra Richardson

Opening last autumn's calendar of BIS events on 20th September was a fascinating and well-structured talk given by Christopher Garibaldi entitled "Nationalism in 19th century Italian painting". Garibaldi has worn several hats during his professional life, working with English Heritage at Walmar Castle, cataloguing the silver collections at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle and currently enjoying an involvement with horse racing as well.

Aided by well chosen slides to illustrate his points, Garibaldi started by confessing that his research initiated with a host of questions: How was art reflected in the Risorgimento? Was there a "national art"? Indeed was there a single Risorgimento? (his conclusion there was that there were many Risorgimentos) .

He gave as his starting point the early Napoleonic era in Italy when neoclassical works began to raise the consciousness of citizenship and of national unity. We were shown an image of the famed and sensual Antonio Canova sculpture (executed 1805-1808) of Paolina Borghese in all her neoclassical splendour in the role of Venus Victorious. A slide image of another of Canova's works, the monumental tomb of the poet Vittorio Alfieri (1749-1803) at the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence portrays the nascent sense of patriotism, as the draped figure of a grieving Italy stands mourning over the departed poet.

Garibaldi then showed us a number of paintings by the Venice-born Francesco Hayez (1791-1882), who was renowned for his historical canvasses and political allegories. Openly portraying the yearnings of nationhood, freed from the Napoleonic yoke, was a risky business in those days. And thus Hayez, as well as others, resorted to subterfuge, weaving in sly symbols that managed to slip through the censorial net. In one portrait of a seemingly innocent nude, for example, Garibaldi guided us towards noticing the Hayez palette: very symbolically, as a metaphor for Italy, the artist had employed red, white and green as his principal colours. In another work, *I Profughi di Parga* (1831) – a painting now hanging in Milan - the painter shows his sympathy for the Greek War of Independence. Elsewhere, in his *Crusaders thirsting near Jerusalem*, that city seems to be a metaphor for Rome.

Image after image in Christopher Garibaldi's slide presentation bore the message of rising nationalism. In some, the flag of Savoy appears so subtly that it needed to be pointed out by the speaker. In other canvasses of household scenes, one spots miniscule images of Giuseppe Garibaldi hanging unobtrusively on the wall. Then, there were portraits and places, too, glorifying all that was seen to be embodying Italian nationalism – Vincenzo Camuccini's depiction of Pope Pius VII just after his release from captivity by Napoleon, a celebratory view of the Quirinale palace in Rome, ladies stitching together a *tricolore* or Italian flag. We were shown a number of portraits, of course, of Giuseppe Garibaldi, as it would be appropriate, finishing up with a minutely detailed scene of Silvestro Lega's Death of Mazzini, painted in 1873.

THE 2011 LECONFIELD LECTURE – ITALO CALVINO: A LIFE IN LETTERS

By Sandra Fox

Following a warm welcome from Claudia Toffolo of the Italian Cultural Institute, Professor Martin McLaughlin treated us to a breathless and breathtaking survey of Italo Calvino, his biography, letters and the inspiration that he drew from European, especially English, literature – much of which he read in the original.

This essayist, journalist, author and publisher died suddenly in 1985 having been born in Havana, Cuba in 1923 (where his father was then working) and he is survived by his wife and daughter. His writing encompassed a whole range of genres from neo-realism at the beginning of his writing career to fantasy and science fiction towards the end, with journalism, short stories and essays in between. His influence on Italian literature was immeasurable, whilst he was the most translated contemporary Italian writer at the time of his death and about to deliver an influential series of lectures at Harvard – which were published posthumously as *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, in 1986. But, we were told by Professor McLaughlin, the original intention of his family was that he should be an agronomist like his father. Indeed, both Calvino's parents were academics in the field of natural sciences. His mother, Eva Mameli, was a botanist and one of the first women in Italy to be given a Chair at a university, whilst his father, Mario was a distinguished tropical agronomist and botanist. Sundry uncles and aunts were

Professor Martin McLaughlin

also scientists, so why would Italo want to be anything other than a scientist? Why indeed, especially as we were told that he grew up (the family returned to Italy when he was two years old) between a palatial place, Villa Meridiana, in San Remo and his father's family farm in San Giovanni Battista in the hills behind San Remo. Italo and his brother, Floriano, spent most weekends travelling to this latter place to help, very often returning with the fruits of their labour. Here Italo would have observed his father's experiments in growing grapefruit and avocados, for whose introduction to Italy Mario Calvino was responsible and Italo Calvino, himself, would have been thoroughly immersed in the then current European agronomy. All a good apprenticeship for a future agronomist, or was it?

With that background it was automatic to think that the boy, Italo, would become an agronomist or a botanist. But an older father, self-absorbed in his work and a rather austere mother would not have stopped to question what was going on inside their son. Professor McLaughlin told us that from an early age Calvino had always wanted to write. Maybe this is what he did when his classmates at the Liceo Gian Domenico Cassini were having their religious education, from which he was exempt because his parents were atheists and free thinkers. But who knows what he did then, other than learn how to justify his parents anti-conformist stance, something that in later life he acknowledged had given him great tolerance of other people and their views, especially religious ones. What we did learn from Professor McLaughlin, though, was that one of his earliest talents to emerge was that of a cartoonist. That he was cartoonist of no mean skill was in no doubt and we had the evidence of this before our eyes as Professor McLaughlin showed us some examples of his work, such as a cartoon of Mussolini on horseback and self-portrait cartoons and explained that Calvino had some of these published under an early pen name of Santiago.

Whatever his inner longings, he enrolled at Turin University in 1941 to study agronomy, as his family had wanted him to do. Calvino later had to move to Florence University in 1943 as Turin University had to be closed due to bombing raids. This was followed by his call-up for conscription into the army of Mussolini's puppet Republic of Salò in 1944. At this point, Calvino took the decision to join the partisans (he joined one of the Communist Brigades, initially because they were the best organised in his area) and fought against Mussolini and the fascists – as also did his brother. He ended up fighting in the Ligurian hills that he knew so well.

At the end of the war, Italo Calvino emerged from the hills as a communist but also determined not to return to agronomy. So whilst he returned to Turin University, he took a post-war 'fast' degree in English not agronomy, with his graduating thesis on Joseph Conrad. The speaker commented that it is quite clear from this thesis that Calvino had read most of Conrad in the original English. Indeed, we were told that Calvino had read much English literature both in Italian and English as he was growing up and throughout his life, in particular Kipling, Conrad, Stevenson and even Defoe and that these authors would all have a profound influence on Calvino's writing.

Whilst at Turin University, Calvino spent his spare time writing short stories and his writing career began with the publication of one of his neo-realistic works, a short story entitled *'Andato al comando'* in 1945. On graduating in 1947 he had a brief brush with publishing when he worked for Einaudi but he soon left there to write for l'*Unità*, the official Communist daily, reviewing books and films and writing socio-political articles. In this period Calvino's first book was published, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno (The Path to the Spiders' Nests)*. It proved very popular and won him much praise, including the Premio Riccione prize.

The success of his first novel was not swiftly followed by other successful books. Indeed, Calvino struggled with his second novel about post-war life and factory workers. He wrote two books in this period, neither of which was of any great merit then. In the end Calvino said:

"I began doing what came naturally to me – that is, following the memory of things I have loved best since boyhood. Instead of making myself write the book I *ought* to write, the novel that was expected of me, I conjured up a book I myself would have liked to read, the sort by an unknown writer, from another age and another country, discovered in an attic". (Calvino, 'Introduction by the author', *Our Ancestors*, vii.)

What resulted was *Il visconte dimezzato (The Cloven Viscount,* 1952), a fantasy novel which not only ended this first period of writer's block but displayed the beginnings of Calvino's fantasy writing. This led on to his search and subsequent collation of Italian fairy stories/folk tales (*Fiabe Italiane*), a commission from Giulio Einaudi who had wondered if it was possible to compile an Italian equivalent of the Brothers Grimm. But, Professor McLaughlin commented, in many ways the early 1950s were quite a fallow period for Calvino until, in 1957, while struggling to write another realist work, he wrote a new fantasy in barely two months (for which he also drew some cartoons), *Il barone rampante (The Baron in the Trees,* 1957).

To catalogue all of Calvino's work here would take too long. Suffice it to say that he continued to publish but around the time in 1962 that he met his wife, an Argentine translator, Esther Judith Singer ("Chichita") he began to write his cosmicomic stories, centred on man and his place in the cosmic system but always with a humorous slant. After they had settled in Rome, he began publishing these in 1965 in *Il Caffè*, a literary magazine. His cosmic fantasy writing went from strength to strength and some feel reached its zenith in *Le città invisibili (Invisible Cities,* 1972), an attempt to retell Marco Polo's story but in an experimental, almost poetic way. Many of these later works were accompanied by complex diagrams of the links between, for example, the cities of *Invisible Cities*. We were shown some of these diagrams, which illustrated the author's ideas of the complexity of literature. Then, Professor McLaughlin explained that, before the last two books of his life, between about 1973 and 1979, Calvino suffered from writer's block again. As he was in a creative crisis, Calvino decided to write about this topic and produced a complex novel containing ten unfinished novels inside it, *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore (If on a winter's night a traveller,* 1979).

Having given us an excellent biography of Calvino, Professor McLaughlin turned to Calvino's letters. He explained that he wrote letters throughout his childhood to schoolfriends such as Eugenio Scalfari, who later co-founded *la Repubblica*. We were told that many of these included a discussion of the existence of God whom they called Filippo! Then there was a huge gap in the war years until a small scrap of a letter in 1943 to his parents, clearly written in hiding and telling them that he and his brother were alive and well. There were letters to Cesare Pavese, too, in which Calvino showed tremendous confidence in his literary taste and another very brief one to the writer Domenico Rea in which he defended his laconic style. Luckily, Professor McLaughlin had provided us with a 'handout' of quotes from the letters, so that we could follow what Calvino had written to his various friends. These letters demonstrated new insight into Calvino and his early-age precocity plus determination to be a writer. They mention his early projects such as a play (originally he had thought that he would write for theatre) and his desire later in life to experiment with different forms of writing and different approaches, such as cartoon writing. Professor McLaughlin also told us how the letters demonstrated a continuing anxiety about how his books would stand the test of time and about any posthumous publication. Calvino's letters also displayed his Calvinistic work ethic (his very early education was in a Protestant elementary private school run by Waldensians), his generosity to his fellow writers and translators and his willingness to respond to everyone, regardless of who they were, hence his many letters replying to schoolchildren. The sources for all of these letters, we were told, were partly in the Calvino archive in Rome, together with those of private individuals who have kept his correspondence with them.

Professor McLaughlin left us stunned by this interesting character, his humanity on the one hand, his political commitments on the other and the tremendous variety in his literature and its enduring influence and legacy.

THE SOCIETY'S CHRISTMAS DINNER 2011

By Charles de Chassiron

The Society's 2011 Christmas dinner was again held at the Grange Fitzrovia Hotel in London, and 85 members and their guests enjoyed a convivial (if rather crowded) evening, enlivened by a glass of welcoming prosecco and then a very good talk at the start of the meal.

In this year of anniversaries (Italy's 150th, the Society's 70th) it was fitting that the speaker we had invited to talk about 'Italy: A troubled Birthday' was the doyen of Italian TV foreign correspondents, Antonio Caprarica, whose face is one of the most famous on Italian television. He was accompanied by his wife Iolanta. Since 1988, Antonio has been RAI's foreign correspondent in a succession of cities, including Moscow, Paris and London (twice, as he is on his second tour here at present), and he has held senior jobs in Rome in between. He is a successful novelist too, and has also written a series of witty and wise popular historical works, including *'Dio Ci Salvi dagli Inglesi ..o No!?'.* This is about his first time around in London – including an entertaining description of the State Banquet held for President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi in 2004, at which he and I were both present. Most recently *'La Classe non è Acqua',* about the British aristocracy, which was my Christmas reading subsequently. His most successful recent history book has been *'C'era una volta in Italia',* published just before the start of 2011, in which he imagines himself travelling backwards in time as a special correspondent to the Italy of the Risorgimento era. The book vividly depicts Turin, the new capital of the Italian Kingdom from 1861, and also covers Habsburg Milan, Papal Rome, and ex-Bourbon Naples, as well as setting out some of Italy's late 19th century history, especially the civil war in the South against the 'brigands'. As a Southerner himself, from Lecce, Antonio has a real feel for that theme. I had read the book avidly while visiting Turin during the autumn.

Antonio Caprarica and his wife Iolanta

Antonio presented the book's themes in a most engaging way. He began by referring to D'Azeglio's famous rebuttal of Cavour's dying words –'Italy may be made, but not the Italians'- and admitted that Italy is still a divided, often fractious society. He noted slyly that Cavour was the first and only Italian Prime Minister for whom the British have ever had true regard. Italy's problems began when the first Parliament assembled – there was no proper accommodation for them in Turin in early 1861, and no allowances either. All the new leaders generally disliked each other, and resentment at the imposition of Piedmontese rule in the South was just swept aside as the incoming prefetti took charge. Antonio showed how few voters actually participated in the first elections, but he also pointed out that

enthusiasm for Unification was not an aristocratic or minority taste. This was illustrated by the death toll during the Cinque Giornate uprising against the Austrians in 1848: of 338 dead, 250 were workers, and fully 38 were women. In fact the author highlighted the role of women in the Risorgimento, from the feisty Princess Cristina Belgioioso to Garibaldi's companion Jessie White Mario to less famous women. As a good Pugliese, he was also particularly interesting (as the book is, of course in more detail) about the difficult relationship between North and South in the decades after Unification.

In conclusion, Antonio drew some striking parallels with the UK, hazarding a guess that Italy will not be the first West European country to disintegrate – Spain and the UK are rather more likely candidates, if only because Catalonia and Scotland really did exist as separate states in the past, which 'Padania' never did. He did however confess that in the late 70s, the years of Red Brigade terrorism, he had feared not only for his own personal safety in Rome but for the collapse of the Italian State itself.

There was much food for thought here at the end of the anniversary year. But we all turned as quickly as the rather wayward service at the hotel allowed to enjoying the dinner of mozzarella, turkey and tiramisù which followed this stimulating talk. We are all grateful to Antonio Caprarica for rounding off the BIS's event year so well.

MAFIA BROTHERHOODS

By Susan Kikoler

Once upon a time three Spanish knights, Osso, Mastrosso and Carcagnosso, fled from Spain to Favignano, an island off Sicily, having avenged their dishonoured sister. Over the next twenty-nine years they created the concept of the Honoured Society from their sense of injustice and of brotherhood. From these men sprang the three Italian criminal organisations – the Cosa Nostra or Sicilian Mafia (Ossa), the Camorra of Naples (Mastrosso) and the 'Ndrangheta of Calabria (Carcagnosso), where, at a trial at Palmi in 1897, a witness first recounted this founding myth.

John Dickie's new book *Mafia Brotherhoods*, (formerly *Blood Brotherhoods*), follows the international success of *Cosa Nostra,* his first book on the Mafia, and was written in response to readers' questions. He sets out to debunk the myth and meticulously dissect the reasons why and how these three organisations originated, developed and survive today. As he told BIS members on 25th January, Mafia History is a young field of scholarship and he believes it important to bring the results of such research to the widest audience.

John Dickie traces the origins of all three groups to the early nineteenth century and the tumultuous years of the fight for Italian independence and unity. The absolutist Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was fertile ground for secret societies and clubs, like the *Carbonari*, as the only means of political opposition. In turn they influenced the criminal elements which recognised the advantages of the Freemasons' model. Unearthing previously unknown or overlooked material he cites the memoirs of Sigismondo Castromediano, Duke of Morciano, whose experience of the prison system in Naples in the 1850s testified to the rule of the Camorra within the gaol. Inmates were taxed for any privilege – *pizzo* referred to a place obtained to lay a bed.

Outside in the city, the Camorra was present controlling gambling and extorsion and in the violence of the Risorgimento both sides soon found these ferocious enforcers a useful arm to control the strife. Thus the Honoured Society can be considered a bastard by-product of Italian unification. Initially considered as sects, a Freemasonry of criminals, there was even a romanticised 1899

John Dickie

play in Naples, Edoardo Minichini's *The Foundation of the Camorra*, and folksongs were inspired by the legendary 'Ndrangheta figure of Giuseppe Musolino, "The King of Aspromonte", a loner who killed seven men and injured another seven. The 'Ndrangheta had emerged from the prison system in the 1880s when the right to vote was expanded. Politics became more important and thus more lucrative and politicians too began to rely on organised violence.

Although the book finishes at the end of World War II, in his lecture John Dickie continued to assess the state of these organisations today. From a shared language and code of honour, (*omertà* is derived from *umiltà*), their activities have diverged into a dual business model: the trafficking of arms, narcotics, illegal waste or tobacco and the protection racket which has now become a subtle infiltration of both the legal and illegal economies. It can now be in the interests of the local business community to come to terms with criminals to avoid labour disputes or problems with tax authorities. They have become a Shadow State which infiltrates politics, obtaining state funds and building contracts.

There is a difference in structure between the three groups. Cosa Nostra is formed like a pyramid with a base of ten "soldiers"-

decina -and a *capodecina*. Two or more *decine* are a *famiglia*, a term in use since the 1930s, with a *Capofamiglia*. Three *Famiglie* form a *Mandamento* and each *Capomandamento* has a seat on the *Commissione* which acts as a court giving ultimate approval for murders and business dealings.

The Camorra as a secret society was destroyed by the Cuocolo trial in 1911-1912. Today it is an anarchic archipelago of violent, unstable gangs fighting turf wars. Live fast, die young seems to be its motto as opposed to the image of the typical Mafia dynasty with its ancient Sicilian boss.

The 'Ndrangheta had long been considered a fragmented local organisation but the recent "Operazione Crimine", which began in July 2010 with the arrest of three hundred men including the eighty-year-old Domenico Oppedisano, has revealed a single highly structured organisation with Oppedisano as *capocrimine* - chief of crime – of the "Province", the 'Ndrangheta's supreme co-ordinating body which is also divided into three *mandamenti* or precincts, covering the three zones of Reggio Calabria. The 'Ndrangheta is also now closely linked to the South American cocaine cartels.

For John Dickie these three organisations represent a permanent emergency that the Italian government has yet to dominate. Although the Honoured Society died out in Naples through its inability to adapt, other groups have proved more able to learn and move on. Once members were easily distinguished by tattoos, scars and hairstyle or dress, now they are camouflaged into society.

In 2011 John Dickie was invited to present *Mafia Brotherhoods* at Lamezia Terme in Calabria, one of fifty books and talks at an Anti-Mafia Festival. There were packed houses at every session even late at night. Something is stirring in the South of Italy. There are businessmen and women who refuse to pay the *pizzo*, courageous prosecutors and journalists like Lirio Abbate, one of 140 journalists living under death threat, who worked with the police to capture Provenzano. *Mafia Brotherhoods* is a sobering, incisive and original contribution to the understanding of this phenomenon and the fight for its extermination.

THE BEST GARDENS IN ITALY – AN ILLUSTRATED TALK BY KIRSTY McLEOD AND PRIMROSE BELL

By Diana Darlington

Kirsty's talk to BIS members on 29th February, so beautifully illustrated by photographer Primrose, was based on their book published in 2011 under the same title and took our capacity audience on an itinerary from the north of Italy to Sicily visiting delightful gardens in the Veneto, the Lakes, Liguria, Tuscany, Le Marche and Lazio along the way.

Our journey began on the shores of Lake Maggiore at Il Giardino di Villa San Remigio. This early twentieth-century garden was a testament to the love affair between cousins, Silvio, a musician and pupil of Liszt and Sophie, a painter, whose families opposed their marriage. They transformed a modest chalet into a palatial villa and then in 1905, the garden via a series of themed terraces illustrating love, happiness, melancholy, sighs, memories, using numerous statues by Orazio Marinali. In its heyday, this garden was tended by 60 gardeners but is now falling into decay.

We then moved on to Lake Como's Villa del Balbianello set on a wooded peninsula with breathtaking views. Bought as a retreat by Cardinal Angelo Durini in the eighteenth century, it has a beautiful loggia at the top of the garden, on either side of which is his library and his music room, where he would entertain his cultured friends beneath the motto "Fay ce que voudrais" – "Do as you please". The steeply sloping terrain and paucity of soil were overcome by planting laurel, box, ilex, ivy and the using of green architecture in the form of a topiary. In the twentieth century, the garden came into the ownership of Guido Manzino, an explorer and alpinist who left the estate, including furniture and works of art, to Il Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI).

Kirsty McLeod and Primrose Bell

Passing on to Verona was the Giardino di Pojega at Villa Rizzardi. In 1650, Count Carlo Rizzardi bought this wine estate and its villa and one hundred years later, his descendant Antonio Rizzardi, created the garden with its unique green amphitheatre. It takes advantage of the contours and views and has seven tiers of turf seats edged with box. Seen as the last fling of the classical Italian

Renaissance style, here nature is subject to the rules of geometry, the plants seen as elements of architecture.

Next our lecturer discussed Liguria's Villa Boccanegra. Built in the seventeenth century, it has had many owners; the most important was Ellen Willmott, who acquired it in 1906. She was a passionate gardener on a grand scale and extremely rich. Over 4 years, she spent over £2,000 on plants – figs, mimosa, yuccas, cedars, citrus, aloes, agaves and 300 cannas. She organised this and her other gardens in England and France by sending instructions to her gardeners on hundreds of postcards. The garden is now owned by a Tuscan botanist, Ursula Piacenza, who continues to care for it.

Several beautiful gardens in Tuscany were discussed. The Villa Capponi near Florence, for example, is an intimate jewel-like garden, descending a hill via three terraces behind vase-topped scalloped stone walls. It has been cherished for hundreds of years and the terraces have views of the best of the Florentine skyline. Full of roses, plumbago, citrus, dahlias and pink lychnis, it was the inspiration for Lady Ottoline Morrell's garden at Garsington.

Near Massa Carrara is Pescigola. This garden, set in wooded hills studded with sheep, in spring is full of thousands of daffodils and narcissus. It was taken over some ten years ago by Andrea Hedges Scrufoni, who planted over 400 varieties of daffodils set in parterres and created a daffodil maze.

Near Lucca, Villa Bernardini is a late Renaissance villa still in the ownership of the same family and exudes a sense of time asleep. In the lush Giardino Inglese are many unusal plants and trees, whilst the seventeenth century green theatre in box provides an ample stage and excellent acoustics for concerts and weddings.

In the province of Siena is La Foce, the famous garden created by Iris Origo and Cecil Pinsent in 1929 and 1930. Set amid the harsh Sienese crete, this garden, "made for pleasure, not to impress", is an oasis of green; ordered and geometric, a series of rooms and terraces – the lemon garden, the fountain garden and the wondrous wisteria pergola. In the background is the "Cinquecento Road", a winding strada climbing up the hill lined with Tuscan cypresses. Iris Origo died in 1988 and La Foce is now in the care of her daughter Benedetta.

Crossing into Le Marche near Macerata, to Villa Buonaccorsi, we visited this exuberant enchanted garden where time has stood still since its creation in the eighteenth century. Full of water games, curiosities and high spirits, its five terraces and stairways give lovely views across the gently rolling countryside. Enhanced by its statuary - dwarfs, Roman emperors and hunting dogs by Orazio Marinali, it is the very essence of the Baroque.

Passing into Lazio, we stopped at Villa Lante, near Viterbo. This garden is unusual in that it does not complement a principal house, but rather the two pavilions complement the garden. For 500 years, Lante has stood as the perfect Renaissance garden created in 1566 by Cardinal Gambara. Set on a steeply sloping site, the garden was formed as a series of terraces, with water flowing from a rocky grotto at the top, down through various fountains – the Fountain of the Giants, the Fountain of the Lamp, the Fountain of the Dolphins, via the water staircase, edged with stone volutes in the form of crayfish – a play on Gambara's name. On one terrace is the stone table at which the Cardinal entertained, cooling his wine in the water trough running down the centre, copying a classical Roman idea suggested by Pliny the Younger. This is a garden which, though on a modest scale, represents a triumph of intellect over nature.

Castello Ruspoli at Vignanello, is the best preserved Renaissance parterre to survive in Italy. Best seen from above, from the windows of the Ruspoli fortress, which had been turned in the 1530s into a vast Renaissance palace by Antonio Sangallo, the garden remains as it was 400 years ago. The creation of Ottavia Orsini, the complicated design of the parterre contains her initials and those of her sons, Sforza and Galleazzo. The present owner, Princess Claudia Ruspoli is very protective of the garden and with the help of EU grants, is restoring the parterre to save it for posterity.

South of Rome is Giardino della Landriana, a 10-hectare site which 50 years ago was a dusty and barren place, swept by salt-laden winds from the sea near Anzio. In 1956, the late Marchesa Lavinia Taverna, a self-taught gifted amateur, set out to create her garden comprising 32 garden rooms on the abandoned farm. Aided by Russell Page and later English garden designers, and drawing on the gardens of Sissinghurst and Hidcote, she ordered plants by the thousands. The orange garden has bitter orange trees edged by ground hugging domes of Myrsine Africana. Other areas are full of English cottage garden flowers. The cypress avenue has pots of pale pink roses; the white walk over 300 varieties of roses. The garden now belongs to the Province of Lazio.

Eventually, we crossed to Sicily, a land of citrus and succulents, to visit two gardens. The first, at Agrigento, Il Giardino della Kolymbetra, is set in a hidden ravine in the red limestone cliffs behind the ruins of the fifth century BC temple of Castor and Pollux. This ancient garden now flourishes with citrus, almond and olive trees, irrigated via trenches originally made by the Arabs. It contains the Pool of the Gods, dug by Cartheginian prisoners in 480 BC. The garden was taken over in 1999 by FAI when it was in a sorry state, but visitors can now wander among the ancient myrtle, olive and orange trees, picking the sweet oranges as they go.

We ended our journey at Catania, where Il Giardino del Biviere at Villa Borghese, was created out of the harsh, waterless rocky landscape on the site of an ancient harbour. Scipione and Miki Borghese took over an uninhabited house and now there flourishes a lush and exotic oasis. This is an informal garden, with palms, yucca and a euphorbia as tall as the house against which it stands. Banksia and China roses abound.

Italy's gardens, many of which have been the inspiration for other gardens of Europe, both great and small, have not always been open to the public and it is only in recent years that many Italian owners have come to realise what treasures their gardens are. It is books like '*The Best Gardens in Italy*' that will ensure that these lovely places continue be visited and appreciated by a much wider audience in the future.

PRESENTING THE ROOKE PRIZE AWARDS FOLLOWED BY THE LECTURE ON REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN ITALIAN CULTURE

By Linda Northern

The Rooke Prize Awards

The evening of 20th March opened with the presentation of awards to the student winners of the BIS Rooke Prize competition of 2011, which had been conducted in association with the Society of Italian Studies (SIS) and which was represented by its chairman, Dr Charles Burdett who was also the guest speaker. The Rosemary Rooke Memorial Prize was created by the British-Italian Society to encourage the study of Italian language and culture at British universities both at undergraduate and graduate level, working closely with the SIS The winners were selected by a panel of three judges: Dr Charles Burdett, Chairman of the SIS, Susan Kikoler, Honorary Director of the BIS, and Counsellor Nicola Todaro Marescotti, head of the Italian Embassy's Public Affairs, Cultural and Press department.

The awards this year were shared in both categories between two winners, who each received £350. The prizes were awarded to the winners in person by Ministro Stefano Pontecorvo, Deputy Head of Mission at the Italian Embassy.

The winners were:

Postgraduate

Marie-France Courriol (Cambridge) – Documenting the Epic: Realist and documentary Strategies in Italian Colonial Film (1935-1939)

Paul Howard (Oxford) – The Battle of the sexes: FuPProprio Donna. BButto' via 'r zinale/ Prima de tutto e ss'ingaggio' ssordito - a detailed analysis of some sonnets by Giuseppe Gioachino Belli, the Roman dialect poet, with reference to a gender studies framework

Undergraduate

Clare Stovell (UCL) – Quando si è donne … e poi anche povere: women, 'madness' and social exclusion

Hannah McGivern (Bristol) – The meaning and political significance of texts are not simply inscribed in their formal features but are defined through their appropriation or rejection by different groups (A Willis). Discuss two films in relation to issues of audience reception and genre classification

Films analysed: Tre Metri Sopra il Cielo by Luca Lucini 2004 and Gomorra/Gomorrah by Matteo Garrone 2008

The prize giving was followed by a talk by Dr Burdett entitled 'Representations of the Islamic World in Italian Culture 2001-2011'.

Dr Charles Burdett is Reader in Modern Italian Studies at the University of Bristol and Chair of the Society for Italian Studies (SIS). His principal areas of research are Italian culture under fascism; the representation of colonialism; travel writing; theories of inter-cultural contact. His most recent book, *Journeys through Fascism: Italian Travel writing between the Wars* (2007, paperback 2010), sought to determine how the inhabitants and cultures of other countries appeared to Italian writers and journalists of the 1920s and 1930s. He is currently working on a study of Italian representations of the Islamic world from the 1930s to the present.

According to Dr Burdett and other contemporary commentators, the emergence of Islam within Italy over the relatively recent past is one of the most important societal and cultural questions facing the country. The debates surrounding this issue have ranged from those that seek to polarise Italy and the Islamic world and those which express a sophisticated awareness of the porosity of any national culture. Dr Burdett aimed in his talk to examine concepts concerning the nature of Italian identity that have emerged in contemporary discussions and to explore the different ways in which Italy's contact with the Islamic world has been thought about and represented within this debate. While concentrating on the immediate past, he also referred to key moments in the history of Italy's relations with the Islamic world during the period of Italy's colonial rule over Libya and parts of East Africa and in the aftermath of the Second World War.

He then gave a brief outline of recent Italian history and of recent immigration into Italy from Islamic countries. The Islamic Community now numbers about one million. The media debate is polarised and at times incandescent. There is a mutual lack of understanding as the tools are not yet in place for a constructive dialogue. Crises elsewhere (September 11th and other terrorist outrages) have made people more aware of the Islamic presence. He described the views and positions taken by leading protagonists in the contemporary debate. Among others he cited Stefano Allievi (Department of Sociology, University of Padua), Oriana Fallaci (journalist, interviewer, author), Sergio Yahya Pallavicini (Italian Imam, Italian father and Japanese mother), Younis Tawfik (Iraqi-born, naturalised Italian, Professor at the University of Genoa, journalist and writer), Khaled Fouad Allam (Algerian-born, naturalised Italian, Professor in Faculty of Political and Social Science, University of Trieste, politician), Souad Sbai (Italian journalist and politician of Moroccan origin), Franco Cardini Historian and essayist (Professor of Medieval History, Florence) and John Gray (British political philosopher and author, formerly Professor in School of European Thought, London School of Economics).

Dr Burdett then addressed the following issues:

A CHANGE OF CULTURE

The right to build places of worship, mosques springing up in the main cities, has led to the increasing visibility of Islam and changes to the physical appearance of places. Allievi described the central mosque in Rome, which was started in 1984 and finished in 1994. The original significance was symbolic, but it is now also used.

There have also been sociological changes and an inter-religious dialogue has grown up. We need to bear in mind that a space can mean different things to different people. Pallavicini has described the building of mosques from the inside, as an appropriate place of worship. According to him the problem is not Islam, but fundamentalism – most Moslems are far from extreme. They don't deny the existence of radical Islam. In fact, it poses a huge problem for the Islamic community.

RADICAL ISLAM

It presents itself as the whole face of Islam. There is a boundary of fear. All Moslems have been demonised. Most have no connection with the radicals, but we need to understand the appeal of, for example, the Moslem Brotherhood. Its appeal is social, of a utopia, a new world, a Third Way - hostile to Capitalism and Communism. Allievi contrasts and compares radical Islam with the Brigate Rosse who operated in the 1970s. It is a problem for the Islamic Community and a marker – the main body distances itself from radical Islam. He agrees with those who encourage a formal dialogue between Islamic associations and the State.

WOMEN AND ISLAM

The mass media is very interested in the subject and exploit it. However, the issues need to be confronted. Khaled Fouad Allam discusses it. Violence against women can also be seen as violence against the west. We need to be careful how we think about and discuss this. Souad Spai has spent time on this. The veil is a sign and signifier, but we need to be careful about what we think it signifies. There is a fear that globalisation will lead to hybridisation.

HISTORY OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND ITALY

Contemporary texts seek a new perspective on the present and on the past. Franco Cardini (Catholic intellectual, more to the right than left), writer of '*I Cantore della Guerre Giusta*', denounces the Clash of Civilisations idea. He denies that there has been any such clash in history. He asserts that it makes no historical sense to regard Islam as foreign or new to Europe. John Gray, in his book '*Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia*' describes the west as ethnocentric , which can lead to the idea of a utopian future. Allievi has written a travelogue about the physical presence of Islam in, e.g. Sicily, Bari, southern Italy and Sardinia. Khaled Fouad Allam cites Palermo as a positive example of Islamic influence. Nowadays, Italy is experiencing the return of Islam and not something new. In the 1930s Italy expanded its empire and Mussolini, while in Libya, defined himself as the protector of Islam.

CONCLUSION

Dr Burdett concluded by reminding us of the need to look at Islam in the plural, the porosity of the boundary between self and other (porous and changeable boundaries), and the elusiveness of Italian identity and Islamic identity.

THE LANDMARK TRUST

By Alexandra Richardson

On 8th May, Simon Verdon who is Head of Operations for The Landmark Trust gave us what might well be described as an appetising menu of a talk on the properties of this association, both in the U.K. and on the Continent. The Trust was founded in 1965, the brainchild of Sir John Smith who during his adult life wore a number of hats, from serving in the Navy to being an MP, with an extremely successful period in between as a businessman. At various times, he served as director at Coutts Bank, Rolls-Royce and The Financial Times, accruing a personal fortune of some 50-60 million pounds. But his heart, Verdon stressed, was truly in bricks and mortar.

Very early on, Sir John noted that while many of the buildings around the country of the highest architectural order and in the brightest limelight were being brought back from oblivion, it was "very many of the minor buildings that were disappearing all the time". And so, 47 years ago, he set up the Trust. His aims were twofold: to save those lesser known homes and to give as many people as possible the opportunity to live in them, albeit briefly. If the Landmark Trust began as "hunter", seeking out potential properties itself, it wasn't long before it became "hunted", as more and more people came forth offering decaying homes they could no longer afford to keep up themselves. At the outset, Sir John was providing up to £80,000 per year of his own money to meet restoration costs.

Using a panorama of very attractive (and inviting!) slides, Simon Verdon showed us the Trust's very first venture, "Church Cottage", built in the early Victorian style for the caretaker of the nearby church (since demolished, in 2000) at Llandygwydd in Cardiganshire. Standing in a small village, the two-story, low-ceilinged property features two double bedrooms upstairs and a cosy sitting room with fireplace on the ground floor. With time, the portfolio grew and today the Trust either owns outright or otherwise leases 160 buildings on the U.K. mainland. Sir John and Lady Smith must have had a tender spot for the occasional eccentricities. A number of towers have come into the Trust collection ("they are so hard to convert", Verdon confessed). Then there is the castle with 9 bedrooms but only 1 ½ bathrooms and no central heating. A Swiss cottage in Devon, a watermill, several gatehouses, a school and even a former prison! "The Pigsty", at Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire was built by its owner in the late 1800s with a flourish of six exterior timber columns in "modified Ionic" style and a grandstand view out over the distant sea--- all to accommodate his two pigs! "We hope that we have made it acceptable to a higher breed of inhabitant", the Trust catalogue writes reassuringly today. The Smiths must also have loved some of the homes' names: "The Ruin", "Radio Room", "The Pineapple" and "Gothic Temple".

Managing such a large collection of buildings is no easy task, we were told. Once restored and made habitable for today's visitor, the Landmark Trust decided that furnishing the interiors in a uniform style was their best option. Occasionally, there is a quirky piece here and there, of course, to lend extra interest. In one of the slides, Verdon pointed out the handsome blue and white china adorning a Welsh dresser. "We have a stock of about 400 more, should there be breakages", he explained. Thanks to a full-time carpentry shop, any sideboard, bedpost or table that meets with an accident can be repaired or recycled into a new item of furniture. Care, too, is given to stocking of the bookshelves in all properties. "We try to localise, giving visitors something to read about that area where they are staying", our speaker told us.

We were all ears, of course, when the subject then turned to the four Italian properties of the Landmark Trust. "Something was missing in our portfolio", Smith is said to have reflected. And that "something" was Italy…and France. "Italy was an interesting challenge", Verdon said diplomatically; seemingly, the Trust was not daunted by the prospect of potential bureaucracy and red tape. In 1989, the Villa Saraceno at Finale, just to the south of Vicenza, was purchased, becoming the Trust's very first "interesting challenge". It had been abandoned for fifteen years and the roof was caving in. Built circa 1550 as a country retreat and working farm for a minor nobleman, this was one of the earliest and simplest works of the famed architect Andrea Palladio. The Palladio provenance was just the link that inspired the Trust's decision to go forward: Palladio was much loved and much emulated by the likes of Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren and thus provided the pretext for taking on this villa at Finale. The exact positioning of the villa was chosen to offer spectacular views of the Dolomites to the north. The central core of the complex was elevated to avoid occasional flooding and it was given aligned doorways at both the south and north ends to assure a constant breeze during the often stifling summer heat. In the course of the restoration project, frescoes in the *salone* were found and had to be completely restored. One of them depicts a scene from one of Pietro Aretino's tragedies, '*Orazia*'. The theme may have been chosen because Aretino was known to have visited the property and may well have even written *Orazia* there in Finale. Today, fully operational, the Villa Saraceno can accommodate parties of up to 16 people.

The BIS talk then veered south from the Veneto to central Florence and the Casa Guidi of which the Landmark Trust acquired the lease in 1992. The English connection here was, of course, the poets Robert and Elizabeth Browning who lived in an apartment on the piano nobile. Not far from the Pitti Palace, this 15th-century palazzo, was home to the Brownings between 1847 and 1861. Many of the furnishings have been painstakingly replicated, based on original descriptions or illustrations. Smaller than the Villa Saraceno, the Casa Guidi today sleeps up to six people at a time.

Moving south again, Verdon then introduced us to the third of the Trust's Italian quartet of properties, Sant'Antonio at Tivoli. A mosaic of epochs, some parts of its walls date back to 60 BC, when the poet Horace is believed to have lived here. Later in its life, it became a Franciscan monastery, but was abandoned in 1870. The "English connection" began eight years later when Frederick Searle purchased the property, enchanted by the lovely views of a waterfall across the ravine. He settled his family into the sprawling place and began restoring it. The tiered gardens are very much a apart of the allure. Given its size, Sant'Antonio can accommodate up to 12 people at a time.

The last property almost needs no introduction: the Keats-Shelley house in Rome's Piazza di Spagna. In its theatrical setting,

flanked by those beautiful steps outside and the square right in front, the third floor of this 17th-century palazzo was given over to the Trust and attentively restored to a 19th-century appearance. With its coffered ceilings and tiled floors, these snug surroundings offer the visitor one of the most atmospheric literary sites imaginable.

In order to fund future purchases, leases and restorations and to assure the maintenance and upkeep of the present-day portfolio, the short stay or weeklong rentals come at a price depending on the size of the property, the dates and the duration of the stay desired. But for a unique experience, this would be hard to beat, we all seemed to agree.

VENICE NOIR

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

The last speaker for the season following the AGM held on 14th June was Maxim Jakubowski with his thriller collection of short stories entitled *Venice Noir*. Jakubowski, once a columnist for Time Out and the Guardian including other newspapers and magazines, is now a writer and editor. He also runs London's annual crime film and literary festival CRIME SCENE, as well as working as a consultant for overseas film festivals.

Venice Noir, published in 2012, follows a series of other short story collections including *London Noir, Brooklyn Noir, New Jersey Noir, Istanbul Noir, Paris Noir, Boston Noir* and *Rome Noir*. Each story is in a different part of the city. 'The city', behind the tourist veil, is revealed and dissected.

Maxim Jakubowski explained how "initially, crime writing was considered non-Italian". *I gialli Italiani* only started flourishing over the past 30 years at regional level, as in the case of Camilleri whose plots mostly take place in Sicily. He also mentioned the trend of foreign writers, in particular English and American authors, to set their crime stories in Italy.

He then went on to say how "important the atmosphere and the social context are". Hence Venice is an ideal location for mystery and crime besides being one of the most famous cities in the world. Immortalised by writers throughout the centuries, a city built on water whose geographical position once saw it rule the world and become a crossing point between East and West. Shakespeare considered it the city of merchants and rulers; others remember it as the city of artists, glamour, philosophers, corrupt nobles, courtesans and lovers buffeted by wars. Canova and Byron were other famous or infamous characters to roam around the city. With its bridges and canals which are the only thoroughfare to access the old part, this threatened city has also become important for films, festivals and its annual carnival event.

All these aspects together with its charm create the perfect backdrop for a thriller. Hence, Maxim Jakubowski brings together writers who have the skills to create suspense in the narrow winding back streets of Venice through a labyrinth of stone and water after dark. Those who have visited Venice in winter may remember how on grey days land and water merge. And at times, Venice looks more like a haunted town under fog and snow in the thick of winter. The plots also take place on the Lido,

Maxim Jakubowski

not only in old Venice. The Lido is the choice for Jakubowski's short story *Lido Winter*, which the writer says is "like a ghost town", influenced by Visconti's film *Death in Venice*.

Whilst readers are invited to wade through the pages, in his introduction to the collection he reminds us that the stories are written by both foreign and Italian authors, not to forget the city's status as a world cultural heritage site: "I've always felt that Venice belongs to the world, attracting us from all over in its spider web of beauty, crumbling stones and water, so this time around I didn't just invite Italian writers to let their imaginations loose on 'the city', and summoned the mischievous and noir imaginations of writers hailing from the UK, the USA, Canada, France and Australia too. The portrait they draw in *Venice Noir* is compelling, as hapless visitors and troubled locals wander the canals, bridges, and waters of La Serenissima, with a heartful of darkness and wonder, evoking all the secrets, sounds, sights and smells of the city". As in any 'noir city' the reader "should expect the unexpected".

ESPERIENZA ITALIA: MARKING THE ANNIVERSARY OF UNIFICATION

By Charles de Chassiron

For much of 2011, Italy has been celebrating the 150th anniversary of its hard fought-for Unification. The series of events began with official ceremonies on March 17, the actual day in 1861 when the new Parliament proclaimed King Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont-Sardinia as King of a newly united kingdom. As the celebrations near their end, at a time of economic turmoil in Italy, it is worth looking at how the anniversary events have gone down.

Politically speaking the enthusiasm for them has not been universal, as Italy remains a country of regional and (in the best sense) provincial loyalties and of weak national identity. There are strong centrifugal tendencies, notably the pressure from the Northern League for autonomy and for 'fiscal federalism'. Much of this is posturing, as the League is one of the governing coalition partners in Rome. Ironically the anti-unification rhetoric which in the past came mostly from the South (and was more than verbal and indeed quite violent in the late 19th century, notably in Sicily) is now heard much more in the North. Yet just as the first 50 years were celebrated with nationalistic enthusiasm in 1911, and the centenary was held at a time of rising prosperity in 1961, so this year's celebrations have been marked by real pride –with flags everywhere to be seen in many areas – and certainly by a series of historical and cultural events, deliberately centred on Turin, and carefully planned by a grand national committee headed by former PM Giuliano Amato. In late October I visited the soberly elegant Piedmontese capital, which was to become the united Kingdom's first capital too, to sample 'Esperienza Italia', as the celebrations have been called. I was impressed.

There will have been 250 days of activity by the time the 'experience' ends on 20 November, taking the form of exhibitions, concerts and conferences, and highlighting Italy's recent history, its present and its future. So Turin has been something of a national 'laboratorio' for much of the year. The main attraction has been a major historical exhibition called 'Making the Italians' –echoing the famous phrase coined by the Piedmontese politician Massimo d'Azeglio, when he said that this was needed to complement the work of making Italy - and held in a restored industrial space. This is the OGR, a large former locomotive repair workshop near one of Turin's stations. The show covers the phases and themes of the country's history in an imaginative multimedia display, staffed by enthusiastic volunteers, and it had attracted over 500,000 visitors over the summer who thronged its raised catwalks. As the October temperatures dropped, there were only school parties there in the cavernous and unheated sheds–and a few foreigners like me. To be seen alongside this sprawling show were 'Future Station', depicting a society based on technological innovation, and 'Craftsmen of Tomorrow', recording how Italy's famed artisan tradition has developed into today's digital practitioners.

The other major pole of EI has been the stupendous and recently-restored Reggia di Venaria, a Versailles-style baroque hunting lodge built by the Savoia dukes. In its large stables designed by Filippo Juvarra, the exhibition 'Bella Italia' brought together over the summer 300 Italian paintings from all the pre-unification capitals (Turin, Milan, Rome, Genoa, Venice. Bologna, Naples, and Palermo). Unfortunately this had just finished when I visited, and the start of the planned successor art exhibition 'Leonardo: from genius to legend' had been postponed till November. It will feature many drawings depicting the human face, and be centred on the great self-portrait held by Turin's Royal Library. It will make an interesting complement to the current Leonardo show in London's National Gallery. But there were artistic compensations for me , as the Venaria features some wonderful cinematic recreations of the palace's earliest inhabitants, including dukes, court ladies and cooks, mounted by Peter Greenaway, and still running was a beautiful exhibition on Italian fashion called 'Italy likes what it sees'. This avoided concentrating on the over-exposed 'stilisti' of today in favour of the designs of the 19th and early 20th centuries – Claudia Cardinale's original ballroom gown from the famous Visconti film of 'Il Gattopardo' being a high point. And in the Venaria's enormous gardens, visitors could see the royal potager and sample dishes using its produce. Food is always and rightly a major element in any Italian celebration.

The many other events in Turin have included both environmental and energy-related shows in the city's main parks lining the River Po's banks, and also the reopening of the city's hitherto rather dusty Museum of the Risorgimento, now fully restored and refurbished. It occupies the handsome 17th century Palazzo Carignano. Its Garibaldi room is stuffed with images and paintings of the great man. In the Palazzo Madama, right in the central piazza, another restoration has made it possible to see not only the city's fine art collection but also a superb recreation, entitled 'Sarà l'Italia', or ' Italy in the Making,' of the Kingdom's first Senate chamber, built in wood painted cream and gold and complete with audio reconstructions of the great debates of the 1850s and 1860s. The words of Cavour and of Victor Emmanuel ring out as visitors sit in seats bearing plaques with the names of illustrious Senators – mine had that of General Alberto Della Marmora, and nearby was that of Alessandro Manzoni, Italy's greatest 19th century writer (whose daughter married the future Prime Minister d'Azeglio, I learnt). The original Senate chamber had not survived, as the Italian capital was moved to Florence in 1866 and four years later to Rome, and it was dismantled in 1927.

It was impressive to see the imaginative and non- triumphalist way this anniversary has been marked in Turin, and to learn more about the Risorgimento and its major protagonists (celebrities avant la lettre, one could say). The Mayor of Turin wants to turn 'Fare Gli Italiani' into a permanent exhibition, but where the money will come from in today's dire economic situation is not evident. Esperienza Italia has reached a lot of Italians, including many visitors from the diaspora abroad, I was told, as well as recent immigrants' children, and it has also attracted those from abroad who love the country despite its current political and economic problems. Perhaps the 150th anniversary celebrations will be remembered for cheering

Italians up, as well as for showing that on balance Unification has been a better bet than having a peninsula featuring perhaps a revived Venetian Republic or even a gracious Tuscan Grand Duchy as well as a brash and rich Padania, among other Italian statelets –one of history's might have beens

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A SPASSO TRA I LIBRI: ALCUNE TENDENZE NELLA NARRATIVA ITALIANA CONTEMPORANEA

By Elisabetta Venerosi Pesciolini

Quando ero ancora una studentessa ricordo che un giorno il mio insegnante di inglese ci spiegò con enfasi che in Inghilterra la gente, mentre si recava al lavoro in autobus o in metropolitana, era solita leggere il giornale o un buon libro. La cosa mi meravigliò molto, tanto che oggi, a distanza di anni, non l'ho ancora dimenticata. All'epoca infatti, in Italia mediamente la gente in autobus, faceva una gran confusione ma non leggeva. Da allora sono trascorsi quasi quarant'anni, oggi lavoro in una biblioteca scolastica ed essendo a stretto contatto con il mondo dei libri mi rendo conto che molte abitudini sono cambiate: gli italiani leggono, anche se al di sotto della media europea e sono assidui frequentatori di librerie e biblioteche.

Alcuni dati statistici sullo stato della lettura in Italia forniti dall'AIE (Associazione Italiana Editori): 26,4 i milioni di italiani che dichiarano di leggere almeno un libro all'anno, poco meno della metà quelli che ne leggono tre e il 15% quelli che ne leggono uno al mese; 57000 circa i titoli pubblicati annualmente; un fenomeno in crescita è quello degli e-book, anche se leggere un libro in versione cartacea può essere preferibile e più rilassante. Nato nel 2010, il mercato degli e-book è passato, in poco più di due anni, da 1600 a quasi 18000 titoli e non può che essere destinato a crescere. Per quanto riguarda i canali di vendita la libreria tradizionale continua ad essere il canale d'acquisto privilegiato per i libri (51% del mercato), diminuisce il peso della libreria a conduzione famigliare, mentre sale quello delle librerie di catena (Feltrinelli, Mondadori Megastore, Fnac, Rizzoli Store); crescono con il maggior tasso assoluto le vendite on line (+25%) ed anche le vendite in edicola confermano un trend in aumento. Altro fenomeno in incremento è quello della autopubblicazione di libri (Book on demand). Di fronte a tanta offerta essere aggiornati e sapersi orientare nella scelta di un buon libro non è sempre cosa facile. Si può entrare in libreria e soffermarsi nel reparto delle novità editoriali, frequentare le fiere del libro, tenersi aggiornati sui vincitori dei più importanti premi letterari nazionali: Strega (dal 1947), Bancarella (dal 1953), Campiello (dal 1962), seguire le numerose trasmissioni televisive che si occupano di libri, le classifiche di vendita sui giornali, iscriversi a un club di lettura o infine affidarsi al passaparola che è sempre valido perché nessuno meglio di chi ti conosce veramente bene è in grado di consigliare il libro che fa per te, in quel momento…

Ma quali sono attualmente, nel campo della narrativa, le tendenze prevalenti? Tra i generi che vanno per la maggiore il romanzo di evasione o psicologico-intimistico che affronta le problematiche esistenziali degli adulti, il romanzo di formazione con uno sguardo più attento al mondo dei giovani e alle difficoltà che questi ultimi incontrano nel difficile mestiere di crescere, il memoriale autobiografico, il genere storico, la narrativa gialla e di mistero in tutte le sue varianti. Si nota inoltre, trasversalmente ai generi, il riaffiorare di una vena di regionalismo che si traduce nella tendenza al recupero del dialetto e delle tradizioni locali, soprattutto culinarie. C'è infine, come in tutti i periodi di crisi, un ritorno di interesse alla dimensione spirituale e metafisica, quasi che l'uomo avvertisse il bisogno di nutrire la propria anima per dare un senso più profondo alla vita ed ecco allora che non si può non ricordare Benedetto XVI con i suoi numerosissimi libri e le tre encicliche: *Deus caritas est, Spe salvi* e *Caritas in veritate*, fonti inesauribili di riflessione sulle complesse realtà del mondo in cui viviamo, e Padre Livio Fanzaga, direttore di Radio Maria, uno dei più lucidi interpreti dei nostri tempi. Della sua produzione, vastissima (più di settanta libri disponibili anche in versione MP3), vorrei citare due titoli tra i più interessanti *Il falsario* e *Il discernimento spirituale*.

Vediamo ora di conoscere più da vicino alcuni tra gli scrittori di narrativa che si sono cimentati nei generi sopra elencati. Al genere **psicologico intimistico** possiamo ricondurre i romanzi di Massimo Gramellini. Giornalista sportivo, poi corrispondente da Montecitorio, inviato di guerra da Sarajevo, alla sua seconda esperienza come romanziere. Dopo *L'ultima riga delle favole del 2010*, una fiaba moderna nella quale il protagonista impara a realizzarsi e a vincere le proprie paure guardando dentro di sé, in *Fai bei sogni,* uscito nel marzo del 2012 e subito al primo posto nella classifica delle vendite, Gramellini racconta la storia, in parte autobiografica, di un segreto celato in una busta per quarant'anni: la causa della morte improvvisa di sua madre. La storia di un bambino, e poi di un adulto, che imparerà ad affrontare il dolore più grande - la perdita della mamma - e

il mostro più insidioso: il timore di vivere. Altro autore che si muove in questo filone è Fabio Volo, conduttore televisivo e radiofonico, attore, sceneggiatore. Come scrittore ha pubblicato sei romanzi ed è considerato un fenomeno editoriale dato che i suoi libri sono quasi sempre ai primi posti delle classifiche. Nel suo ultimo romanzo *Le prime luci del mattino* la protagonista è una donna insoddisfatta della propria vita e del suo matrimonio. Un incontro imprevisto la costringerà a fare i conti con sé stessa.

Molti gli autori che recentemente si sono cimentati con successo nel filone del **romanzo di formazione**. Paolo Giordano nel 2008 si era aggiudicato il Premio Strega con *La solitudine dei numeri primi:* la storia di Alice e Mattia le cui vite, segnate indelebilmente da due episodi vissuti nell'infanzia, si incrociano. Essi scoprono di essere vicini ma al tempo stesso divisi proprio come i così detti "numeri gemelli" che in matematica sono separati da un numero pari. Un altro autore molto interessante e di spessore è il trentacinquenne Alessandro D'Avenia, giovane scrittore e insegnante di origine siciliana, allievo di Don Puglisi, il sacerdote ucciso a Palermo dalla mafia il 15 settembre del 1993, a causa del suo impegno evangelico e sociale. D'Avenia ha al suo attivo due romanzi *Bianca come il latte, rossa come il sangue*, uscito nel 2010 dal quale dovrebbe essere tratto un film e *Cose che nessuno sa* del 2011. Entrambi i romanzi sono letti sia dagli adulti che da un pubblico più giovane poiché in essi si parla di adolescenti, delle loro paure, della iniziale incapacità dei protagonisti di affrontare le prove della vita. Nel primo romanzo si tratta di accettare la malattia e la morte di una compagna di classe, nel secondo il divorzio dei genitori. Questi ragazzi ci riusciranno grazie all'aiuto di figure adulte, in grado di supportarli nel difficile cammino che porta un giovane dall'adolescenza all'età adulta. L'intelligenza e la sensibilità di un giovane insegnante innamorato del proprio lavoro di educatore, l'amicizia disinteressata di alcuni compagni di classe, l'amore dei genitori, la saggezza di una nonna e perfino la comprensione della mamma di una compagna di classe riusciranno a far sbocciare alla vita questi adolescenti. D'Avenia ha anche un Blog: "*Profdue.0*". Nella sezione articoli e racconti, segnalo il pezzo *Due modi anzi uno*, dove lo scrittore espone le proprie riflessioni su quello che egli considera l'unico modo positivo di affrontare la vita. Alle prese con le dinamiche adolescenziali anche la scrittrice esordiente Paola Predicatori *con Il mio inverno a zerolandia* dove si parla di amicizia tra due liceali: i due zeri della classe e dove si scopre che la somma di due zeri non è zero ma qualcosa di più.

Tra i best sellers sono spesso presenti libri che rientrano nel genere della così detta **narrativa memoriale**. Ecco alcuni titoli che nell'ultimo anno sono stati ai primi posti nella classifica delle vendite. *La casa sopra i portici* dove l'autore Carlo Verdone, famoso attore e regista che nei suoi film ha tracciato un esilarante, lucido, anche se talvolta spietato ritratto del bel Paese, si racconta partendo dalla sua giovinezza: il rapporto con i genitori e i fratelli, i primi passi nel cinema sotto la guida di Rossellini, le amicizie che hanno segnato la sua vita (Sergio Leone, Federico Fellini, Massimo Troisi); l'amore per la musica, i primi concerti dei Beatles e degli Who, gli incontri con David Bowie, David Gilmour e Led Zeppelin. Da menzionare anche *Dizionario delle cose perdute* del cantautore Francesco Guccini: un viaggio nel nostro passato recente per far rivivere emozioni, abitudini, parole che ormai rischiano di andare perdute e *Neanche un morso all'orecchio* del popolare conduttore televisivo Flavio Insinna che in un libro introspettivo rievoca la figura del padre medico, ne ricorda gli insegnamenti, racconta come la vita ci metta di fronte a continue scelte e quanto sia importante non lasciarsi "tentare"ma rimanere comunque sempre se stessi. Ancora al genere del memoriale ma questa volta con una profonda riflessione sociologica appartengono i libri di Edoardo Nesi. Già finalista al premio Strega con *L'età dell'oro* nel 2005, se lo aggiudica nel 2011 con *Storia della mia gente* un libro a metà tra il saggio, l'autobiografia e il trattato economico nel quale affronta il problema della globalizzazione vissuto sulla propria pelle, da piccolo industriale tessile nella città di Prato, costretto a chiudere l'azienda di famiglia a causa della concorrenza cinese. Sullo stesso tema il suo ultimo libro, *Le nostre vite senza ieri* del 2012 dove si chiede cosa fare quando il benessere di un paese volge al tramonto perché tutta una realtà sociale e industriale è letteralmente soffocata dalla globalizzazione. Le speranze, sembra rispondere, vanno riposte sui giovani che dovranno dare forma a nuove idee per ricostruire il benessere perduto, in concorrenza con altri coetanei che provengono da tutto il mondo.

Un genere molto amato e spesso premiato dalla critica negli ultimi anni è quello **storico**. Molti gli autori da segnalare: Melania Mazzucco già vincitrice del premio Strega nel 2003 con *Vita*, un romanzo sul tema dell'emigrazione degli italiani in America, ha recentemente pubblicato *La lunga attesa dell'Angelo* (2008) e il saggio *Jacopo Tintoretto e i suoi figli* (2012), un dittico che la scrittrice ha voluto dedicare a Jacopo Robusti detto appunto il Tintoretto. Quest'ultimo suo lavoro, frutto di oltre dieci anni di studi e ricerche e ricco di documenti inediti e originali, rappresenta la prima importante biografia mai apparsa in Italia sul pittore veneziano. Sempre al genere storico appartengono *Canale Mussolini*, il romanzo di Antonio Pennacchi vincitore del premio Strega 2010, sulla bonifica dell'Agro Pontino voluta da Mussolini e *Non tutti i bastardi sono di Vienna* di Andrea Molesini, scrittore per ragazzi al suo primo romanzo per un pubblico adulto, che si è aggiudicato Il premio Campiello 2012. Altra scrittrice interessante che affronta anche il genere storico, questa volta di ambiente siciliano, è l'italo-inglese Simonetta Agnello Hornby. Nata a Palermo nel 1945, dopo essersi laureata in giurisprudenza sposa l'inglese Hornby dal quale ha due figli, va a vivere negli Stati Uniti, poi nello Zambia ed infine si stabilisce a Londra dove fonda lo studio di avvocati Hornby e Levy, specializzato nel diritto di famiglia e nel diritto dei minori e per otto anni ricopre la carica di presidente dello Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal. Tra i suoi romanzi la trilogia siciliana: *La Mennulara* (venditrice di mandorle) con la quale esordisce nel 2002, ambientato nella Sicilia degli anni '60, *La zia marchesa* che ha per sfondo la Sicilia dell'Ottocento e *Boccamurata* ambientato ai nostri giorni. Nei suoi libri la Agnello si avvicina anche ad altre tematiche. *Vento scomposto,* scritto originariamente in inglese, con il titolo *There is nothing wrong with Lucy* nel 2009 è frutto della sua esperienza di avvocato dei minori. E' la storia di una famiglia inglese la

cui vita viene drammaticamente sconvolta allorchè il padre è accusato di abusi nei confronti della propria figlia, dalla maestra d'asilo della bambina. La scrittrice mette in evidenza come accuse non certe possano distruggere la vita e la reputazione di una famiglia e come talvolta i servizi sociali si siano dimostrati arroganti e incompetenti. In *Camera Oscura* del 2010, la Agnello Hornby prende in esame la figura dello scrittore e professore Charles L. Dodgson, in arte Lewis Carroll, l'autore di *Alice nel paese delle meraviglie*, concentrandosi in particolare sul rapporto che Dodgson aveva stabilito con Ruth, una delle bambine poi immortalate nelle sue famose fotografie. Gli ultimi suoi due libri *Un filo d'olio* del 2011 e *La cucina del buon gusto* del 2012 ruotano intorno al tema della cucina. Il primo è un libro di memorie nel quale la scrittrice ricorda con nostalgia le estati della sua fanciullezza trascorse nella casa di campagna, in provincia di Agrigento. Tra le pagine affiora il lessico famigliare, la memoria degli aromi pungenti della campagna, la preparazione dei piatti legati alla tradizione della sua famiglia, le ricette della sorella Chiara. Il secondo, a marzo tra i primi dieci libri nella classifica delle vendite, scritto "a quattro mani" con Maria Rosario Lazzati , è un vero e proprio saggio di culinaria nel quale le autrici intendono celebrare la gastronomia e i piaceri dei sensi che si incontrano nel preparare il cibo, nel servirlo e nel mangiarlo. Fonte di ispirazione è stato per le autrici, il politico e gastronomo francese Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin che verso la fine del Settecento firmò il trattato *La fisiologia del gusto o Meditazioni di gastronomia trascendente*, un'opera che mescola amabilmente nozioni scientifiche, riflessioni filosofiche, aneddoti storici e consigli e al quale si deve il famoso aforisma "Dimmi cosa mangi e ti dirò chi sei".

Questa nostra passeggiata tra i libri merita, per concludere, uno sguardo agli autori della così detta **narrativa gialla** o del delitto. Oltre ad Andrea Camilleri, che rimane sempre uno degli scrittori preferiti dagli amanti del genere giallo, non si può non ricordare Umberto Eco con il suo ultimo libro *Il cimitero di Praga*, Giorgio Faletti sempre molto seguito dai suoi lettori, il pisano Marco Malvaldi ed Andrea Vitali. Molti gli autori alla ribalta, impossibile citarli tutti, numerosissimi i libri che affollano il panorama narrativo attuale. Quali di questi rimarranno nella memoria collettiva tra cento anni non è facile da prevedere. Ai posteri l'ardua sentenza! Intanto non ci resta che sperare di scovare sempre storie belle ed edificanti da leggere, perché ogni libro letto, in qualche modo ci trasforma, entrando un pò a far parte di noi.

"THERE WILL BE SHOOTING"

By David Lingard

"Day 3 (pm): Went to Catona, a suburb of Reggio Calabria, renowned for its high density of poachers and Mafia activities. I had spent three wonderful days, thrilling at the passing raptors, hearing few shots and feeling rather optimistic.

Four of us stood in a lay-by, watching the sun set behind Sicily and counting 22 Honey Buzzards flying low and slow towards us. I had been briefed: 'There will be shooting. Count and identify the birds and count the shots.'

I was watching one bird through binoculars as the shooting suddenly started. Ten, twenty, a hundred shots pierced the air all around us. 'My' bird just kept on flying until it was hit and dropped like a stone. Others fell around it and I felt desolation and unspeakable anger amidst this deafening, relentless nightmare. After seven long minutes we counted just 5 surviving birds rising up the ridge behind Catona"…

This chilling account was written by an English volunteer at a camp organised by Italy's 47-year old Bird Protection League (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli, or LIPU) on the Strait of Messina almost twenty years ago. Such raptor protection camps were set up each year and were, in those days, dangerous. Some volunteers were shot at and, on one occasion, one of their cars blown up. We have come a long way since then: the death toll is a fraction of those dark days and the police and conservationists have the upper hand. But there are still terrible problems faced by the League. In this article, the author gives some of the historical background of LIPU, describes the challenges it faces and some of the work carried out both by the parent association and its England-based chapter.

From the very outset in 1965 when it was set up, LIPU's aims have been to protect Italy's birdlife from wholesale slaughter, safeguard natural avian habitats, educate youth and help shape public opinion with regard to these matters. In the near half-century that followed, the League has built up a following of some 42,000 supporters in Italy, in 100 local chapters. It has created a network of nearly 60 bird sanctuaries and rescue centres where wounded birds are treated. Helping in all this work is LIPU-UK, the England-based offshoot, formed in 1989 with 850 members. This latter group is very much committed to supporting all anti-poaching efforts, monitoring migration routes, furnishing medicines needed in the recovery centres around Italy.

One specific project funded by LIPU-UK for the last eight years has been monitoring the progress and roosting sites used by migrant Honey Buzzards each spring. From their observation posts, LIPU volunteers spot approaching flocks, identify their numbers, note their direction. With LIPU members and the Corpo Forestale dello Stato on the lookout, the birds are ensured a safer passage overhead. Were their protectors not on hand, it would be an illegal bloodbath for these winged creatures.

Sadly, though, while one door is closed on the poachers, another opens, leading to the death of millions of songbirds. Songbirds for some mean money: upwards of €100 in cash per day. In the valleys of the north of Italy around the lakes to the north of Brescia, trappers have divided up the hillsides, setting up lines of

deadly traps for the small birds looking for food in the bushes. The culprits come from all walks of life. They defend themselves saying that these practices are perfectly legal in the hunting season. The truth is that trapping is illegal in both domestic and European law.

The main victim of this barbarism is Europe's favourite bird, the robin and these are caught in the thousands in *archetti*, traps made of a bow of spring steel with a perch forming a hair trigger. The trap is placed near some berries. The bird lands on the "perch" to feed and what happens next is almost too quick for the eye: the perch flies away and a noose of nylon cord snaps over the bird's legs which are often broken in the process. The poor creature flutters in the trap until the hunter comes to collect his prize and reset the trap for another catch. He may have up to 100 traps set, checking them every few hours. It doesn't take long for the death toll to mount. Accommodating local restaurateurs will slip them one Euro per bird just to put *polenta e osei* on their backroom menus for trusted clients. Brave men have been threatened, attacked and had their cars damaged as they try to put a stop to illegal trapping. But it has not stopped their good work, which goes on throughout the autumn. LIPU-UK is pleased to play its part in trying to stamp out these atrocious practices.

Sadly though, the lure of illicit earnings makes it an ongoing battle.

From the very north of Italy, travel south until reaching Sardinia. There the situation is no better: yet more scenes of indiscriminate snaring and killing of wild animals. Again, the focus is on birds. This time, it is thrushes which are sought. I joined one of the teams in the hills above Capoterra, to the west of the capital, Cagliari and watched as things unfolded. We climbed high up the hillsides, watched by men said to be poachers until we reached the areas where traps had been set and then we followed the mountain paths made smooth by the passage of wild animals and humans. The traps we were looking for were harder to spot than those in the north because the design is completely different: these have near-invisible nooses, made of horsehair in a thriving local cottage industry. They are made in sets of 4 or 5 between wire supports which are left in the bushes from year to year. The branches on which they are set are bent down, close to a horizontal position so as to appear safe as perches for blackbirds, song thrush and redwing. When the bird attempts to lift off, it is caught by the wing or the neck in a noose which tightens more and more as the bird tries to struggle free. Again, the victim dangles in a noose until the poacher returns to collect his booty which will fetch him 4 or 5 Euros apiece from the restaurants. I was shown an advertisement in a local paper openly offering grilled wild birds.

So, what are the tools being used to fight back? The British branch has funded the purchase of a battery-powered video recording system which has proved very useful. A pair of carefully camouflaged cameras are positioned on the ground, pointing at a trap. When a trapper approaches his quarry, motion-detecting sensors activate the system and the culprit is caught on film. This evidence is turned over to the police and has helped bring a number of poachers to justice. The word has now spread that the hillsides are not as private as they once were. Such anti-poaching efforts are succeeding and this is seen by the volunteers who now have to walk further and further into the mountains to find traps, as poachers retreat from the attention of the LIPU teams.

The future is not rosy, but it is getting better, The League, together with its chapter in this country, has won the battle at the Messina Strait, ensuring safer passage of migratory birds there. Elsewhere, they have not let up on their efforts to stamp out poaching. They are forging ahead with education schemes, because changing attitudes is an important part of the way forward. After all, birds belong to us all and are a vital part of our common natural heritage.

The author is the UK representative of LIPU. For all further information, see www.lipu-uk.org

SANTA MARIA DELLE GRAZIE AND IL FESTIVALETTERATURA

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

"La peste crudele serpeggia in tutto il popolo
E colpisce miseramente innumerevoli persone....
Allora Francesco Gonzaga prega questa Santa Donna
E col voto di erigere il tempio cessa il morbo funesto".

Words written under one of the frescoes at the entrance of the church.

The small town of Curtatone is about 7 kilometres from Mantua en route to Cremona next to the Valli del Mincio park, one of the most important natural reserves for flora and birds. It boasts the sanctuary of Our Lady of Graces, built around 1399 by Francesco Gonzaga to thank the Virgin Mary for ending the plague. It is now a place of pilgrimage. Although it has a rather somber Gothic Longobard style façade, the interior is an unusual mixture, full of surprises. I had never seen a church so clad with such strong visual feelings and emotions. What strikes the visitor most are the niches along the walls with painted statues in wax, papier mâché and wood of ex-voto images of devotees, each depicting the miracle which saved them either from physical threat or illness. The fifty-three out of about eighty surviving statues are on an upper and lower level on both sides of the church in a gallery of miracles. The statues on the lower level have medallions below explaining in verse the story of the miracle. At times it looks like a chamber of horrors where, at the last minute the victims are miraculously saved.

Another curiosity about the statues is that some of them wear armour. It was a way to hide and protect the armoury collection of the Gonzaga family which had disappeared for centuries. It was J.G. Mann, the English archaeologist, who discovered the lost armoury of the Gonzagas. He wrote about his findings in 1938: "The Franciscan monastery of Santa Maria delle Grazie is situated

on the bank of the Mincio some five miles west of Mantua on the road to Cremona. My attention was first drawn to it by the late Baron de Cosson during a conversation in Florence in 1926, when he showed me a photograph of the interior of the church. He understood that the local tradition was that the statues were clad in armour taken from the battlefield of Marignano in 1515, and mentioned that there appeared to be some basis for this belief as the armour looked to him genuine enough, so far as it was possible to see it from the floor of the church...The suggestion that there might be in existence a church full of armour dating from the early part of the sixteenth century, hitherto unrecorded, inspired a desire to visit the place at the first opportunity". Two years later, Mann got there: "On my arrival a brother informed me that the armour on the statues was only of *carta pesta* and not worth looking at. But the first figure that I inspected showed that my hopes had been exceeded. Not only was much of the armour real, so far as one could tell through a coating of thick black paint overlaid with the dust of countless Italian summers, but its form was not that of the time of Marignano but of some fifty years earlier, when the art of the Italian armourer had reached its zenith". The armoury was then cleaned and moved to a museum.

The next unusual sight in the church is the crocodile hanging down from the ceiling in the centre of the nave inside the entrance. According to popular tradition, this animal symbolising evil was supposed to have once roamed in the nearby river Mincio and was finally caught through intercession of Our Lady of All Graces. It was more likely to have been one of the exotic animals which had escaped from the Gonzagas' botanical gardens.

The square outside the church also offers a special spectacle hosting an annual event on one of the hottest days in the year, 15th August on the Feast of the Assumption, when the Madonnari competition is held attracting street painters from all over the world. The tradition of street chalk painting began centuries ago as devotional drawings outside churches, most often depicting the Madonna, hence the name. A *Madonnaro* or *Madonnara* may draw anything, but normally it should entail a religious theme. It is an important achievement for the best artist to win a medal to gain the title of *Maestro* and earn some money. The Madonnari normally start painting on the eve after the blessing of the chalks by the Bishop of Mantua and the artists have 24 hours to complete their painting. 2012 marks the 40th edition of this event for the town of Curtatone.

If the surroundings of Mantua hold surprises such as the Santa Maria delle Grazie Church in nearby Curtatone, then Mantua itself holds a few as well that may be less familiar to visitors.

Mantua is a city once renowned throughout Europe largely for its splendours both in the arts and military skills under the Gonzaga family, who ruled for four hundred years.

What better place could be chosen than here, the birthplace of the Latin poet Virgil, to help inspire the choice of this city to celebrate books. This year marked the 16th edition of the Literature Festival which was held from 5th to 9th September 2012.

Looking for ways to revive the fortunes of some of its smaller cities, the Lombardy region in 1995 began to focus on the possibilities of Mantua as a city of books and reading. Taking a leaf from the successful model of such festivals as that at Hay-on-Wye in Wales, among others, the authorities in Mantua began planning their festival which would offer something extra: their many historical buildings in the city centre. In 1997, the first Festival opened its doors, and was immediately welcomed as a way to aid the local economy: sponsors and volunteers weighed in with help. The piazze, theaters and halls of the city's historic buildings hosted many of the events, allowing everyone to move around easily on foot from venue to venue.

The current structure includes five intensive days of encounters with authors, readings, performances and concerts featuring artists from all over the world, taking place in different parts of the city. Festivaletteratura is now considered one of the most important annual cultural and literary events. It begins in early September with writers and readers mingling informally in an international party atmosphere. Over 200 events take place in the piazzas, palazzos and private gardens of one of northern Italy's most beautiful cities. Concerts and plays add to the festivities.

Since the first edition, Festivaletteratura has tried to establish a more direct relationship between writers and audiences, new ways of experiencing comparison, exchange and research. Participants include writers, essayists, poets and storytellers of Italian and international renown who read in their native language. They include the most interesting names of emerging literature, and the younger generation of writers, as well as musicians and artists.

A special place is devoted to children and adolescents. There are also meetings, workshops and performances designed for children and teenagers with opportunities for them to meet important writers. It is a gathering point for all ages and interests with other events organised around the festival, such as plays, concerts and guided tours to historical places in the city and neighbouring towns.

ITALIAN GOLD AT THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

By Alexandra Richardson

The old entrance into London's Royal Geographical Society which faces onto Kensington Gore looks slightly forlorn today, its small foyer unlit, slightly dusty and dank, like an unloved appendage. Squint your eyes, though, and have a more careful look. Mounted on the walls are rich oak panels and on them, beautifully etched, are the names of some of the bravest, most remarkable adventurers ever known. Some of them are still household names to us today: David Livingstone, Richard Burton, Fridtjof Nansen, Freya Stark, Wilfred Thesiger, Thor Heyerdahl --- just to name a few. All of them have, in one arena or another, pushed back the frontiers of the unknown here on earth, whether atop treacherous peaks, in unimaginably cold polar wastes, amidst perilous jungles, in barren deserts or at the bottom of oceans. Those listed on the panels are recipients of the prized gold medals of the Society, awarded over long decades to the very highest achievers. Among this roll call of excellence, British homage is paid to a small but distinguished number of Italians.

The Geographical Society began, like many learned societies in the London of those times, as a dining club, back in 1830. The purpose was to discuss scientific matters and ideas. Within two years, the Society began publishing its first journal. Under the patronage of King William IV, the name changed to the Royal Geographical Society, moving its headquarters from one place to another until, in 1913, it settled permanently at its present day address. Its principal role is in "the advancement of geographical science" which in its earlier years entailed the promoting of "colonial" exploration in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the polar regions and central Asia. Along the way, a collection of some two million photographs, maps, books, documents and artefacts accrued. Today, with its 15,000 members, it is the largest such Society in Europe and one of the largest in the world. It was decided at the very outset that Gold Medals would be awarded (in 1830 the Founder's Medal and 1838 the Patron's Medal, the two categories offered under the Gold Medal designation) in recognition of " the encouragement and promotion of geographical science and discovery". With time, other awards were introduced, but none quite so coveted as the Gold Medals. And it is the names of those medallists which hang high on the wall of the historic entrance into the building.

Founder's Medal

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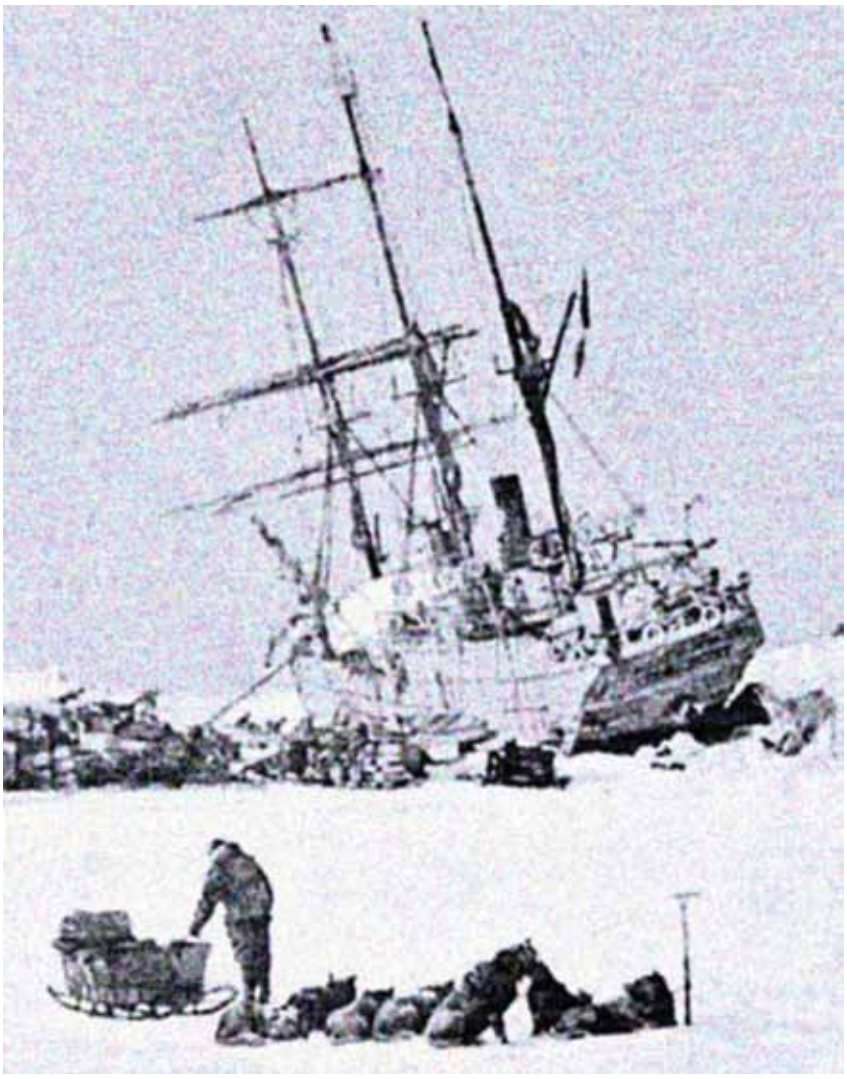
Prince Luigi Amedeo of Savoia, Duke of the Abruzzi

Italy counts five recipients of them.[1] All of these Italians were illustrious, daring and resourceful individuals, of course. Perhaps, though, one stands out to be remembered more markedly. For his colourful life, for the particular era in which he was exploring, for the fact that he was noteworthy for *two* – not one – feats: Prince Luigi Amedeo of Savoia, Duke of the Abruzzi who was honoured in 1901 by the RGS for "his journey to the summit of Mount St. Elias and for his Arctic voyage in the *Stella Polare*".

Luigi Amedeo Giuseppe Maria Ferdinando Francesco di Savoia-Aosta, Duke of the Abruzzi was born in 1873. His uncle became King Umberto I five years later; his cousin became King Vittorio Emanuele III in 1900. At the tender age of nine, he began his first climbs on Monte Bianco and Monte Rosa, virtually at his back door, discovering that he really *did* like the adventurous life. His early education took place in military academies, no doubt further strengthening his hardy nature. Travel around the world followed, but by age 24, in 1897, the young prince was ready to take on his first serious challenge, Mount St. Elias which straddles two countries. At 5489 metres, it was the second highest mountain in both Canada and the United States. Other mountaineers had attempted to reach the summit before him but had had to turn back because of treacherous weather conditions. Amedeo would be the first to actually get to the top; no further attempts to repeat that occurred until 1946, nearly a half century later. In a description of that very final push, he was to record amusingly that the "...ascent occupied ten hours and a half but we must deduct from this the thirty minutes spent over lunch".

The prince did not sit back and rest on his laurels with that. Twenty-four months later, he was off on another adventure. Inspired no doubt by Fridtjof Nansen of Norway and his exploits in the Arctic, the Italian prince set his sites on beating the Scandinavian's North Pole record. In 1899, he arrived unannounced at the then-capital of Norway with his Italian team of 20 and rather brazenly bought the 570-ton whaler, the Jason. The boat had taken Nansen on an expedition to Greenland earlier and now, under the new name of *Stella Polare*, would challenge the Norwegian's record. On 12th June 1899, Luigi Amedeo set sail, headed for Arkhangel'sk, which they reached on the 30th. Twelve days later, they continued on their journey. Winter camp would be set up at Rudolf Island and from there the team would continue on by dog sledge ever north across the frozen sea. The Prince himself had had to bow out of the final push by dog sledge when two fingers were lost to frost bite. On 25th April 1900, the team reached latitude 86º 34' and thus beat Nansen's achievement of 1895. It would be in recognition of these two expeditions that the Royal Geographical Society in London awarded him their prized Gold Medal (the Founder's Medal) in 1901. (Had the Society waited another nine years, they could have added another of Luigi Amedeo's accomplishments: in 1909, he led another team which reached a height of 6666 metres in the Karakoram Range -K2- of the Himalayas. The K2's East Ridge is now known as the Abruzzi Spur).



Stella Polare

Prince Luigi Amedeo would add further mountaineering feats to his curriculum, namely in Uganda. He later settled in a village north of Mogadishu, then Italian Somaliland where he developed new agricultural cultivation techniques and married a Somali woman. He died in 1933 and was buried there at Jowhar.

[1] The others were: **Guido Cora** in 1886. The Patron's Medal for services as a writer and cartographer; **Filippo de Filippi** in 1915. The Patron's Medal for his great expedition to the Karakoram and Eastern Turkestan; HRH the **Duke of Spoleto** in 1932. The Patron's Medal for work in the Himalayas; **Ardito Desio** in 1957. Founder's Medal for geographical exploration and surveys in the Himalayas.

MEDALS FOR ITALY AT THE 2012 LONDON OLYMPICS

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

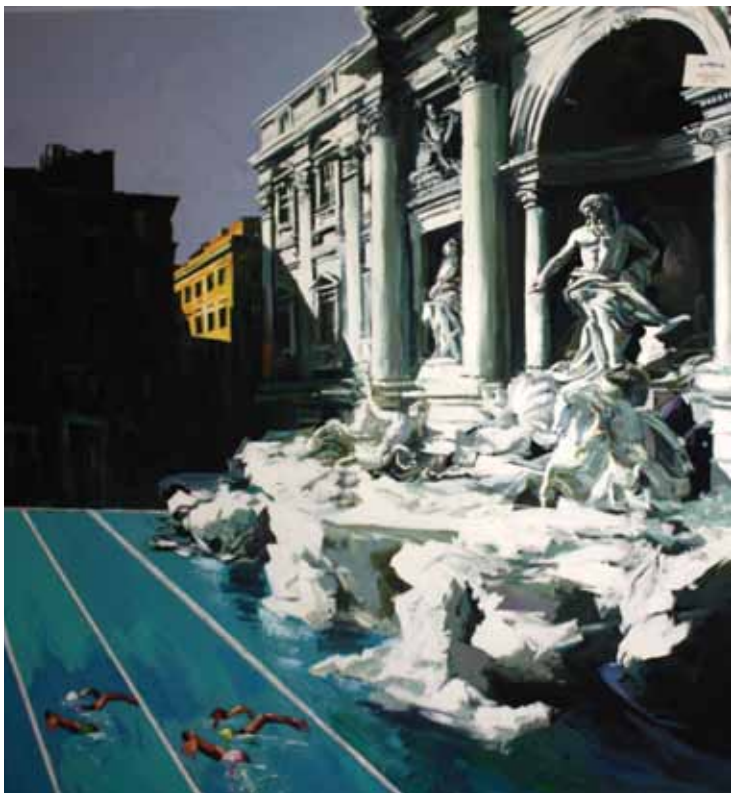
Sport				Total
Archery	1	0	0	**1**
Athletics	0	0	1	**1**
Boxing	0	2	1	**3**
Cycling - Mountain Bike	0	0	1	**1**
Canoe Slalom	1	0	0	**1**
Fencing	3	2	2	**7**
Gymnastics - Artistic	0	0	1	**1**
Gymnastics - Rhythmic	0	0	1	**1**
Judo	0	0	1	**1**
Rowing	0	1	0	**1**
Shooting	2	3	0	**5**
Swimming	0	0	1	**1**
Taekwondo	1	0	1	**2**
Volleyball	0	0	1	**1**
Water Polo	0	1	0	**1**

Italy ranked in 8th place in the list of the winning nations in the London Olympics 2012 with 3 gold medals, 9 silver medals and 11 bronze medals totaling 28 medals in all.

CONI, the Italian National Olympic Committee, was delighted with the positive results. Raffaele Pagnozzi, Head of the Italian Mission accompanying the teams compared their participation in the Games to "La nostra avventura nella terra di Albione come la battaglia di Inghilterra", to which Giovanni Petrucci, President of CONI, commented at the closure "La battaglia è stata vinta. L'Italia si è migliorata rispetto a Pechino ed è rimasta nelle prime 8 nazioni del medagliere".

In addition to the sports achievements, Italy also displayed a special showcase with Casa Italia, where Italian flair met English tradition. During the London 2012 Olympic Games many countries set up national hospitality houses to entertain athletes and VIPs. Italy's Casa Italia boasted one of the best locations with The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre located right opposite Westminster Abbey near the Houses of Parliament.

Casa Italia offered a taste of Italy featuring food and wine, design in fashion and cars and art. *Tradition and Innovation*, a special art exhibition was set up to highlight the Italian Olympic Spirit. Three different art genres (Photography, Ceramics and Contemporary Art) dedicated to the world



Fontana di Trevi and the Olympics by Antonio Tamburro

of sports were showcased to celebrate the Olympic Games, where different artists brought their own style and works showing their passion for the 'Olympic' spirit. The artist to catch the eye was Antonio Tamburro with his creative and introspective paintings of views of an Olympic City revealing nostalgia for the 1960 Olympics in Rome and the hope for the Games to be held in the city again in the possible future.

On the odd occasion, national hospitality houses were provided with return tickets for less known or unpopular sports. These were offered at discounted rates to naïve visitors who had come to London unprepared without tickets.

Professor Renata Freccero, who planned the exhibition, explained how the Casa Italia venue "showed how Italy in memory of the Rome Olympics wanted to offer on this occasion a sense of hospitality and welcome in a spirit of joy and conviviality acknowledging the identity of others". She was proud to talk about the athletes' feat entailing long hours of training, sacrifice, hard work and perseverance both at individual level and at team level maintaining different roles in unity". In addition, she believed that the positive outcome was also due to a close bond with the families of the athletes who played an important role in the personal success in the Olympics by giving their full support at all times.

REFLECTIONS ON TWO FILMS

By Guglielmo Tosato

In London, I went to see *The King's Speech*, the charming and upbeat tale of Prince Albert, who, with the help of an unorthodox elocutionist, overcomes his stammer to deliver a rousing speech that inspires the British people on the brink of World War II.

In Rome, I went to see Nanni Moretti's *Habemus Papam*, the comic tale of Cardinal Melville, newly elected pope, who despite the aid of a kindly psychoanalyst, flees the daunting role of Christ's representative on earth to disappear into the general population.

The two films invite comparison. Both tell the tale of a reluctant hero facing a critical moment and the person who comes to his aid. Both characters find themselves asked to assume a position they never sought: Albert was second in line to the throne, and if his selfish brother had only fulfilled his obligations, Albert would have been able to continue stuttering blissfully with no consequence. In the first moments of Moretti's film, it is clear that all of the cardinals dread the possibility of being named, and as the newly elected pope is about to be presented to the faithful gathered in St Peter's Square, he lets out a piercing *cri de coeur*. But the diverging outcomes of these crises say much about each country, especially to me. I have lived in the UK for over ten years, and while one would think that a young boy would succumb totally to the effects of nurture over nature, I know that in many ways, how I eat, think and feel, I remain profoundly Italian.

In Britain, those who overcome weakness are deeply admired. There is something heroic in the would-be failure who rises to the occasion through effort, determination and struggle. That image of the unlikely hero, embodied in Prince Albert, corresponds to the waning imperial power that pulled itself together to defeat the very real evil of Nazism. I can see that same attitude amongst my British friends. The struggle is always worth it, in math class or on the tennis court, and I admire and embrace that attitude. We want to excel academically, cannot wait to become independent, and compete with one another, pushing and challenging ourselves. We thus share the drive and determination of Colin Firth's character, and even some of his reluctance, for it is in that struggle that character is built.

In contrast, individualism and creative flair are privileged in Italy, where the private sphere can take precedence over public interest; this explains why we have thousands of successful entrepreneurs and inept governments. Indeed, like the cardinal who flees and disappears into the crowd, there is a tendency to shirk the challenge of a public role in favour of private fulfillment. There is another telling moment in *Habemus Papam*. Nearly overwhelmed by the tension of papal selection, the cardinals suddenly burst into an improvised game of volleyball. It is certainly a moment of comic relief, but it is also indicative of the Italian ability to let go and enjoy the moment. Scenes in *La Vita è Bella* share that same very warm laughter in the midst of horrendous tragedy.

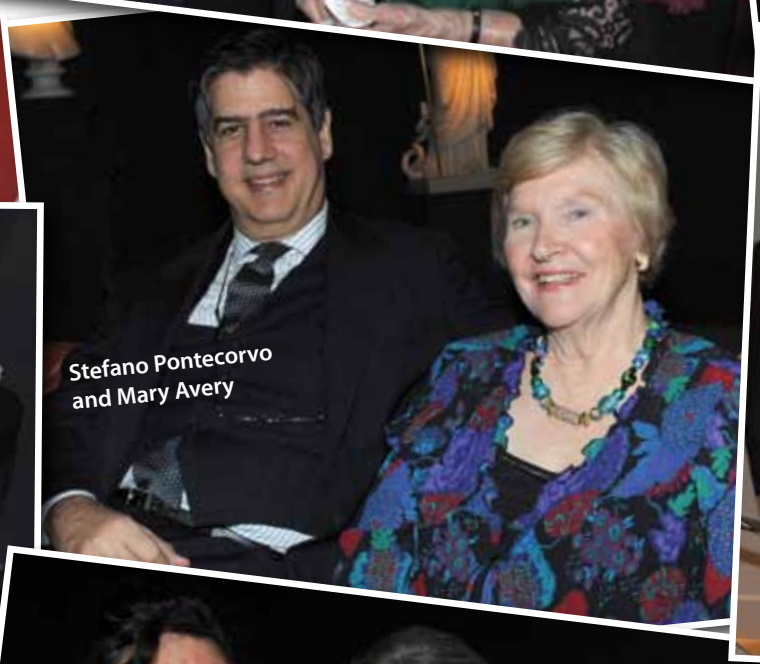
And so I sympathize with both, for in many ways, the combination is what makes us human. Indeed, like Albert, I enjoy measuring up to challenges and 'taking one for the team' straight on, chin up. However, like my fellow Italians, I also cherish the private sphere, filled with quiet accomplishments that seek no recognition and the time for a laugh or smile with spontaneity and contentment. Though much is accomplished through the British method of hard work, like the cardinal I find I am also able to step back sometimes and almost play hooky from responsibility. But it is also time to be with myself and consider what I value. During my day I often fluctuate between the two, embracing the challenge in lessons, striving to be the best, and then walking away from that forum, playing just for the fun of it, reading, not for the exam, but just because the book is interesting. It would be great to bring that balance to bear on how cultures behave so that the messages of both films could inform both countries, only then would we attain the real benefits of a multicultural world.

The author has lived in England since the age of six. Now 18 years old, he has been a student at St Paul's School in London.

HAPPY B

Charles de Chassiron and Lidia Pontecorvo


Tom Richardson and
Dulcibel Jenkins McKenzie


Stefano Pontecorvo
and Mary Avery


Fulvio Granocchia,
Johnny Tomasso
and Sidney Ross


Ian Grainger and
Johnny Tomasso


Anna Mondavio, guest of
Anna Mondavio and Elisabetta

RTHDAY

Lidia Pontecorvo, Charles de Chassiron, Stefano Pontecorvo and Britt-Marie de Chassiron

Reiko and Eugenio Bosco

Susan Kikoler and Diana Darlington

Tomasso Starace Quartet

Sheila Youngs, Elisabetta and Raffaella Celia

Caroline and David Colvin

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NELSON'S ITALIAN VALET

By Alexandra Richardson

In 1807, two years after the Battle of Trafalgar in October 1807, the artist Arthur William Devis painted three copies of his famous canvas *The Death of Nelson*. One hangs in the Greenwich Maritime Museum. Another is on display aboard the HMS Victory and the last one is owned by HM The Queen. Huddled around the dying Horatio Nelson aboard the HMS Victory, Devis captured the tragic scene in the darkened quarters below deck where those closest to him watched over the fatally wounded Admiral. Among them, in profile (third figure from left) was Nelson's loyal Italian valet, Gaetano Spedillo in a brown coat, holding a glass of water for his master. He has dark hair, rich sideburns and a pronounced aquiline nose. After thirty years in the service of Sir William Hamilton in Naples, the Sicilian-born Spedillo was taken on by Nelson, rapidly becoming a favourite servant on board the Victory for five years until his patron's death. It would be Emma Hamilton who arranged for "Old Gaetano" to return to his homeland soon afterwards.

The Death of Nelson by Arthur William Devis

PAVANE FOR A DEFUNCT HOTEL

By Massimo Bacigalupo

On 6th February 2002, the Faculty of Languages of the University of Genoa hosted a panel on 'The Hotel Croce di Malta and Its Guests'. The occasion was the inauguration of a plaque on an old building overlooking the Genoa harbour, which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the city's foremost inn. The Hotel Croix de Malte was named after the Knights of Malta, who still preside over the nearby church of San Pancrazio and run a day hospital for the neighbourhood, one of the city's oldest and poorest. However, proximity to the new Aquarium and marina has brought it crowds of visitors—at least in the daytime.

When Tobias Smollett sailed from Nice into Genoa in 1764, he reported: "We passed through a considerable number of ships and vessels lying at anchor, and landing at the water-gate, repaired to an inn called *La Croix de Malte*, in the neighbourhood of the harbour. Here we met with such good entertainment as prepossessed us in favour of the interior parts of Italy, and contributed with other motives to detain us some days in this city." *(Travels, 205)*

A little over a century later, in 1877, the Croce di Malta was still in business and attracted Henry James's considerable powers of attention. "I had found my hotel", he wrote in *Italian Hours*, "extremely entertaining—the Croce di Malta, as it is called, established in a gigantic palace on the edge of the swarming and not over-clean harbour. It was the biggest house I had ever entered—the basement alone would have contained a dozen American caravanseries. I met an American gentleman in the vestibule who . . . was annoyed by its troublesome dimensions—one was a quarter of an hour ascending out of the basement—and desired to know if it were a 'fair sample' of the Genoese inns. It appeared an excellent specimen of Genoese architecture generally; so far as I had observed there were few houses perceptibly smaller than this Titanic tavern. I lunched in a dusky ballroom whose ceiling was vaulted, frescoed and gilded with the fatal facility of a couple of centuries ago . . ." (114-115)

Soon after James' visit, the Croce di Malta was shut down and all traces of it disappeared. By consulting directories from the nineteenth century I found its address to have been 'Vico dei Morci', and was happy to discover that a Vico Morchi still emerges from the dim labyrinth of Genoa's 'topographical tangle' (James) into the light of the seafront square, Piazza Caricamento. It turned out to be close to a little eatery where I often stop between classes (Friggitoria Carega, Via Sottoripa 113r), for it serves some of the best *farinata* (hot chickpea bake), fried shrimp and boiled octopus I know—if one is willing to stand or sit on a metal perch in the narrow shop, near the oven, still a wood-burning one. Winter and summer, there is no door to this venerable establishment, certain proof that this is a temperate climate.

Vico Morchi is a rather dingy alley on the next corner from this Genoese fish & chips. Here I discovered a barber-shop which could have gone back to the times of Henry James, were it not for the pictures of Marx and Engels adorning the walls and the strange metal constructs or erotic modernistic sculptures lying around the premises. The courteous and aged barber informed me that Castro was a great statesman and that his brother's

Hotel Croix de Malte plaque

sculptures were not for sale. He lives in the opposite building and he has heard from the daughter of an old lady who died long ago in her eighties that her grandfather said that the house was a hotel.

This seemed sufficient proof. In the 1890s the old palace was renovated by a new owner and turned into apartments for his extended family. And so it has remained. The friendly barber climbs up to the top floor—no elevator. And on top of that is a red medieval tower, where some of the more romantic guests may have stayed. Only, I cannot see traces of the immensity that so impressed Henry James. Perhaps I will if I ever venture inside. I once visited a Genoese painter's studio nearby and thought the floor was as big as a football field. But there was no electricity, and perhaps not even a bathroom. He said he only painted in the daytime anyhow.

James was the last of three notable American guests of the Croce di Malta. In February 1829 James Fenimore Cooper wrote to his wife in Florence: "I am at the Croix de Malta, which looks directly upon the harbour. I can scarcely describe to you the pleasure I feel in seeing ships, hearing the cries of seamen, a race everywhere so much alike, and in smelling all the odours of the trade". He even considered bringing wife and child "as high as this in June." (*Letters and Journals*, I, 361).

In *The Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain wrote enthusiastically: "The hotel we live in belonged to one of those great orders of knights of the Cross in the times of the Crusades, and its mailed sentinels once kept watch and ward in its massive turrets and woke the echoes of these halls and corridors with their iron heels". (122).

At the time of the Innocents' visit, Genoa was still an important tourist stop, and even Twain's friend William Dean Howells has a bemused chapter in his *Italian Journeys* on wandering through the city's labyrinth. He doesn't say where he spent the night, but catches the scene very well: "A very great number of the streets of Genoa are footways merely, and these are as narrow, as dark, as full of jutting chimney-places, balconies, and open window-shutters, and as picturesque as the little alleys in Venice. They wander at will around the bases of the gloomy old stony palaces, and seem to have a vagabond fondness for creeping down to the port, and losing themselves there in a certain cavernous arcade which curves round the water with the flection of the shore, and makes itself a twilight of noonday. Under it are clangorous shops of ironsmiths, and sizzling shops of marine cooks, and, looking down its dim perspective, one beholds chiefly sea-legs coming and going, more or less affected by strong waters . . ." (34) Unfortunately today one is as likely as not to see somebody stagger under the influence of a shot of heroin, but sailors and ship chandlers and sizzling shops still abound.

Mark Twain, for his part, was impressed by the women of Genoa: "I did not see how a man of only ordinary decision of character could marry here, because before he could get his mind made up he would fall in love with somebody else." (117). This is surely tongue-in-cheek, though Balzac claimed somewhere that Michelangelo had used Genoese models for his wide-breasted nudes in the Medici chapel. Genoa reminded Clemens "of a cave I used to know at home . . . with its lofty passages, its silence and solitude, its shrouding gloom." (122) I am sure this is the cave we all remember from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

So it was only right that there should be a marble plaque in Vico Morchi, informing all strollers who will crane their necks around the unpromising corner of the building's illustrious past. AISNA, the American Studies Association of Italy, and AIWC, American International Women's Club Genoa, shared the expense and– all due permissions having been obtained--the tablet was inaugurated on 6th February 2002. My Scottish friends will be disappointed that Smollett's name was forgotten (I only came upon the relevant passage in the *Travels* later). But, besides the Americans Cooper James and Mark Twain, three European figures are listed: Mary Shelley, Stendhal, and Giuseppe Verdi. Verdi, it turns out, spent in Genoa most of his winters, because the climate there was milder than in his native Parma, and people would leave him alone in his strolls. (The Genoese have a reputation for reserve, as well as for stinginess.)

Certainly many other notable guests of the Croce di Malta will turn up. For every one of them there is a story, letter or chapter that takes us back into time, and seems to call for novelistic treatment. Imagine Henry James meeting Giuseppe Verdi in the frescoed ballroom, and the two planning together an opera on Daisy (not Luisa) Miller. Or Mary Shelley, a widow of 25, musing on her beloved Percy in September 1822, and worrying about her -- and her child's – future, "in this busy hateful Genoa where nothing speaks to me of him, except the sea, which is his murderer" (*Letters*, I, 258). After she moved from the hotel to Casa Negrotto, Albaro, in the suburbs, Mary wrote Jane Williams about Edward Trelawny: "He is at the Croce di Malta; Gabrielle [Wright] sees him every day—generally dines with him there, & what will become of him when W[right] comes home?—I have seen L.B[yron]. only once & that by accident . . . I have copied for him the 10th Canto of Don Juan" (I, 281). The plot thickens.

That these lives should have passed under the dim arcades of the Genoa waterfront does not cease to intrigue me.

The author is Professor of American Literature, University of Genoa.

ALL THAT JAZZ

By Elisabetta Murgia

Cagliari, Sardinia is home to one of the liveliest jazz events on the Italian calendar, the European Jazz Expo. I attended recently and was overwhelmed: four days of music, with over 200 performers, 50 concerts and seven stages…all on one site, the Parco Monte Claro! And it got me thinking about the world of jazz in Italy.

They say that many people don't like jazz. But remember: it comes in many forms from swing to bebop, Dixie, cool and many other styles in between. There is something for every taste. Furthermore, apart from being a vital outlet for its fans and musicians alike, such festivals are a way of promoting a country and also giving non-jazz lovers a chance to reconsider their aversion.

Jazz has been slow to take hold in Italy until recent times when more Italian artists started receiving international acclaim and more jazz clubs opened. What we do know about its beginnings here is that jazz developed more slowly than elsewhere in Europe, probably because of a lack of publicity during the early years. Unfortunately, very few recordings made between 1921 and 1950 survive, mainly because they were destroyed during wartime bombings or otherwise were poorly stored by the recording houses. Jazz did make its appearance in Italy at about the same time as the rest of Europe, albeit more fitfully, namely in the 1920s, thanks to the presence of American musicians in military bands during the First World War. This music was soon labelled as "syncopated". However, the *very* first taste of (imported) jazz arrived on our shores in 1904 with the performance of a "Creole" group of singers and dancers at the Eden Theatre in Milan.

In the 1930s, Arturo Agazzi, known as Mirador, formed the first real home-grown jazz group, the so-called "Syncopated Orchestra". Mirador had lived in London between 1913 and 1918, managing nightclubs and parties when he began listening to inspiring jazz. Once back home, he began performing, proudly using wood blocks, plates and car horns. Before long, he formed his very own band and introduced this music to Milan. The anti-American policies of the fascist regime that ensued a bit later put a halt to this genre of music. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that Mussolini's very own son, Romano, was a great jazz buff and pianist. After World War II, he started playing jazz (under another name) and by the 1960s, he formed the "Romano Mussolini All Stars" which became an applauded group and cut three albums under this name. Some of the other names of that era were Gorni Kramer, Giorgio Gaslini, Lelio Luttazzi, Franco Cerri, composer Bruno Martino and singers Natalino Otto and Jula de Palma.
In time, jazz popularity gained traction. By the 1940s, aided by the introduction of specialist publications like *Introduzione alla Vera Musica di Jazz* further recognition was gained. This was followed in 1945 with the arrival of the magazine *Musica Jazz*, with the valuable input of writer Arrigo Polillo , who, incidentally, was director of the Mondadori publishing house up until 1968 and issued a number of books on the subject including *JAZZ: La Vicenda e I protagonisti della musica afro-americana.* The *Enciclopedia del Jazz* also saw publication in 1945.

Hand in hand with these various publications came the emergence of proper jazz clubs. One of the notable ones was the Milan College Jazz Society in 1952 in the Lombardy capital. It was formed by very talented young students and professionals with a flair for this music. They met at the famous Santa Tecla Club, near the Duomo, between the 1950s and 1960s – a place renowned for hosting many emerging stars. The venue was destroyed by fire in the 1990s; rebuilt, it opened again in 2006 under the name of Santa Tecla Café . Another important club was the Capolinea, founded in 1968 by Giorgio Vanni, an ex-drummer from Tuscany. It was based on Milan's Navigli canals and took its name from the nearby tram terminus. Very quickly, it became a focal point for big national and international names in the jazz world. Many recordings were made there, including one by American trumpeter Chet Baker, simply entitled *Capolinea*. Sadly, this venue was closed in 1999 due to fire problems. Meanwhile, the oldest club in Rome made its appearance only in 1982: the Alexanderplatz Jazz Club, near the Vatican. (A predecessor was America's famed black entertainer from West Virginia, "Bricktop", who ran a much-loved Rome cabaret, Bricktop, from 1949-1961 where jazz musicians were frequently, if not exclusively, welcomed on her stage) .

Jazz in Italy has certainly progressed after the 1960s thanks also to the increasing involvement of artists and composers on the scene. Interestingly, today in Tuscany, Siena plays a major role in the jazz world with the establishment of the *Fondazione Siena Jazz-Accademia Nazionale del Jazz* which offers a variety of activities, courses, workshops and research resources. Within this academy is the *Centro Nazionale Studi sul Jazz Arrigo Pollilo* formed in 1989 and comprising the formidable archive of documents, books, images, videos and recordings donated by Pollilo's family.

Nowadays, nearly every town in Italy has a jazz club; throughout the country there are many jazz festivals where such contemporary musicians such as composer and pianist Antonello Salis, trumpeters Paolo Fresu and Enrico Rava, pianist Stefano Bollani, saxophonists Massimo Urbani and Stefano di Battista, trombonist Gianluca Petrella and bassist-composer Bruno Tomasso all appear. Starting back in 1973, one of the most important jazz festivals in the world has been the Umbria Jazz Festival at Perugia, attended by all the big names. Visiting Perugia in July is unforgettable, as the medieval streets fill with music fans of all ages. Music is everywhere, outdoors and indoors, well into the night. Pescara Jazz Festival is yet another important event in Europe, where such celebrated stars as Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and Chet Baker performed in the past.

Wherever you travel in Italy over the summer months, very likely you will come across even more festivals---Verona, Siena, Fano, Pisa, Bologna. Take your pick! The European Jazz Festival that I attended in Sardinia featured live gigs of established artists as well as new ones to the scene, both Italian and non-Italian. They performed with different voices, different instruments and different styles. The common thread, though, was that it was *all* jazz. I saw thousands of visitors of all ages over those four days. Concerts began at 11:00 a.m. through to 1:00 p.m. Then, after the siesta, they resumed at 5:00 p.m. ending with a final gig starting at 10:00 p.m. The first two days of the event were entirely free, while the final two days were very affordable at € 15 for a one-day pass and €25 for both days. One thing that really made European Jazz Expo so special was its pleasant surroundings, immersed out in the open amidst so much greenery. With its partner the Legambiente, the Festival succeeded in respecting the environment with a minimum of clutter, crowding and chaos. Yet another good excuse for heading off to your nearest jazz event. *Buon ascolto a tutti!*

DUILIO CAMBELLOTTI AND THE WATERWORKS OF BARI

By Alexandra Richardson

"The weather truly is hotter than where we had just come from. The wheat fields had grown tall but it was feared that the harvest might be entirely lost because of drought".

The observations were those of Jean Louis Desprez on a sketching tour of southern Italy. The date was June 1778. And the parched landscape that the French artist saw before him was an all-too-well-known fact of life in hardscrabble Puglia, barely hospitable to wheat cultivation and sheep herding and not much else. Even the native-born poet Horace had described his land centuries earlier as having "a thirst that rises to the stars". Nearly 200 years after the Frenchman's visit, *"La Storia dell'Agricoltura Italiana"*, an Italian government publication, would still be echoing those thoughts, commenting laconically that: "Lo sfruttamento agricolo del Tavoliere pugliese è ostacolato dal clima e dalla crosta superficiale calcarea e impermeabile che riveste un terreno friabile sottostante. Le piogge sono scarse". Crop irrigation from Puglia's only sizeable rivers, the Sele and the Ofanto, was so fitful, in fact, as to make it pointless to expand agricultural output. Tariff wars, too, did not help. Nor did the massive exodus of emigrants who turned their backs on their region where work was assured for barely one-third of the year.

It was those harsh realities that drew, to the astonishment of all, the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Zanardelli southwards to see for himself just how dire the situation was. Hiccups ensued but in due course, around 1910-1914, Rome began investing earnestly on aqueducts, irrigation and general water supplies throughout the south. Legislated in June 1902, there was even a first formal commitment to the construction of the Pugliese Aqueduct – a law that would translate into reality only some years later. When work did get underway the project was deemed the most ambitious hydraulic engineering project ever to have been embarked upon up until then. It even earned an admiring accolade in the Encyclopedia Britannica which called it "the most remarkable water system in the world"! Engineers headed to the Sele headwaters near Avellino in Campania and began rerouting its flow towards Puglia. The duct layout would not consist in a single channel but rather an extensive network from feeder streams. In total, an astounding 10,000 miles of arched aqueducts, hidden tunnels and other lesser conduits would be built, engaging an army of some 20,000 labourers which would serve more than 4 million inhabitants in 258 communities in the region.

If the authorities in Rome and Puglia thought on the grand scale for their ambitious new waterworks, they were no less bold and imaginative in their plans for a brand new headquarter to be sited in the centre of Bari from which to administer this complex network. This would not be the usual grey and drab office building created to house equally grey and drab bureaucrats. No. This one was going to be different. Every last detail, from the grandiose to the smallest minutiae, would be focussed on with the greatest of attention and the man they had to choose needed to be nothing short of a genius. Enter Duilio Cambellotti. It would be the most inventive choice the administration could possibly make. And it would surely be the most creative wide-scale project of Cambellotti's entire career.

Duilio Cambellotti was born in Rome in 1876. Pictures show him from early adulthood onwards to be on the squat side, a bit plump. If his thick head of hair remained uncorralled by the comb, he was rather meticulous in trimming his goatee to a perfect point. He could dress like a gentleman, finely decked out in well-cut three-piece suits but he invariably looked happiest in a loose and shapeless jacket and baggy trousers.

Early on, faithful to tradition, he joined his craftsman father's bottega learning the skills of wood carving before enrolling, aged 17, on a five-year course at the art school attached to Rome's Art and Industry Museum. At the outset, ceramics seemed to appeal the most. But then, he turned his hand to designs which local nuns used to produce tapestries. Other talents followed rapidly: poster designs, book illustrations, stained glass ornamentation. He received various commissions to decorate the interiors of Rome villas. He fell in with artistic circles befriending the likes of Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini and indeed, marrying Maria Capobianco, a cousin of the Futurist painter Umberto Boccioni. He began gravitating toward theatre work, designing stage sets and costumes for productions at Rome's Teatro Argentina and then for the Greek theatre at Siracusa in Sicily. Writing about himself in 1954, he said: "Among the ranks of artists, I have always been something of an outsider. I had neither schooling nor teachers. I was self-taught". Gianni Franzone of the Wolfson Collection in Genoa and a noted expert on the Cambellotti oeuvre challenges the artist's casual self-appraisal: "Duilio Cambellotti is one of the most interesting figures in the field of Italian decorative arts in the first half of the twentieth century. He was a painter, sculptor, illustrator, engraver as well as theatrical and cinematographic set and costume designer. He also designed furniture, ceramics, stained glass windows, medals and jewellery".

Work on the massive four-story building began in 1927, after The Great War and much to-ing and fro-ing, mostly over costs. Boxed in between the Via Cognetti, Via Fiume, Via Bozzi and Via XXIV Maggio in the centre of Bari, the principal architect was Cesare Vittorio Brunetti. Brunetti, who came to be nicknamed "The Architect of Water", would adopt what was termed as the "Transitional Pugliese Romanesque"style. Clad in soft whitestone brought in from Trani, the building rose very slowly, to be finished only in the early 1930s. Delicate sculptural detail embellished the curved windows. The elaborate corner balconies rested on supports evoking the ripple effect of water, while the parapets departed from the usual boxy sort of crenellation in favour of arch-shaped trim echoing the form of the new aqueducts crossing the Puglia landscape. Now came the truly interesting part: the indoors, 172 rooms to be adorned and furnished.

Duilio Cambellotti was 55 years old and a well-established artist when he formally took on the commitment, signing his contract 7th of March, 1931. "I assume the responsibility to decorate various areas of the building…to conceive images, objects and ornamental detail reflecting the work of the Puglia Aqueduct". The "various areas" included the boardroom and its two adjoining salons, the presidential and vice-presidential chambers, private

apartments of the chief executive, waiting rooms, corridors, meeting rooms, stairways, walls, atria and much more. The visitor to this building sees the water message immediately. Inlaid brown amphorae at the top of each staircase landing are a-tilt in the act of pouring rivulets of water down the steps. The marble flooring in the vice-president's suite portrays four contented horses quaffing their thirst in a zigzagged blue line symbolising water. Boardroom lighting comes in the form of a Spartan stone pillar with a woman's hands pouring water, all subtly illuminated from the base. There are handsome rugs with aqueducts spewing canalised water into a walled Pugliese town. Hallway oak panelling repeats the arch theme of the aqueduct, as do bronze door handles and richly carved armchairs. Perhaps in memory of skills picked up in his father's art studio, Cambellotti adorned important executive desks with mother-of-pearl inlay featuring images of water in movement and women pouring from clay vessels. The artist was particularly fond of animals and worked them into his themes wherever he could. Swallows appear on some of the lamps. Horses either grazing or drinking are frequently present. And he even worked a serpent onto one courtyard drainpipe!

Italy had no shortage of talented craftsmen to execute Cambellotti's designs. Where he could, he turned to those in Puglia at Trani, Bari and elsewhere for stonework, ceramics, sculpture and electricals; further afield, he commissioned woodwork and stained glass windows from Bologna. Trusted Roman artisans executed yet other items. Some 120 designs of his for furniture were produced and it took complicated orchestration to see everything through to fruition. What did come directly from his own hand were the murals which he painted in his Rome studio. Painted on canvas, they portrayed water in all its aspects: an aqueduct bridge conveying water with Castel del Monte in the background, laundresses washing their linens in a stream, children splashing happily. Once completed, these artworks were taken to Bari and affixed to their appointed places.

By 1934 this awesome project was completed and Duilio Cambellotti moved on to other projects. None, however, would approach the magnitude of the Puglia waterworks building in Bari. Should travels take the reader to this regional capital, do, by all means visit the more obvious sites such as the Bari Cathedral, the Basilica of San Nicola and the Petruzzelli Opera House. But set aside time, too, to see the Acquedotto Pugliese, truly a masterpiece in celebration of water.

Museo dell'Acquedotto Pugliese – Via Cognetti 36, Bari

Open Sundays 9:00-13:30 and on Saturdays by prior arrangement (Tel: 080-5723458)

Website: www.agp.it

THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

"France and Germany maintain archaeological institutes in the capitals of Greece and Italy. Why should there not be a British school of archaeology at Athens and at Rome?"

In a letter to The Times from R.C. Jebb, Professor of Greek at the University of Glasgow in September 1878

A few weeks later, Jebb pressed home this message in an article in the Contemporary Review, commenting on: "the way in which English education has been accustomed to divorce the study of the ancient languages and literatures from the study of ancient life and art". However, it took quite a while before the school was set up. The British School at Rome (BSR) was officially founded in 1901 and initially occupied rented premises in Palazzo Odescalchi on Piazza SS Apostoli. Following the international exhibition held in Rome in 1911, the Municipality of Rome offered a location and the grounds thanks to the negotiating skills of the British ambassador in Rome at the time, Sir Rennell Rodd and the Anglophile Mayor of Rome Ernesto Nathan. The building was designed by Edwin Lutyens who was inspired by Christopher Wren's designs for the west front of St Paul's cathedral. The result was an extraordinary combination of a classical British and Roman building located on the northern side of the Villa Borghese gardens, Rome's largest public park, near the Valle Giulia area. Its neighbours are the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Rome, Rome's Modern Art Gallery and several foreign institutes for art and history.

Two great directors were the driving force in the history of the school: Thomas Ashby and John Ward Perkins, the latter being one of the longest serving directors (1946 to 1974). Many remember Ashby for his wide range of interests, intensive work as an archaeologist and topographer and for his understanding of the documentary value of photography which numbered around 9000 photographs. Thomas Ashby accumulated pages of notes, a huge number of publications and a large collection of rare books which now form an important part of the Library and Photographic Archive of the British School at Rome. It is an excellent library, which, apart from the BSR scholars, is also open to the general public who can join the membership scheme.

The British School at Rome was set up for archaeologists, architects and artists making it "An extraordinary place where a remarkable group of people come together every year. There is a sense of community and working together in the heart of Rome", commented Professor Christopher Smith, the current Director. It is a melting pot offering scholars from different areas with an eclectic mix of skills and interests the rare opportunity to meet and talk to each other about their experiences. The School is proud about how this exchange has led many to the highest levels of professional achievement and recognition.

The BSR offers outstanding artists and scholars grants to come and stay in Rome and do research in Italy for a few months. They are supported by a small staff who have access to the very best

Professor Christopher Smith

that this wonderful city can offer. Many archives are based in the capital. The scope of the BSR today is "For humanities, research and to promote knowledge of aspects of art, history and culture", introducing British and Commonwealth scholars to a whole world of art and history.

When asked about relations between the BSR and the Italian authorities, Christopher Smith replied: "Italian support is in kind, granting the land and the premises and having close relations with the authorities. There is trust and respect between ourselves and the Italian authorities, who have been very open to what we bring. It is a bridge. We bring talent. We also hold lectures and exhibitions".

The BSR archaeological team have been involved in various important projects in collaboration with the local Soprintendenze, such as the Sentinum Marche Project, the Tiber Valley Project and the Pompeii Project just to name a few. One of the most important projects is the Herculaneoum Conservation Project, which was set up by David W. Packard, President of the Packard Humanities Institute in the USA, with the aim of supporting the Italian State through the the local heritage authority the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archaeologici di Napoli e Pompei. The archaeological site was in danger of imminent collapse, while decorative features had become endangered, requiring urgent material and financial support to stop further damage. The British School at Rome has been involved in the project for its expertise as a third active partner with the aim of preserving this uniquely valuable yet fragile archaeological site of the ancient city of Herculaneum.

The challenging task of the British School at Rome is to advance knowledge for scholars, safeguard and conserve cultural heritage and offer understanding and public awareness of the arts, architecture, history and archaeology. Such efforts are qualities to be appreciated not only now, but also by future generations. When asked about future projects for the BSR, Christopher Smith replied: "Our major project for the future is to address the remaining challenges of the building, such as creating more space and repairing the original roof making it watertight, being able to regenerate electricity considering the rise in electricity costs, in other words having a sustainable building in the 21st century". Thanks to establishments such as these, great discoveries have changed the past bringing history to light through visual signs. The British School at Rome is too important to lose.

Facade of The British School at Rome

LONDON MEMORIAL TO ARANDORA STAR VICTIMS

Our chairman Charles de Chassiron represented the Society at an important symbolic event in London, the formal unveiling on 2nd July 2012 by the Italian Consul-General of a memorial in St Peter's Italian Church to the 240 London-resident Italians who died in the Arandora Star disaster of 2nd July 1940. They were among nearly 500 Italian victims of the German torpedo attack on a British ship carrying recently-detained Italians (and some Germans) to Canada, shortly after the wholesale detention of enemy aliens was decided on in the aftermath of Mussolini's declaration of war against Britain. The death toll would have been even greater had not the Canadian Navy rescued survivors.

Similar monuments exist already in Liverpool, Glasgow, Middlesbrough and Cardiff, as well as in several Italian cities, but the largest group of those lost, the victims born or resident in London, is now at last fittingly commemorated more than 70 years on. The unveiling was preceded by a Mass said in both languages, and the service was attended by many of the children and grandchildren of those who died, and also by the Mayors of Islington and Camden and the local MP, Frank Dobson. Money for the plaque (which is made of glass) had been collected among the Italian community of London, thanks to efforts by a group of Trustees led by the Mazzini-Garibaldi Foundation's Domenic Pini.

The maritime disaster was followed by a parliamentary enquiry held that far-off autumn, which in turn led to the suspension of the whole policy of internment, which had been brought in too hastily amid fear of fifth-columnists, and had netted many obviously harmless people. In every other way the tragic sinking of the Arandora Star was and remains a painful example of the many terrible things that happen in wartime. The monument is on the southern wall of the Church and is well worth a visit.

FOSCOLO A LONDRA

By Maurizia Trowell Angelino

Ugo Foscolo arrivò esule a Londra l'11 settembre 1816, accompagnato dal suo segretario Antonio Calbo, con poche risorse finanziarie, ma con molte speranze. Si sentiva exul immeritus, vittima immolata alla libertà tradita dal vento di restaurazione che allora soffiava sull'Europa, ma, ben conscio delle sue capacità artistico- letterarie (coscienza che non l'abbandonò mai sino all'ultimo suo respiro), sperava di trovare nella società inglese una sorta di riscatto che conducesse alla piena affermazione del suo valore. A tale riconoscimento si sarebbe accompagnata quella vita 'inimitabile' di lusso sfarzoso che da sempre sognava.

La realtà fu molto diversa e gli anni inglesi furono per Foscolo una progressiva parabola discendente che lo videro approdare alla povertà, alla malattia ed infine alla morte, avvenuta il 10 settembre 1827. Inizialmente le sue aspettative sembrarono incontrare favore, in quanto il poeta, circondato dal suo alone di fama e di sventura fu ben presto accolto con simpatia non aliena da ammirazione presso i salotti letterari, in particolare quello tenuto da Lord e Lady Holland, dei quali divenne ospite frequente. Lì conobbe l'editore John Murray, che pubblicherà molte sue opere. Frequentava anche la casa di William Stewart Rose che divenne suo grande amico, come in seguito il ricco banchiere Hudson Gurney. Nel desiderio di sentirsi 'alla pari' con i suoi protettori-ospiti non badò a spese nell'ammobiliare e rendere confortevoli le numerose dimore in cui venne ad abitare. Foscolo ebbe un rapporto difficile con il denaro, da un lato inseguito come indispensabile strumento di una vita di lusso eccentrico, dall'altro disprezzato come vile blasone dei borghesi arricchiti dalla rivoluzione industriale che l'Inghilterra stava allora appieno vivendo. Il suo disprezzo per i nuovi ricchi appare evidente in una lettera indirizzata il 12 giugno 1822 a Lady Dacre da Sale, cara amica del Foscolo ed entusiasta traduttrice del Petrarca. La missiva è scritta subito dopo una visita a Manchester, che lo aveva messo a contatto con la nuova società industriale: *"... qui* (a Manchester) *regna solo la più orrenda delle tirannie, quella degli oligarchi padroni delle manifatture, i quali non hanno altro sentimento o pensiero, che quello di far fortuna, dando pel maggior lavoro possibile il minor pane possibile".*

Il denaro è tuttavia il protagonista più importante dell'ultima parte della vita-romanzo del poeta: continuamente assillato dai creditori, Foscolo cercò in tutti i modi di ottenere compensi dai suoi editori, con cui però ebbe relazioni ambigue. Nonostante egli lavorasse indefessamente, i guadagni non riuscirono mai a provvedere al pagamento degli impegni-cambiali. Quasi sempre i suoi grandi amici e protettori (in particolare gli amici e benefattori di sempre, Gurney, Taylor ed Higgins) lo salvarono dalla bancarotta, ma nel 1824 il poeta finì, se pur brevemente, in prigione per debiti. Anche i suoi rapporti personali subirono una fase calante forse a causa del suo carattere indubbiamente difficile. Alterno fu pure il suo rapporto con gli esuli italiani da cui egli volutamente prese da loro le distanze . Essi criticavano la sua vita, il suo altalenare tra debiti e sotterfugi per sfuggire ai creditori, la sua generalizzata polemica contro l'Italia postnapoleonica a livello sia politico che letterario.

Del resto Foscolo, più che essere il portatore delle nuove idee liberali (di cui quegli esuli erano sostenitori), proponeva una *weltanshauung* di ribellione all'ordine costituito, quale che esso fosse! Come molti critici concordano, Foscolo amava considerarsi ed era un *déraciné*, in conflitto con qualsiasi sistema costituito: nemico feroce dell'assolutismo pre-rivoluzionario, critico interno del sistema napoleonico nato dalla rivoluzione, incapace di inserirsi nel clima liberale dell'Inghilterra degli anni '20! Tuttavia la vita di Foscolo in Inghilterra non fu solo una 'corsa al precipizio' che lo portò alla morte in quasi totale isolamento: il poeta ebbe anche alcuni momenti 'felici' o quanto meno positivi. Tra questi sicuramente trova spazio la storia d'amore per Caroline Russell, cantata con il nome di Calliroe (fonte dalle belle acque).

Per te, Calliroe!..ma dall'Amore e dagli anni
apprendo come la Fantasia passa
destandosi dalla gioia al pianto...

Caroline era una degli 11 figli di Lord Henry Russell di Swallowfield, la cui casa Foscolo iniziò a frequentare alla fine del 1818. In un primo tempo attratto dalla sorella Catherine, già maritata, in seguito spostò la sua attenzione su Caroline, una ragazza piena di buon senso e 'con i piedi per terra'! Caroline, pur stimando ed ammirando il poeta, non aveva alcuna intenzione di corrispondere alle sue proposte e probabilmente lo vedeva come una figura matura da considerare con rispetto.

L'amore per Foscolo, almeno quando prende la penna in mano, è sempre unico, completo, eterno.

" Tu sarai l'ultimo eterno amore di questo giovane sfortunato..." aveva scritto ad Antonietta Fagnani Arese *" Io vi amerò sempre, ve lo giuro da profondo del cuore, vi amerò sino all'estremo sospiro"* a Francesca Giovio, *"..senza di te sarei nulla"* a Lucietta Frapolli. La lista potrebbe procedere assai a lungo... Forse questa lunga serie di amori non è tanto il riflesso di una vita condotta tra ribellione e libertinaggio, quanto l'espressione della concezione assoluta dell'amore di Foscolo: ogni storia in quel momento è 'il tutto' ed in quanto tale sembra essere inesauribile ed eterna.

Un capitolo imprevedibile nella vita del Foscolo si aprì nel 1817 quando improvvisamente scopri' di avere una figlia che ebbe occasione di frequentare.

FLORIANA

Sol chi non lascia eredita' d'affetti...

Mary Emerytt, da Foscolo ribattezzata Floriana, era il frutto di una relazione avuta dal poeta con una giovane inglese, Sophie Hamilton, della cui famiglia era divenuto amico, allorchè, nel lontano 1804, era preposto alla guarnigione di Valenciennes, dove erano confinati anche alcuni cittadini inglesi che non erano riusciti a ritornare in patria. Foscolo casualmente incontrò, durante un suo soggiorno ad East Molesey, l'allora dodicenne fanciulla nel salotto di Miss Pamela Fitzgerald, appunto vicina di casa di Mrs.Emerytt, un'anziana signora che viveva con la giovane nipote. La fanciulla aveva perso la madre

e mai conosciuto il padre, su cui tuttavia faceva numerose domande alla nonna. Mrs. Emerytt confidò al Foscolo la sua paternità segreta, permettendogli di frequentare Floriana, con la promessa di non rivelarle per il momento la vera natura del legame che li univa. Foscolo promise, ma con il suo charme gentile riuscì ben presto ad accattivarsi le simpatie della ragazzina, che pianse a dirotto, allorchè, un bel giorno d'autunno, il poeta si congedò dalle Emerytt , annunciando il suo ritorno a Londra, a causa di serie questioni di lavoro.

Qualche anno dopo, nel 1822, l'anziana Mrs. Emerytt morì: la lettura del testamento, cui erano presenti due avvocati amici, Higgins e Taylor, Floriana, ed il signor Hughes (così Foscolo era conosciuto agli Emerytt) riservò non poche sorprese. La verità della paternità di Foscolo venne finalmente rivelata, anche se ingentilita dalla pietosa bugia di un avvenuto matrimonio tra Hughes e Sophie. Dalla nonna Floriana ereditò beni per il valore di circa £ 3,000, una somma per quei tempi discreta e, se ben amministrata, capace di permettere il decoroso mantenimento della giovane. Nel testamento Floriana era affidata alle cure degli avvocati Higgins e Taylor, ma soprattutto al Signor Ugo Foscolo. Il poeta interpretò forse oltre la lettera la volontà di Mrs.Emerytt ed immediatamente si sentì 'proprietario' di quella piccola fortuna che il destino gli aveva inaspettatamente messo tra le mani. E' ben nota la tragica vicenda di quelle 3.000 sterline che, grazie a speculazioni sbagliate e scelte finanziarie assurde, si esaurirono ben presto, riportando nuovamente il Foscolo sul lastrico ed alle soglie della bancarotta.

Grazie all'eredità di Floriana, egli acquistò un lotto di terreno in St. John's Wood, dove si fece costruire una villa che corrispondesse a tutte le sue aspirazioni. La chiamò Digamma Cottage, certamente riferendosi alla forma del perduto digamma greco riprodottosi nella lettera maiuscola F, che chiaramente richiamava il suo nome! Il poeta certo non bado' a spese, anzi si lascio' trascinare da visioni megalomaniacali se rapportate ai suoi mezzi reali, e nell'autunno del 1822, entro' trionfalmente nella nuova dimora, che contava ben 13 stanze! Fu un momento di grande gioia, anche se di brevissima durata, perche' egli non fu in grado di coprire tutte le spese.

Il Digamma Cottage fu alla fine venduto ed il ricavato finì interamente nelle mani dei creditori. Mutando frequentemente nome e residenza per evitare di essere rintracciato, nell'aprile del 1827 Foscolo finì per vivere in una modesta casa a Turnham Green, dove trascorse gli ultimi dolorosi mesi della sua vita.

Ormai pressochè immobile a causa dell'idropisia che da un paio d'anni lo tormentava, deterioro' progressivamente, nonostante le affettuose cure della figlia Floriana, sino a che il 10 settembre morì.

Il poco denaro da lui lasciato a stento bastò per i funerali e soltanto l'aiuto dei suoi amici permise la sepoltura nel cimitero di St.Nicholas a Chiswick: la sua 'prima tomba' fu dunque un semplice tumulo di terra , che però sottrasse le spoglie del poeta all'offesa della fossa comune. Tuttavia, già pochi giorni dopo la sua sepoltura, l'amico Gurney, diede l'incarico ad Edgard Taylor di posare sulla tomba una pietra recante il nome, l'età e la data della morte del Foscolo, scritti in latino. Tale pietra si trovava tuttavia in una zona di grande passaggio e ben presto l'iscrizione divenne illeggibile. Gurney, forse ricordando come la tomba fosse l'estrema illusione del Foscolo, certamente ben al corrente della processione di esuli italiani che si recavano a Chiswick come in pellegrinaggio, nel 1861 decise di costruire all'amico-poeta un vero e proprio sepolcro, destinato a continuare la "*corrispondenza d' amorosi sensi*" tra i visitatori pietosi ed il grande vate. Della realizzazione venne affidato l'incarico a Carlo Marochetti, scultore oggi forse dimenticato, ma che ai tempi godeva di grande fama.

Il volto della tomba non era pomposo, ma esprimeva nobile dignità: una sorta di parallelepipedo in granito evocante l'ara romana, elevato sopra un piedistallo, recante in inglese l'indicazione delle date del poeta: " UGO FOSCOLO- Died September 10,1827 - Aged 50".

Nel 1871, su iniziativa del Parlamento italiano, il Senatore Angelo Bargoni, ricevette l'incarico di attuare il trasferimento delle spoglie del Foscolo da Chiswick a Santa Croce. La riesumazione fu effettuata una mattina di maggio e le spoglie del poeta furono definitivamente trasferite in Santa Croce il 24 giugno 1871. Sulla tomba, rimasta vuota, fu collocata un'iscrizione che ricordava il rimpatrio:

'From the sacred guardianship of Chiswick to the honours of Santa Croce, in Florence, The Government and people of Italy have transported The remains of the wearied Citizen Poet, ... This spot, where for 44 years the Relics of Ugo Foscolo Reposed in honoured Custody, Will be forever held in grateful Remembrance by the Italian Nation.

Maurizia Trowell Angelino è stata professore di Ruolo Ordinario presso i licei ed istituti di scuola superiore. Nel suo ultimo incarico ha insegnato lettere italiane e latine nel triennio superiore al liceo G. Segrè di Torino.

Ugo Foscolo's tomb, Basilica of Sante Croce, Florence

PIEDMONT ON A PLATE

By Alexandra Richardson

In the plush surrounds of the historic Del Cambio Restaurant in central Turin, where red velvet banquettes, glittering chandeliers and soaring mirrors all reign, it is the *profumo di storia* which still sometimes vies for attention today. It was here that Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, the first prime minister of the Kingdom of Italy, regularly came to appease his generous waistband. At the Cambio, he was within easy reach of the Palazzo Carignano (Parliament) where he had his office, just across the square. But no doubt, he *could* turn his attention elsewhere momentarily from politics to some of the glories of Piedmontese cuisine which are still firmly anchored to the menu today. Indeed, over two and a half centuries later, the Ristorante del Cambio continues to serve up some of those same magnificent dishes from Cavour's day which make this north western region of Italy such a magnet for memorable eating. *Cardo gobbo di Nizza Monferrato con vellutata al Castelmagno. Agnolotti tradizionali. La finanziera. Manzo brasato al Barolo. Il Gran Fritto Misto.*

Cambridge's culinary columnist Tim Hayward recently characterised the cooking of this corner of the country as "having the accent more on dairy rather than on the familiar ingredients of the Mediterranean". A look at any map, which shows the distance between Turin and the French border as scarcely 55 miles, proves him absolutely right. Think of butter, cream, cheese, all so dear to the classical French kitchen nearby. Anxious to illustrate even tighter cross-border links, some are quick to point out that one of the earliest native cookbooks, written in 1766, is entitled *"Il cuoco piemontese perfezionato a Parigi".* Others remind us that French recipes crept across the Alps and that even French terms, like soufflé, gattò (gâteau) and sartù made it into the local vocabulary. And that Cavour dispatched his own chef off to France for training.

But just one minute. Be all that as it may, what about some of the *other* unique hallmarks of the Piedmontese table, dishes with a hint of neither dairy nor Francophilia? *Bagna caôda, grissini, bollito misto* and *giandujotti,* for instance, which would be unpardonable to exclude from the local pantheon. The truth is that Piedmont eating has it all. In spades. What is more, it has varied eye-pleasing landscapes to go along with the experience, doubling- no, make that tripling - the pleasure. Just glance at the regional entries for "worth-a-detour" starred restaurants in Michelin's red guide to Italy: it is a veritable snowstorm of flakes over the Piedmont pages! And surely it cannot be an accident that the famed Slow Food movement to protect and nurture "endangered" food products was born and is still based in the region, at Bra.

Piedmont spreads out over 9806 square miles, has a population of 4.4 million and counts eight provinces within its borders. Its majestic Alps wrap around the edges of nearly three-quarters of the region, almost making you forget that it boasts vast stretches of flatland as well, home to its rice fields and gentle slopes where many of its magnificent vineyards are deeply rooted.

Whichever of those eight provinces one goes to, richness is characteristic in more ways than one. Unapologetic bounty on the table is often on full display: antipasti – *assaggi* - appear in multiples of ten. No self-respecting *bollito* counts less than six varieties of meat. When the Cambio unleashes its *Gran Fritto Misto*, reckon on no fewer than 35 ingredients, including sweetbreads, liver, aubergines, artichokes, sweet semolina fritters and amaretti biscuits. But the piedmontese, when called for, also know how to exercise restraint. Sliced raw peppers, cardoons, celery and fennel dipped into a bubbling little brew of oil, anchovies and garlic is, like its name bagna caôda (hot bath), simplicity itself. As is a plate of tartare-like *insalata di carne cruda*, crowned with shavings of parmesan, white truffle and no more. Or that most pared-down appetite-calmer of all, the humble but addictive grissini, Turin's breadstick gift to the world. The only concession to variety there is whether to have them *stirati* –flattish – or *rubati* or plumper!

Say the word "Asti" and "spumante" immediately springs to mind. Fair enough. Piedmont has some 250 wine producers and those of the Asti area, who make the sweet sparkling white wine so favoured for toasting newlyweds, weigh in with a formidable 80 million bottles of it annually. But turn your attention elsewhere for a moment. Did you know that Asti, the city of the so-called "100 Towers", stages one of the very best regular open-air food markets of the entire region? "Italy for the Gourmet Traveler," a premier culinary guide, ranks it among the top five food markets for the entire country. Every Wednesday and Saturday morning sprawled over three central piazze the finest cheeses of the region are on display. The locals know a lot about cheese: they make over 100 varieties. Six have DOP or Denominazione Origine Protetta status. The little fresh white thimble-shaped Toma, for example, are very popular with a splash of olive oil and finely chopped parsley, while the creamy Robiola of Roccaverano, mixing sheep with goat, is best on its own. If you prefer more of a bite, then perhaps a sampling of Raschera from the Alto Monferrato will appeal. Although the oozy blue-veined Gorgonzola originally hailed from Lombardy, today the bulk of it is made across the border at Novara. Many vote Castelmagno, though, with its hard, salty and crumbly texture and homely crust as the real aristocrat of Piedmontese cheeses and delight in presenting it with a swirl of honey. In all, it is reckoned that Piedmont produces 30,000 quintals of cheese a year. The quintessential display is at the biennial cheese festival held over four days in the autumn at Bra under the auspices of the Slow Food movement. Count on seeing the samples of about 200 international cheese producers. At these events, not only are Piedmont's principle producers present but also the far smaller makers from remote mountain *malghe*.

The *Langhe* is that slightly elusive, borderless southern part of the region that spreads over the provinces of Asti, Cuneo and Alessandria. It is a beautiful hilly landscape with a smattering of attractive castles and picturesque villages. Alongside the cathedrals, there is even a rich heritage of 17th and 18th century synagogues in some of the towns like Saluzzo and Mondovì attesting to the historical Jewish communities there. But it is the rolling acres of vineyards which will inform you that this is the true heartland of Italy's classiest red wines. The finest Barolos, Barbarescos, Dolcettos and Barberas come from the soil of the Langhe and the best time to see the vineyards spring to life is the early autumn, at harvest time. The full-bodied Barolo is given over not only to the glass but also to a hearty slow-cooking

White truffles of Alba

brasato al barolo braised beef best eaten on a cold winter's day. It is in the Langhe , too, that two beloved Piedmontese pasta dishes originated: *agnolotti del plin* ("plin" is dialect for "pinch", the traditional manner in which the ravioli pouch is sealed close) and the super-thin *tajarin*, dialect for taglierini. What helps to further localise both of these primi, of course, is a generous grating of white truffles from neighbouring Alba. The *Tuber magnatum* has long flourished in the ground surrounding Alba in such quantities to merit an annual truffle fair held in late October through early November which draws many visitors. At £60 per 10 grams, though, you may wish to go easy on the slicer over your plate. The prized hazelnuts of Piedmont – 85% of them are produced in the province of Cuneo - are central to some of the native desserts. Ice creams, *torta di nocciole*, *giandujotti*. This last item took its name from the carnival mask, *gianduja*. And of course, there is the renowned Nutella spread, another user of hazelnuts. If you prefer chocolate, you will not have to look farther than the streets of Cuneo for those rum-laced *cuneesi*, rivalling the best chocolates of Turin.

With the mountains to your back, look east now to the flat terrain of Piedmont. The rice lands of Vercelli and Novara. Nearly 600,000 acres are under cultivation, making Italy the leading rice producer of Europe, with 1.3 million tons per year. Even Thomas Jefferson, when he was U.S. Minister to France, knew what a valued treasure this short and fat grain was, which was capable of soaking up cooking broth like a blotter. In April 1787, thinking it to be superior to American rice, he slipped into Piedmont. He knew full well that taking unhusked rice out of the area was then a crime punishable by death. Risking that fate, this determined agrarian experimenter stuffed his coat pockets full of grain and hustled back to Paris. Sent back home to America, alas, it did not take to its new environment and was abandoned. Interestingly, although rice is very much a product of Piedmont – be it the Carnaroli, Arborio orVialone nano variety - it was Lombardy which hijacked this ingredient to develop their most splendid *risotto alla milanese* dish, brightened yellow with saffron. The novaresi responded by coming up with their own savoury rice dish, *paniscia* - a soupier blend of rice, sausage, cheese and diced vegetables. The sausage, incidentally, is more precisely a salame called *d'la duja*, preserved in barrels of lard. Nearby Vercelli has a similar dish – they call theirs *panissa* – to which they add borlotti beans.

The tour through the pots and pans of Piedmont could easily continue. There is that elegant platter of *finanziera* starring many lesser known parts of the chicken anatomy like gizzards and cockscombs. Or one could sigh over a wedge of *bonet* which deftly amalgamates amaretti biscuits and chocolate. Or swoon over a *Monte Bianco* using the region's marron-type chestnuts. But maybe it's time to leave the table and round off this serendipitous trip through the food of Piedmont. What better way to complete this fantasy visit than right back in Turin with a coffee finale at one of its many historic *caffés*? Take your pick: Al Bicerin, the Caffé Torino, Baratti & Milano, Mulassano.

Buon appetito!

A FAMILY IN TURMOIL: THE ITALIAN EXILE

By Georgina Gordon-Ham

Suffering is one very long moment.
We cannot divide it by seasons.

Oscar Wilde, De Profundis

Italy has captivated people ever since the time of the Grand Tour, if not for centuries before. Hence, it is no surprise, when in Italy, to encounter directly or indirectly somebody who is or knows a celebrity. Some years back I met Dinah Vescovo at the Rome Luncheon Club, a British ladies association. It came up in casual conversation at one of these luncheon events that her great-aunt was Constance Mary Lloyd, the wife of Oscar Wilde. I was curious and at a later date would learn more.

Many have read Oscar Wilde's works, but few know about what happened to his family, that is, his wife and two sons Cyril and Vyvyan, after the scandal and their reaction to the incident. At the time, his sons were about seven and nine years old. They suddenly found themselves in the spotlight and the only way out was to disappear and go into exile far from their country and Victorian values. This also meant taking on a new identity by changing their surname to Holland. *Son of Oscar Wilde* by Vyvyan Holland (first published in 1954 by Rupert Hart Davis, London) and the interview with his Irish cousin Dinah Vescovo, née Holland Lloyd, gave some insight into the turmoil of this family and their connections with Italy. Also the recently published book *Constance, the Tragic and Scandalous Life of Mrs Oscar Wilde* by Franny Moyle (John Murray publisher) based on manuscripts and previously unpublished letters, in particular between Constance and her great friend Lady Mount-Temple, are invaluable.

Right from the beginning of the book one understands that Vyvyan Holland felt he had to write about what had really happened to the family. He begins by saying that his mother appeared in a dream telling him to talk about his childhood and loneliness. Vyvyan Holland dramatically portrays in detail his happy early years with a caring father followed by years in exile, his return to England and his adolescent years, and later his decision as a mature adult to lay to rest the bitter memory of those difficult years by recording them for posterity. He described it as "not a very amusing or entertaining story".

Many stories about Oscar Wilde have been told by people who loved him, who hated him and by people who did not even know him. So his son believed that it was time somebody in the family wrote something about their story and the tragic repercussions. Vyvyan said that the family, that is to say the children, never saw Oscar Wilde again after 1895. Hence, difficult times lay ahead turning into dark years of turmoil spent between Italy, Germany and France. Under the advice of his grandparents and relatives, the boys' mother Constance gave neither explanations with regard to reasons for the departure nor to their change of surname. It was forbidden to talk about their father as well. This heavy atmosphere was confirmed by their cousin Dinah Vescovo whose grandfather was Otho Holland Lloyd, Constance's brother. Otho helped his sister bring up Cyril and Vyvyan.

Italy was chosen, Dinah Vescovo explained because their "mother liked Italian poetry, she knew many pieces by Dante by heart and had already read Petrarca and Tasso, besides the fact that it was best for the boys to be far away from England. Constance went to live for a while in Bordighera with the two boys". Letters reveal that Constance had visited Italy in early 1893 to escape from wintry London leaving Oscar to his own devices. She left on a sort of grand tour travelling with friends and relatives visiting Florence, Pisa, Rome and other parts. She was so enthusiastic about Italy that she began to take photos of everything with her Kodak camera. Some photos of this holiday still survive today. She was so imbued with Florentine art and culture that she even thought at one point that she and Oscar might actually go and live in Florence: "... I love Florence with a passionate love and yearning as I have never loved any place before, only people. Still I don't know whether I shall get Oscar out here, though he does speak of it as a possibility, and to me it seems more than a possibility, a delightful future to look forward to".

All her joys of an Italian 'soggiorno' crumbled when she got back to England to find Oscar was not there to greet her. Matters got worse and worse. When asked about Oscar Wilde seeing his children after coming out of jail, Dinah Vescovo said that Wilde was never allowed to visit them: "No, my great-aunt gave him some money when he came out of prison, but he was not allowed to see his children again. Letters were hidden from the family, and in particular from the children whom he was very fond of". Yet further correspondence reveals a bit of a different story. It seems that Constance remained directly and indirectly in touch with Oscar Wilde, but kept the children out of it and unaware of these contacts.

That passion for Italy became her second love. Constance returned to live in Italy and got a villa at Bogliasco, just outside Nervi. Villa Elvira seemed to be the ideal place to rebuild a new life. However, letters written in 1897 reveal that she was ready to allow Oscar to come and visit her and the children at the villa without prying eyes: "... I have an idea that he will turn up some day without writing". Although he desperately wanted to see his sons and had planned accordingly, once again he let the family down by delaying his visit by a month and going to Naples in the company of what Constance called "the dreadful person".

Constance died in Genoa in 1898 and was buried in the Protestant section of the city's Staglieno cemetery. Mrs Vescovo recalled how she came across an article about Constance's grave saying that nothing was written on it about her great-aunt being the wife of Oscar Wilde. "It was not right", commented Dinah, and that is why in the mid 1960s she and her Italian husband Dante Vescovo went to the cemetery in Genoa and ordered to be engraved on the tomb the words "Wife of Oscar Wilde". This had not gone unnoticed by Oscar Wilde himself who visited Constance's grave in 1899 remarking to a friend Robbie Ross: "It was very tragic seeing her name carved on a tomb – her surname, my name not mentioned of course – Just Constance Mary, daughter of Horace Lloyd QC....I bought her some flowers. I was deeply affected – with a sense also of the uselessness of all regrets. Nothing could have been otherwise and life is a terrible thing".

Dinah knew her cousin Vyvyan well and they had several chats about the family before he died in 1967. Cyril was killed during the first World War. "Both boys were affected by the tragic family events, in particular the elder son Cyril, who, perhaps, decided to die in battle. He had a fixation about death. Vyvyan was not so pessimistic as Cyril. He was younger and very attached to his father. He was puzzled by the sudden silence and mystery. My grandfather Otho had a son also called Otho, and he was among the people who told Vyvyan about these events when he was eighteen". Vyvyan never forgave them for hiding the incident: "I do not know how they told him the facts, but from then onwards he could never stand the sight of them. Vyvyan was also very fond of his mother. He used to speak about her, but he was very proud of his father. He did not like Italy. I remember that when I told him that I preferred Italy to France, he did not agree with me. Perhaps he associated Italy with the hard times spent in exile".

The following verses from Oscar Wilde's Ballad of Reading Goal are most appropriate and best encapsulate the feelings of such tragic repercussions:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard.
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word.
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

REMEMBERING THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY IN YOUR WILL

From time to time, the Society receives sums left to it by members in their wills and is immensely grateful to all. Such gifts have not only allowed us to continue our present activities but also to launch new initiatives (such as the biennial Rooke Prizes in Italian studies, which the Society is able to fund as a result of a bequest from the late Rosemary Rooke. These prizes reward undergraduate and graduate work in UK universities).

If you enjoy the Society's events and activities and would like them to continue for the benefit of future generations of Italophiles, leaving a legacy to the Society is one way of ensuring that they will. Any bequest, no matter how small, will be very gratefully received. It would be helpful to our planning to know of your intentions.

We emphasise the importance of consulting a solicitor about drawing up a will (or a codicil to an existing will): real difficulties can result from the well-intentioned efforts of the do-it-yourself testamentary draftsman. In this connection, the Society will gladly send your solicitor any information that is required.

If you are interested in doing this, please contact our Membership Secretary, John Jinks, on **020 815 09167** or by e-mail **info@british-italian.org**.

TRIBUTE TO EARTHQUAKE-STRICKEN REGGIO EMILIA AND SURROUNDING AREAS

The British-Italian Society would like to remember all the people affected by the earthquakes, which struck the bordering areas of the provinces of Modena, Ferrara, Reggio Emilia and Mantua. Our thoughts go out to all the families and rescuers who worked so hard to save who and what they could. The aftermath of the events has left yet another human and cultural tragedy which may take years to heal.

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WHEN IN ROME

Matthew Sturgis Frances Lincoln Ltd. £20

Books on Rome there are aplenty. This one has a particular twist: the changing tastes through more than two millennia of those who visited the city, what they wanted to see and what had ceased to interest them, the rise and decline, for example, of enthusiasm for Guido Reni, classical statuary or Baroque architecture. In his preface Sturgis notes tellingly that his 1908 Baedeker praised the Domenichino frescoes in S. Luigi dei Francesi, while making no mention of the Caravaggios that so many visitors to that church now line up to see.

To an extent, tourists see what they are told to see. But, as Sturgis rightly points out, they come to Rome with their own cultural and emotional prejudices. What the classically educated foreigners on the eighteenth century Grand Tour admired above all were Rome's classical remains, not least the statues and other works of art that excavations from the Renaissance onwards had uncovered, such as the Laocoon so praised by Pliny. What the early nineteenth century Romantics wanted to see were, yes, classical ruins, but more as symbols of death and decay capable of touching one's emotions than as objects of beauty and fine workmanship in their own right. And it was not until much later, partly under Ruskin's influence, partly because of the general reawakening of interest in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, that the works of Fra Angelico or Lippi were again to be appreciated. Gems like the fortified church of Quattro Coronati are still largely passed by.

Another factor that coloured travellers' reactions was Rome's own relative importance in the European scheme of things. At the height of the Roman Empire, when the city had a million or so inhabitants – more than it would have again until after the Second World War – there was no question but that all roads led to Rome. When Constantius II visited the city in 357 it was Trajan's Forum that most excited him. (Little now remains of it save Trajan's wonderful column, and it is his adjoining market that now attracts attention, not just because much of it is still standing but because, I think, it provides a human insight into the everyday life of the period that much of the overall Forum complex fails to provide). Similar respect was paid to Renaissance Rome, with its fine new buildings of the popes and the nobility, at a time when London and Paris had nothing comparable to offer. By contrast, the wealthy English and other foreign visitors of the eighteenth century found the city dirty and rather backward, though no doubt a Protestant upbringing often affected their judgement.

Some buildings have of course retained their five-star status throughout the centuries: St Peter's, the Pantheon, the Spanish Steps and the Colosseum, despite complaints in earlier times about its invasion by market stalls, hermits and squatters. In the field of art, the same is true of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, though earlier visitors appear to have preferred his Last Judgement whereas today all eyes and necks go upwards to the ceiling. Raphael continues to be admired, though again as Sturgis notes it is less his famous paintings in the Vatican than La Fornarina that people flock to see, perhaps (and this is true of Caravaggio too) because she touches modern sensibility more closely. Elsewhere, tastes have gone up and down. The catacombs are again a tourist attraction, as they have not been (albeit for different reasons) since the Dark Ages. Statuary bores, while S Clemente, with its four levels of historical occupancy, excites. Other rediscoveries owe much of their fame to Hollywood: the Bocca della Verità (Roman Holiday) or the Trevi Fountain (Three Coins in the Fountain).

Before the twentieth century it was common to spend an entire winter in Rome. Now many have only a week or less at their disposal; and the star system (first invented by Baedeker) becomes an indispensable dictator. There is simply too much to see. The Victorians had this problem too; not that they did not have more time at their disposal but that they were conscientious and thorough beyond measure. One thinks of an already ageing Wordsworth: "I was never good at sightseeing yet it must be done. I have kept duty constantly in my eyes". One edition of Murray's Red Guides listed 46 books that the attentive traveller should read, "though strictly limited to works of modern date", including 18 volumes of Gregorovius in German, two 4-volume tomes on ancient Rome in French and German, while as for churches there was a 4-volume work by Fontana in Italian to which Tosi's 5 volumes were "a very useful supplement". Google and Wikipedia pall by comparison.

Sturgis has bravely taken on a huge subject, and it is probably best appreciated by those who already know Rome well. He writes clearly if densely, and the beginner may be confused by the sheer wealth of information, as also by the relative absence of maps to guide him. There is a deeper problem. We don't go to Rome simply to see the sights but to enjoy all the other pleasures that Rome has to offer, from pottering around the markets to sitting down in a good restaurant, to resting in one of Rome's remaining gardens, like the Celimontana. Now in fairness that wasn't the task that Sturgis set himself. But for a fuller description of why Britons came to Rome and what they did and enjoyed once they got there, John Pemble's "The Mediterranean Passion" – which concentrates on the nineteenth century – still seems to me as good as any; and for a more modern, if less academic take on Rome I've enjoyed Jonathan Boardman's book on the city. I learnt an awful lot from Sturgis' book that I didn't know before (like John Evelyn's impressions during his stay in Rome in 1644-5), and I shall visit some of the sites he mentions with a new awareness of their significance (or lack thereof) over the centuries. But perhaps at heart I am too disorganised a traveller?

Tom Richardson

SENZA ARTE NÈ PARTE

Francesco Savorgnan Edizioni SIMPLE €10

Si legge con piacere e momenti di puro divertimento questo piccolo libro di Francesco Savorgnan, pubblicato nel 2011. Ma non fatevi ingannare dalla svagatezza del titolo o dalla irresistibile trovata finale della litania, più o meno garbata, di rifiuto alla pubblicazione da parte delle case editrici italiane più note.

C'è altro, oltre la risata, dietro questo libretto autobiografico, surreale come un quadro di Chagall.

A cominciare dalla trama che, per l'andamento rapsodico dei capitoli, c'è e non c'è: figlio di diplomatici, viaggiatore suo malgrado per tutta l'infanzia e la giovinezza, Francesco riapproda a Roma, sua città di origine, senza "arte nè parte" appunto. Sradicato com'è, fatica all'inizio a trovare un suo equilibrio: la fortuna lo aiuta nel campo degli affetti ma non nel mondo del lavoro. Rinunciando ad una collocazione stabile si mette a fare di tutto: dal traslocatore all'interprete, oltre ad una serie di altri improbabili lavoretti saltuari che gli consentono, però, di fare gli incontri più strani e di vivere le più strampalate situazioni. Memorabili, fra gli altri, il trasloco per Italo Calvino, la partita a tennis con Giorgio Bassani, l'autore ricordato da molti per il suo romanzo *Il giardino dei Finzi-Contini*, e l'irresistibile episodio delle scarpe ritrovate.

Ma è proprio nella condizione di marginalità, in parte voluta, in parte subita dal protagonista che risiede il sottile fascino del libro. Infatti, da questo suo essere "fuori" (fuori arte, fuori parte) scaturisce un punto di osservazione stravagante ma anche privilegiato che permette all'autore di vedere e, in certi momenti di smascherare, con divertito disincanto, storture e conformismi della nostra società borghese.

Francesco Savorgnan discende da una nobile famiglia friulana che ha dato i natali, fra gli altri, all'illustre esploratore Pietro Savorgnan di Brazzà, da cui il nome della capitale del Congo Brazzaville. L'autore del libro è nato a Roma nel 1949, ha studiato e viaggiato in molti paesi extraeuropei e, in particolare in Sudamerica. Attualmente risiede con la famiglia tra Roma e Orvieto. Appassionato di automodellismo è anche musicista e pittore dilettante: compone infatti canzoni di tono surreale e produce quadri *naïf* molto originali, come del resto il suo stesso personaggio.

In appendice al libro si trova una piccola curiosità che potrà senz'altro interessare i lettori di "RIVISTA": si tratta di uno scambio di lettere tra l'autore e la nipote del grande sarto italiano Missoni a proposito proprio del cognome Savorgnan:

Ciao Francesco

ma da quale ramo della famiglia Savorgnan discendi? Un' amica mi ha regalato un libro sulla vera storia di GIULIETTA E ROMEO; si dice che il 26 febbraio 2011 ricorreranno esattamente 500 anni dal primo incontro d'amore tra LUCINA SAVORGNAN e LUIGI DA PORTO nobili friulani la cui vicenda-a quanto pare-ha ispirato Shakespeare per la celebre tragedia. Ne sai qualcosa? Sarebbe divertente scoprire....

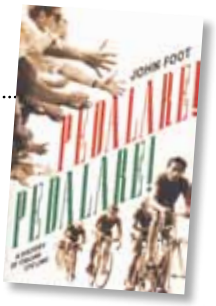
Ciao Elisabetta

Riguardo alla famiglia Savorgnan...io ho sposato una Giulietta-pensa un po' che coincidenza-ma non mi chiamo Romeo...anche se potrei cambiare nome! non so quasi niente delle origini della mia famiglia ahimè! forse siamo estinti...e comunque penso di provenire da un ramo assai oscuro. Comunque sono fiero di questo cognome dato che è una famiglia storica e, come mi disse il Prof. DEGANO noto storico del Friuli, lo stemma dei Savorgnan è...tieniti pronta!... LA BANDIERA DELL'UDINESE CALCIO SERIE A scusa se è poco! Se ci saranno notizie più certe riguardo a Lucina ti manderò la lettera che mi deve mandare Shakespeare...ah, dimenticavo: mio nonno è stato condannato a morte in contumacia per sua fortuna, quando decise di scappare dall'Austria (era austriaco ma di etnia italiana) e perse tutto quello che aveva laggiù: fu prima in Svizzera e poi a Cagliari dove insegnò statistica alla università. In quella città nacque italiano nel 1918 mio padre ...il resto lo sai. baci Francesco.

Marta Caporali

PEDALARE! PEDALARE! - A HISTORY OF ITALIAN CYCLING

John Foot Bloomsbury £14.99



Flashbacks of a childhood growing up on the Italian coast in the early 1950s: movies in *seconda visione* at the local cinema sitting on hard wooden seats, the *processione* weaving its way through narrow village streets with flickering candles and the porcelain-faced Madonna teetering perilously up on her perch, donning black *grembiuli* with lace collars to attend school, the spectacle of 25 flavours of ice creams to chose from at the *gelateria* every summer. And then, there were the bicycle races. One lined up elbow to elbow along the route – with children indulgently allowed in the very front – to watch that ephemeral moment when hoards of cyclists whooshed by. The excitement was palpable. You didn't have to speak the language or even understand the intricacies of the sport. It was enough to simply be there. Watching. Soaking up an excitement that absorbed the entire village.

Such memories flood back with John Foot's wonderful recent book *"Pedalare! Pedalare!"*. The author has painstakingly retraced the roots of the sport in fascinating detail, from the early manufacture of bicycles in Italy in the 1880s on forward to the present day. In a sense, it is also a social history of the country through these two-wheeled conveyances. If the purchase of a bike was at the outset within the means of only the middle class, that rapidly changed: price drops would soon put them within the reach of even the poor. But even then, the bicycle was a precious possession as was so poignantly portrayed in Vittorio De Sica's film *"Bicycle Thieves"*. Nonetheless, everyone seemingly was soon pedalling away and it would be a short interlude before it made the leap into a competitive sport. The French were in there first with the Tour de France race and Italy followed in 1909 with their own Giro d'Italia.

Foot has a sharp eye for describing many of the early pioneers of bicycling, some of them true eccentrics like the Rome-born Enrico Toti. At age 20, he lost one leg in an accident. Undeterred, he removed the left pedal of his bicycle and carried on as before, even making his way to France, Belgium and Denmark, explaining to one and all that "the bicycle [is] liberty". A patriotic nationalist, he tried persistently to join the army at the outset of World War I, only to be rebuffed because of his handicap. In the end, pestering paid off and a Bersagliere unit took him on for behind-the-lines volunteer work. He would later die in the trenches, struck by three bullets, but not before he had kissed the feathers on his helmet and thrown his crutch at the advancing enemy.

But there would be other heroes as well and the author faithfully records them all: Ottavio Bottecchia (the first Italian to win the Tour de France in the 1920s), Costante Girardengo, Biagio Cavanna, Alfredo Binda, Learco Guerra. As he tells their stories, John Foot weaves in the socio-political history of the times and how it tied in with this sport. Fascism espoused cycling (even though Mussolini himself was a football and motor sport fan). Later, it was perceived as a "red sport" of the proletariat adored by the Left, while further along, the Vatican gave it their blessings as a healthy endeavour keeping adherents out of trouble. What remained a constant was its rising popularity among the apolitical masses.

Foot saves much of his ammunition for the chapters on Italy's two very greatest superstars, Fausto Coppi and Gino Bartali, their respective histories, how they rose to fame and success, their differences in style and why their legend(s) survive to this day. This was the Golden Age that ran from the immediate post-war period through to the mid-to-late 1950s when the wiry young Coppi, born to peasant stock in a little hill town between Piedmont and Liguria, jinxed by brittle bones that periodically broke, rose through hard training to the very top, defying social conventions along the way. He embarked upon a glamorous oysters and champagne lifestyle (deemed to be "above his station in life") and a frowned-upon love life. His great rival Bartali- equally brilliant on the bicycle seat – came out of a different mould, extremely religious, Tuscan, less of a limelight-lover.

Perhaps inevitably with the passage of time, the stakes in Italian bicycle racing rose, becoming Serious Big Business. John Foot follows the sad events that ensued, namely the ugly doping scandals, bribery accusations, and court cases. All went towards tainting the sport indelibly. He cites, among others, the Marco Pantani saga as a case in point. One of his final chapters, in fact, is aptly titled "A Slow Death". Bicycles and racing, he concludes, of course, still *do* survive in Italy. Sadly, though, no longer with that irreplaceable patina of magic and wonderment which brought such innocent excitement to all, including children – I was one of them – standing in the front row on the kerb on a cold winter's day for the thrill of that fast-passing whoosh.

Alexandra Richardson

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS IN ITALY

Until 20 January 2013:

"VERMEER, the Golden Century of Dutch Art" *Vermeer, il secolo d'oro dell'arte olandese (The Golden Century of Dutch Art) is the first public exhibition ever held in Italy of work by the greatest master of Dutch 17th-century painting,*

The exhibition will comprise not only a selection of works by Vermeer, but also thirty works by his Dutch contemporaries, thus allowing the visitor both to explore the artistic genius of Vermeer himself and to understand the way in which the master's work interacted with that of his fellow artists of the time.

Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome

Until 27 January 2013:

"The 1930s. The Arts in Italy Beyond Fascism" *During the fascist era, a very vigorous artistic battle was waged in Italy, involving every style and trend, from Classicism to Futurism, from Expressionism to Abstraction, and from monumental art to salon painting. In Florence these were times of tremendous creative ferment. The Maggio Musicale was created in 1933, the main station at Santa Maria Novella completed in 1934, the Biblioteca Nazionale in 1935. The Palazzo Strozzi was purchased in 1937, then lovingly restored, to re-open in 1940 with the spectacular exhibition on the Tuscan art of the 16th century.*

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence

Until 27 January 2013:

"Francis Bacon and the Existential Condition in Contemporary Art" *The exhibition gets off to a masterly start with a core of paintings by the great* ***Francis Bacon****, whose work dialogues with that of five contemporary artists of international renown –* ***Nathalie Djurberg, Adrian Ghenie, Arcangelo Sassolino, Chiharu Shiota*** *and* ***Annegret Soltau*** *– all of whom share Bacon's reflection on man's existential condition and on the depiction of the human figure. Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzina (CCCS)*

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence

Until 3 February 2013:

"GUTTUSO, 1912-2012" *The city of Rome, where Renato Guttuso lived for fifty years, celebrates the artist with a major exhibition on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. With 100 works by Guttuso the exhibition shows the whole creative path of the Sicilian painter artistic activity.*

Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome

Until 3 February 2013:

"Akbar, the Great Emperor of India"*He was the third monarch of the powerful Mughal Empire which dominated most of India and south central Asia. He is remembered today as a great conqueror, builder, lawmaker and a fair ruler of a very diverse population.*

Museo del Corso, Rome

1 December 2012 to 28 February 2013:

"Benito Jacovitti, 1939 to 1997" *One of Italy's most famous satirical cartoonists.*

Ara Pacis Museum, Rome

February to June 2013:

"Tiziano" *Titian's career began in early 16th-century Venice. He went down in history as the greatest painter of his time and the portrait painter of the rich and powerful. The visitor will be able to track the artist's complete human and artistic career right up to his last moving works.*

Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome

ANNUAL EVENTS IN ITALY

Until 27 January 2013:

"Mercatini di Natale" *In Italy, most towns feature a special market held in one of the main squares. See the following website guide and key in the specific town if it is not already on the list:*

www.mercatini-natale.com

March 2013:

"Carnival in Italy" *Carnival is celebrated in more and more cities and towns in Italy. See the menu Carnevale A-Z of the following website:*

www.carnevaleitaliano.it

April 2013:

"Easter Week" *For special events in Italy during La Settimana Santa, see the following website:*

www.folclore.eu/It/Eventi/Italia/Feste-popolari/Aprile/

June to early July 2013:

"Il Festival dei Due Mondi" *The Festival of the Two Worlds is an annual summer music and opera festival held each year, founded by composer Giancarlo Menotti in 1958. It features a vast array of concerts, opera, dance, drama, visual arts and round table discussions. Spoleto.*

www.festivaldispoleto.com

June - November 2013:

"Venice Biennale 2013 - 55th International Art Exhibition"

First Sunday of September 2013:

"Historical Regatta" *The Grand Canal every year during the first Sunday of September becomes a theatre for one of the greatest of Venetian events, the Historical Regatta, dating back to 1315 under the rule of doge Giovanni Soranzo. Venice*

www.comune.venezia.it

End September to mid October 2013:

"Liuteria in Festival" *The city of Cremona hosts this annual event featuring various competitions, promotional activities, exhibitions, concerts, seminars and conferences on the subject of violin making.*

www.fondazionestradivari.it;
www.friendsofstradivari.it;
www. turismo.comune.cremona.it)

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITS IN ENGLAND

5 September 2012 - September 2013:

"Spazio di Luce" *Italian conceptual artist and master wood craftsman Giuseppe Penone has been appointed by the Bloomberg Commission to create this site-specific work, consisting in the bronze casting of a large gnarled tree trunk.*
Whitechapel Gallery, London

15 September 2012 - 9 December 2012:

"Bronze" *A celebration of the remarkable historical, geographical and stylistic range of this enduring medium, spanning 5000 years. The Renaissance part of this show will feature works by Ghiberti, Donatello and Cellini, among others.*
Royal Academy of Arts , Piccadilly, London

19 September 2012 - 23 December 2012:

"My Futurist Past" *A panoramic look at the career of Bruno Munari, from sculpture to graphics, film, painting and photomontage. The show analyses his work from the early Futurist period around 1927 through to the post-war era when Munari helped found the Movimento Arte Concreta.*
Estorick Collection, London

20 September 2012 - 6 January 2013:

"Happy Birthday Edward Lear: 200 Years of Nature and Nonsense" *A retrospective of Lear's illustrations, sketches and verses. Among the highlights are works executed during his many travels and sojourns within Italy, where he lived on and off over the years and where he is buried.*
Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford

16 January 2013 - 7 April 2013 :

"Giorgio Morandi: Works on Paper" *Eighty meditative landscapes and still lifes by the Bologna-born maestro of poetic subtlety .*
Estorick Collection, London

4 May – 7 October 2012:

"Life and Death in Pompeii and Herculaneum" *The exhibition brings together many fascinating objects, both recent discoveries and celebrated finds from earlier excavations.*
British Museum – The Round Reading Room , London

FORTHCOMING BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY EVENTS

13 November 2012:

The Leconfield Lecture
Travelling Texts, Eastern Approaches – Italian Fabulism and the 1001 Nights. Talk by Marina Warner
Venue T.B.A.

4 December 2012:

Christmas Party at 'Fratelli La Bufala'
40 Shaftesbury Avenue, Piccadilly Circus, London, W1D 7ER
7:00 - 10:30pm

16 January 2013:

The English-speaking Town
Talk by Mariarosa Gatti-Pavia

7 February 2013:

Primo Levi
Talk by Ian Thomson

11 March 2013:

The Jesuits in China
Talk by Dr Mary Laven

22 April 2013:

Wine Tasting at 'Della Terra Wine Bar'

Further events and exact dates had not been finalised at the time of going to press. Please check on the BIS events page of the website for up-to-date info. This information will also be supplied by Elisabetta Murgia, the Events Secretary, closer to the date(s) of the events.

SNIPPETS

We have all heard that the popular Cinque Terre is a string of sleepy fishing villages. What we may not have heard, however, is that one of the main fish they are pulling out of those waters (to this day) is the anchovy.

Up and down the Ligurian coast, anchovies (*acciughe* in Italian, pronounced ah|CHOO|geh) are on the menu and they are nothing like the cured and canned version one is probably accustomed to. These are fresh, often served as an appetizer with a bit of lemon and olive oil, and they are incredible. In some cases, they are small enough to be cooked and served whole – heads and all – but if you are not comfortable eating the heads you can cut them off easily enough.

Poor Őtzi! As it was, the 5300 year old perfectly-preserved man found frozen in ice in the Tyrolean Alps above Bolzano had come to a bad end. Discovered by mountain climbers two decades ago, Őtzi was brought down for the experts to study carefully. Early on, they determined that the middle-aged ice man, after a meal of venison, mountain goat and grain, had died in conflict, with arrow wounds to his head. After many years of genetic studies, the scientists this last spring also revealed that afflictions long thought to be of modern times were in fact well entrenched long ago: Őtzi was lactose-intolerant, suffered from Lyme disease and was a prime candidate for heart disease.

The Sicilian town of Castelbuono has launched a unique idea by using donkeys to go round its narrow streets and collect rubbish. These environmentally friendly four-legged waste collectors cost less to purchase, are not paid wages, save fuel and last longer than any mechanical vehicle. Their average retirement age is around 24 to 25 years.

According to the job spec, they must be female, have long ears and wear special boxes on their backs to collect different kinds of recycled rubbish. They work in shifts. When the females get pregnant, they even have maternity leave.

Although few Sicilians enjoy the service, this local initiative is spreading to other places, such as the city of Trieste which adopted the idea of "gli asini-spazzini" on an experimental basis in the first quarter of 2011.

This year's edition of the Michelin Red Guide to Italian restaurants promoted Modena's Osteria Francescana to three-star status. Four others earned themselves two stars: the Principe Cerami in Taormina, L'Olivo in Capri, Quattropassi at Massalubrense and Oliver Glowig in Rome.

Notwithstanding the locations of these last four, it is Lombardy in the north which has bagged the most number of stars, 56.

The first of November this year marks the 500th anniversary of the unveiling of the Sistine Chapel ceiling . It is alleged that Michelangelo worked so slowly – taking four years to complete his Vatican masterpiece – that the Pope in exasperation threatened to have him thrown off the scaffolding.

A British motorist has been fined tens of thousands of pounds after she was tracked down by Italian police. The 62-year old expatriate was photographed 1,500 times breaking speed limits and entering traffic restricted areas in Florence. The lady was caught when officers spotted her car parked in a city street and waited for her to return. The lady was then presented with a long list of fines. She thought that there was no chance of her being traced due to the fact that she had a foreign number plate. According to a Florence traffic police spokesman, she has called in a lawyer to help her, but the law is clear about the Highway Code. She will have to pay even if it means reaching an agreement and paying the fines in instalments.

Anyone who saw the 1965 filmed version of Evelyn Waugh's withering spoof on the American way of death, *The Loved One* (Caro Estinto was its Italian title) cannot fail to spot similarities between the fictional "Whispering Glades" Cemetery in Los Angeles and Modena's new "Terracielo" funeral enterprise, one of the largest in Europe.

The brainchild of Gianni Gibellini, the Terracielo mega funeral home can accommodate up to nine funerals simultaneously, in styles to fit all budgets. For a consideration, the staff will "refresh" the features of the dearly departed. A coffee bar and a full scale restaurant are on site for peckish mourners. For those living too far away to attend a service, Terracielo offers an internet hook-up to view the entire ceremony *and* sign the virtual condolence book. Want a send-off that isn't off the peg? Gibellini can oblige: he accommodated one family by cutting a Maserati in half and reconfiguring it as a coffin-with-a-difference.

Fashioned in bronze and smaller than a ten-pence piece, it is a coin with a difference, found in the low-tide mud of the Thames. Discovered by an amateur archaeologist, Regis Cursan, near Putney Bridge, the 2000-year old piece depicts a couple in an unmistakeable sexual act.

It has long been known that the early Romans minted such special coins or tokens – purchased by patrons beforehand – to gain admission into brothels. Images and value of the coin varied according to the services required within the establishment. But Curator Caroline McDonald at the Museum of London where the coin was displayed earlier this year stated that "This is the only one of its kind ever to be found in Great Britain". A sort of erotic oyster card, perhaps.

After three years of restoration work, during which time it was covered in advertising billboards, Venice's Bridge of Sighs and the façade of the Doges' Palace along Rio della Canonica are back to their original state and visible once again.

The bridge connects the Doges' Palace to a building which was once a prison. The bridge was given its name by Lord Byron in the 19th century because it was said that prisoners would sigh while crossing the bridge and catching a glimpse of the outside world after a long period of imprisonment. Casanova was said to have crossed the bridge during his incarceration in 1755 and 1756.

According to Venetian legend any couple who kisses at sunset in a gondola under the bridge will be assured of eternal love.

A museum in Italy has started burning its artworks in protest at budget cuts which it says have left cultural institutions out of pocket. Antonio Manfredi, of the Casoria Contemporary Art Museum in Naples, set fire to the first painting: "Our 1,000 artworks are headed for destruction anyway because of the government's indifference", he said. The work was by French artist Severine Bourguignon, who was in favour of the protest and watched it online. Mr Manfredi plans to burn three paintings a week from now on, in a protest he has dubbed "Art War". Artists from across Europe have lent their support, including Welsh sculptor John Brown, who torched out his works in sympathy. Mr Brown told the BBC that his organisation, the Documented Art Space in Harlech, North Wales, had exhibited at the Casoria museum in the past. He called the burning "a symbolic act" to "protest against the way the economic crisis is being dealt with". Italy's debt crisis led to the resignation of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi last year. Since his departure, the government has passed a tough package of austerity measures and other reforms. Art institutions say they have been particularly affected by the country's economic woes, with state subsidies and charitable donations drying up.

Gladiators have been demonstrating in the streets of Rome in protest for delays in passing a law in their favour. The city's fake gladiators and centurions, who station themselves outside the Colosseum and along Via dei Fori Imperiali, could be obliged to obtain a licence to operate according to proposed legislation. The new law would require the "gladiators" to register with the city, carry a licence and adhere to a recognised dress code. In addition, the legislation would allow the gladiators to charge tourists a fixed rate of €10 for posing in photographs. However, consumer groups argue that this is the equivalent of legalising a scam. In recent years the city's gladiators have faced many accusations of over-charging, harassment, intimidation and even violence.

"Italo", Italy's burgundy red Ferrari on rails is finally going into service. Starting on 28th April 28 2012, the new train will travel at speeds of up to 300 kilometres per hour between Milan, Rome and Naples. It is a high-speed train, is more environmentally friendly and also cheaper than its competitors -- on both the rails and roads. The new company, called Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori (or NTV), is run by the chairman of Ferrari Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, who happens to be among the shareholders of Europe's first private operator of high-speed trains, Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori (NTV), along with his friend Diego Della Valle, owner of luxury goods company Tod's.

The new line serves Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples but NTV's high-speed trains go further south than Trenitalia's. It is also going to have a link from Naples to Salerno, thus making it easier and faster for tourists to go down to the Amalfi Coast. Costwise, a single trip from Naples to Rome can be as inexpensive as €20. A trip on the high-speed offering by Trenitalia, Italy's national railway, is slightly slower than the Italo on this particular stretch and costs nearly double the price. Italo is also far cheaper than driving a car the 221 kilometres from Naples to Rome considering the soaring cost of fuel today in Italy.

In addition, this fast luxury train offers passengers all the latest technology facilities and three-course meals served at your seat for first class and club class.

According to a study conducted earlier this year by Italy's Central Bureau of Statistics, Italian parliamentarians are among the highest paid in Europe, with a basic salary of €11283 per month, before taxes. The study added that they receive on top of this a monthly allowance of € 3503 to "cover expenses" plus train, air and sea travel free of charge and exemption from payment of all highway tolls. The salary of Italy's 630 lower house of deputies was more than 60 percent above the European average.

It began last year with her feminist guidebook to Rome, *Percorsi di genere femminile*, and now author Maria Pia Ercolini has gone a step further. Noting that pitifully few street names in the Eternal City – and other cities of Italy too, for that matter – bear the names of women of importance, she has begun a campaign via the internet to make amends.

She points out that while Rome has 14,270 streets, scarcely 336 of them are dedicated to a woman. In many cases, those so honoured are female saints and not women from other walks in life. Turin fares no better with only 27 of its 1,241 streets named after a woman.

Ercolini has appealed to all *comuni* in Italy to redress those statistics by giving women's names to three streets or piazza, adding that there is no shortage of promising candidates amongst Italian female astronomers, authors and parliamentarians.

SNIPPETS

A few streets north of Arco della Pace is the centre of Milan's Chinatown, in Via Paolo Sarpi. The first Chinese immigrants settled here at the end of World War II, opening mainly fabric and then leather shops, but in recent years there has been a large increase in commerce of all kinds. The city's attempts to move some of the shops out to less congested areas of the city were met with violent street protests in the spring of 2007. Presently, city authorities are negotiating a deal with the Chinese community to transfer all wholesale shops to the outer city limits, in an area where the Alfa Romeo factory used to be.

Not that long ago, people hooted at Italian soccer players seen groping for the exact words as they sang the Italian national anthem, *l'Inno di Mameli*. It now seems that those sportsmen had a lot of company. And so, one year after the celebrations for 150th anniversary of Italian Unification, legislation has finally moved forward to remedy the problem. All being well, after passing approval from the Senate, teaching the words and meaning of "Fratelli d'Italia" will enter the elementary school classroom as part of the mandatory curriculum.

White's, the UK's oldest and most prestigious gentlemen's club, is one of the places where centuries-old British tradition still thrives. Italian immigrant Francesco Bianco, who changed his name to Francis White, founded the establishment in 1693 at 4 Chesterfield Street and called it *Mrs.White's Chocolate House*. Mrs. White's sold hot chocolate and other chocolate concoctions. At this time, chocolate was a rare luxury that only the wealthy could afford. During the reign of King Charles II, chocolate houses were gathering places for London's elite to debate politics. White's was one of a number of chocolate houses that eventually became a gentlemen's club.

Fifty years ago, Italy's most iconic lamp was born, the creation of the legendary Milan designers Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni. "Arco", with its sleek stainless steel "stem", anchored to a handsome marble base, sailed elegantly over the crowd, then dipped to a specific spot shedding light. So popular a fixture, it was said to be present in one out of every ten Italian households. Happy Birthday, Arco!

PATRON

H.E. The Italian Ambassador

PRESIDENT

Sir Tom Richardson, KCMG

CHAIRMAN

Mr Charles de Chassiron, CVO

WE WISH TO REMIND MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH-ITALIAN SOCIETY'S BACKGROUND AND THE BRAVERY OF ITS FOUNDER MEMBERS

In 1941, a group of British academics, journalists, broadcasters and former residents of Italy decided to form the Friends of Free Italy, echoing the "Friends of Italy" founded in London by Mazzini in 1851. The new group resolved to remind their countrymen of the true and immortal Italy which transcended the Axis regime with which the country was at war.

Around the same time, a parallel group of Italians formed the Free Italy Committee which became the Movimento Libera Italia. Following internal dissension, the Movimento merged with the Friends and in 1945 became the British-Italian Society which it has remained ever since. Its aims and objects were redefined as being "to increase the understanding in Great Britain of Italian history, Italian institutions, the Italian way of life and the Italian contribution to civilisation, to increase the knowledge of the Italian language in Great Britain, and to encourage and promote the traditional friendship between Great Britain and Italy".

The aims of the Society are to increase the understanding in Great Britain of Italy and Italian civilisation and to encourage friendship between the two countries.

The Society is interested in the political, economic and social development of Italy as well as its culture and history – and as much in the Italy of to-day as in the glories of the past.

Regular lecture meetings are held on topics covering a wide range of subjects. The annual Leconfield Lecture, in memory of the Society's first Chairman, Lord Leconfield, is always given by a speaker of particular distinction.

Various social events and occasional outings to places of interest are also arranged.


GENOVA – Piazza del Banco S. Giorgio
e Via Carlo Alberto