RIVISTA

2014-2015

Politics Italian Style
Queen Victoria in Italy
The Pope Francis Effect
Veronese at the National Gallery
Garibaldi Remembered

The Magazine of
THE BRITISH ITALIAN SOCIETY

Dear readers

Editing a magazine has been a novel experience for us both – and much more challenging than either of us anticipated. But it has brought rich rewards: engaging with many different people with an interest in Italy and British-Italian relations, exploring ideas and learning new skills to name but a few.

In this our first issue we have made a few changes. We are aware that Rivista readers are a loyal bunch and hope that the new look will not upset established reading habits. We are mindful, however, that no magazine can remain static, and to this end we have re-ordered the content so that the featured articles appear at the beginning and articles and news relating to the British-Italian Society have been moved to the later pages. Part of the thinking behind these changes is to reach out to a broader readership who may be drawn to a particular article, with a view to encouraging new members.

We are most grateful to all who have contributed, whether Rivista regulars or first-timers. Features range from an explanation of the Italian political system to Queen Victoria's visits to Italy, from Venice as an island of study to Florence as inspiration for Lady Chatterley's Lover. We also include a review of the National Gallery's blockbuster Veronese show, and couldn't put this issue to bed without an article on Garibaldi – 2014 being the 150th anniversary of his historic visit to London. Two of the featured articles on unrelated subjects mention a remarkable Australian, Mary Gaunt. See if you can spot her!

Finally, we would like to thank Rivista's former editorial team, Alex Richardson and Georgina Gordon-Ham, for all their help and support in handing over the baton to us. We hope to maintain the very high standards that they set for the magazine.

Buona lettura!

Linda Northern and Vanessa Hall-Smith

Vanessa Hall-Smith

Linda Northern

Cover photo:
Ceramic pottery depicting Garibaldi and Colonel John Whitehead Peard (1811-1886) commonly known as Garibaldi's Englishman. Peard joined Garibaldi on his expedition to Sicily and distinguished himself at the battle of Melazzo in 1860. He then made his way to Naples with Garibaldi's troops and commanded the British Legion. For his services he was awarded the Cross of the Order of Valour by King Victor Emmanuel II. Peard retired to Cornwall and was visited by Garibaldi during his visit to England in April 1864.

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Garibaldi Remembered

by Charles de Chassiron

Early April 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of the triumphal visit to London paid by Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1864, during the period just after his astonishing military triumphs in southern Italy which contributed so much to the process of Italian Unification. Garibaldi was received in the British capital as an anti-Catholic and liberal hero, and Garibaldimania gripped all classes of British society as he visited the country, notionally to thank the British people for the support which they had consistently given to the national movement in Italy.

Garibaldi was feted from the start of his stay, being received at Southampton by his aristocratic supporter the Duke of Sutherland, visiting the Isle of Wight to meet Tennyson, and then travelling to London, where he was mobbed by a crowd of 500,000 people as his carriage tried to reach the Duke's home at Stafford House – now known as Lancaster House. A succession of invitations, tributes, speeches, dinners and displays of enthusiasm greeted the Italian hero in mid-Victorian Britain, with Garibaldi actively cultivating his celebrity status and persona, though he was wary of allowing any one group to take him over, whether they were Italian republican exiles or British aristocratic admirers (particularly female ones). He met leading politicians including Gladstone, Palmerston and Russell, as well as public figures like Florence Nightingale, and he received the freedom of the City of London as well as that of the Fishmongers' Guild.


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10 a.m.

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Palermo 22nd 10 a.m.

Duca Sutherland

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Loggia reale oriente palermo

applaudisce liberi muratori inglesi

sendi affetti gratitudine

cordiali manifestazioni

Giuseppe Garibaldi

Telegram from Freemasons in Palermo thanking Freemasons in London for reception given to Garibaldi

Garibaldi

He attended rallies of working people at Crystal Palace, and he also met Mazzini and other radical exiles, including Alexander Herzen – at which point the British Government began to show some concern about the feelings so stirred up. British radicals tried to get him to visit the great Northern cities like Newcastle, and away from his grand admirers in London, but Garibaldi failed to do this, and in fact he suddenly decided to cut short his visit, pleading exhaustion. He left for Italy in the last week of April 1864, to the disappointment of Mazzinians and British radicals alike, who had hoped his presence would attract funds to help liberate Venice and Rome (which only became part of the new Kingdom in 1870). His visit thus ended rather sourly, but it had a discernible effect in Britain both on the political process leading to the Second Reform Act of 1867, and on the movement to found the International Working Men's Association in London that same year.

The visit was suitably commemorated both in 1914 and again in 1964, and late in 2013 an organising committee was set up, with the welcome and active help of the Italian Embassy, to plan a suitable programme of events for Spring 2014. As chairman of the British-Italian Society, I worked with Domenic Pini, chairman of the Mazzini-Garibaldi Club in London, and a number of others to pull together a full programme, which included a well-attended lecture at the Italian Cultural

Institute by Professor Lucy Riall of London University (and author of the best work on Garibaldi in English), followed by a concert of Risorgimento music, another ceremony to confer a City freedom on Garibaldi's redoubtable great-granddaughter Anita, and an exhibition of memorabilia at the Freemasons' Hall. There were also splendid dinners held both at the Reform Club and the Fishmongers' company, the former with Anita Garibaldi attending in person, and finally there was an award ceremony in May of fifteen special Garibaldi medallions to those deemed by a selection committee to have contributed most to bilateral relations in recent years. The awards were given out during a lunch personally prepared by Giorgio Locatelli, and the winners were mainly drawn from the membership of the Mazzini-Garibaldi Club and the Italian Church in Clerkenwell, honouring notable individuals associated with charity service.

Prime Minister Renzi, Kenneth Clarke, Charles de Chassiron and Boris Johnson at Lancaster House

But the highlight of the commemorations was an event in early April 2014 at Lancaster House itself, to coincide with the official visit of Matteo Renzi, the new young Prime Minister of Italy and former Mayor of Florence. We had always hoped to build something around the existence in Lancaster House of the fine plaque and bust of Garibaldi which was presented to the Duke of Sutherland by grateful members of the Italian community in London a decade or so after the visit, but which is little-known today, as Lancaster House is a closed Government hospitality venue. I knew of it from my time as FCO Head of Protocol, but I never imagined that we might be able to hold the event with not only an Italian Prime Minister but another big-city Mayor, Boris Johnson, present, as well as Kenneth Clarke, Minister without Portfolio, to do the honours. About 100 people attended including both bilateral Ambassadors and a large Italian press group. The then Foreign Secretary, William Hague, had generously blessed the plan, though he was not in the UK to attend in person, and I know that its success attracted some positive publicity in Italy.

British-Italian Society Trustees Diana Darlington left and Sidney Ross right with Events Secretary Elisabetta Murgia centre

Prime Minister Renzi had walked over the park in beautiful spring weather from Downing Street after his cordial meeting with David Cameron, and Boris Johnson seemed intrigued to find himself in the company of another Mayor who had been suddenly catapulted into the highest office - though in his speech Boris characteristically claimed that such a development was quite alien to our political tradition, preferring to recall his memories of eating the famous Garibaldi biscuits (which together with Nottingham Forest football shirts, Staffordshire figurines and some pub names constitute the most lasting cultural legacy of the visit to Britain).

The bust and plaque will be viewable by the public when Lancaster House next participates in one of London's Open House days in the autumn of each year, and they are well worth seeing. They are the symbol of a memorable and historic visit, and of our modern-day attempt to commemorate it in a worthy and imaginative way.

The Pope Francis Effect

by Mark Pellew

When Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was elected Pope in March 2013, he was a little known figure outside his native Argentina. Popes, like other world leaders, nowadays live in the constant glare of media publicity, so we very quickly formed a collective impression of the new incumbent – modest, unassuming, un-pompous, straight-talking, a champion of the underprivileged in society. These initial impressions have all proved correct. But, eighteen months into the new papacy, the questions which I, as a sympathetic non-Catholic observer (and former British ambassador to the Holy See), would like to ask are how does the new style of papacy affect the influence that the Holy See exercises in world affairs; and, so far as Britain is concerned, what are the consequences for relations with this country and the worldwide Anglican Communion?

First, I should make clear that by the 'style of papacy' I mean something more fundamental than simply how the pope lives and manages the day-to-day affairs of the Church – important though these matters are, particularly for Roman Catholics. It is rather a question of how the public persona of the pope is viewed by the world at large: does he, by the force of his personality, and his public actions and utterances, have the ability to change attitudes and potentially to point the way towards solution of any of the world's intractable problems?

Looking at the history of recent popes, and judging them by this standard, the Polish Pope John Paul II must undoubtedly be regarded as having had the greatest impact on the world stage. (Significantly, one of Pope Francis's early actions was to canonise John Paul II – along with John XXIII, the Italian pope who convened the reforming Second Vatican Council – thus placing himself in the tradition of the two papal predecessors of the last half century or so who most obviously 'made a difference'.) Perhaps the most remarkable of John Paul's international achievements was his contribution to the ending of communism in Europe. In his later years, when I was lucky enough to know him, John Paul sadly no longer had the strength to push forward every cause in which he believed. He cared passionately about building a lasting peace in the Middle East, as evidenced during his millennium year pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It is interesting to speculate on what he might have achieved there, had he still been as young and vigorous as in the early years of his pontificate when his primary focus internationally was on tackling the evils of communism.

> // The consensus view is that he is building a reputation for steady administrative competence.

By contrast, John Paul's successor, Benedict XVI, had a more cerebral, introspective style that was better geared to consolidating the internal doctrines of the Church than to reaching out to the non-catholic world. It was not a style that made it easy for him to influence entrenched attitudes towards difficult international problems. Indeed, in the case of relations with Islam, his Regensburg speech (widely misunderstood at the time) proved a fatal flaw in his attempts to build bridges between Christians and Muslims. There was also a perception that during his pontificate, and in John Paul's latter years, a number of scandals relating to both priestly sexual abuse and financial mismanagement had been allowed to fester. The Roman Curia – the central governing body of the Catholic Church – began to be seen as increasingly out-of-touch and ineffectual, and the moral authority of the Holy See was correspondingly diminished.

Four million people and 59 heads of state came to John Paul II's funeral. Thanks to this extraordinary legacy, still powerful when Benedict made his surprise decision to resign, Pope Francis is now at the centre of the world stage. Against a background where every move is minutely scrutinised and mistakes cannot be hidden, Pope Francis has moved with remarkable sure-footedness in his first eighteen months. A new 'C8' council of cardinals (all except one from outside the Curia) has been created to clean up administrative structures; there is to be a new Secretariat of the Economy to oversee spending and personnel; new policies of zero-tolerance of priestly abuse have been introduced; competent outsiders have been brought in to manage the Vatican finances; and the handling of public affairs is being completely overhauled. It might be objected that these fairly obvious-sounding reforms are taking too long and do not go as far as had been hoped. But, against this, it must be remembered that Pope Francis has to tread warily around opposition from within the Curia, not least from those who stand to lose their jobs. The consensus view is that he is building a reputation for steady administrative competence, and that this, combined with his own natural authority and integrity

of life-style, gives him a powerful base from which to exercise influence on the world stage.

But as to how and where this influence might be exercised – and whether indeed, at age 77, he will be granted the time to exercise it – we cannot at this stage be sure. One clue is provided by his programme of travels. Apart from a trip to Brazil last year for World Youth Day (which had been scheduled for Benedict XVI before he resigned), Pope Francis has so far only made two overseas visits – one to Jordan, Israel and Palestine (which is pretty much a required visit for any new pope) and the other to South Korea. In the latter case, appeals for reconciliation between North and South Korea were never likely to be productive. But an interesting feature of the trip was the fact that the Chinese government allowed the pope's aircraft to overfly Chinese airspace, though they had refused to do so on the occasion of a visit to South Korea by John Paul II some years previously. China and the Vatican have a complicated history of non-relations: the Holy See still recognises Taiwan as the legitimate government of China, while the Beijing government for its part currently treats Catholics in China (apart from an officially sanctioned 'patriotic' church) as an illegal underground movement. Pope Francis and the new Chinese President Xi Jinping exchanged messages when they both took office on the same day in 2013, but there has so far been no diplomatic breakthrough. As a Jesuit himself, Pope Francis would have a particular interest in bringing Chinese Catholics (who were first missionised by Italian Jesuits in the late 16th century) back into the fold of Rome. He has said that a dialogue with China is the Church's highest priority in Asia. I suspect that we shall hear more from him on this subject.

An aspect of the new papacy which is of interest to Italians – though perhaps less so to those outside Italy – is that, after over 30 years of a Polish and then a German pope, 'Papa Francesco' is seen as having, in a certain sense, brought the papacy back home. The son of Italian immigrants from Piedmont on both sides of his family (his father's family left for Argentina in 1929, apparently not as economic migrants but in order to get away from the Mussolini regime), Jorge Bergoglio speaks only slightly accented Italian and takes evident delight in his role as Vicar of Rome – celebrating Mass each Sunday in a different church in the poorer suburbs of the city. He has a long association with Comunione e Liberazione, a lay Catholic movement which, from its Italian student origins in the 1960s, has spread to other parts of the world, particularly Spain and Latin America, and (though not always approved of by more conservative elements of the Church hierarchy) actively promotes a social Christian agenda. The attention that Pope Francis receives from the Italian media, not just the Catholic media but particularly from left-of-centre publications such as *La Repubblica*, is remarkable. It is not too far-fetched to suppose – though I would not wish to make too much of this – that this degree of publicity for his championing of the underprivileged in society may help to facilitate public acceptance of some of the reforms proposed by Matteo Renzi, Italy's centre-left Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, what are the consequences of the election of Pope Francis for the UK? Wearing my former diplomatic hat, I would say that, from a purely political point of view, his accession makes very little difference. Possible concerns about the effect of a pro-Argentine attitude to the Falkland Islands can, I think, be discounted. Relations between Britain and the Holy See were already extremely warm and friendly at the diplomatic level, particularly after Pope Benedict's surprisingly well-received visit to Britain in 2010, and this is not likely to change under Pope Francis. Indeed, there are striking similarities between the agendas of the British coalition government and the Holy See, for example as regards policies towards the developing world and the UN Millennium Development Goals. Pope Francis's personal commitment to these goals chimes well with the UK's recent achievement of the target of 0.7% of GDP in overseas development aid – and will help us to argue the case for a similar improvement from our G7 partners.

An area where, on the other hand, the Pope Francis effect does, I think, make a positive difference is in ecumenical and interfaith relations. Here the signs are that the new Pope is more open than his predecessors, not only to dialogue but also to practical cooperative action with other faiths and churches. Jews were pleased by the publication last year of a book of conversations between Cardinal (as he then was) Bergoglio and an Argentinian friend, Rabbi Abraham Skorka, revealing their closeness of view over ethical and religious issues. (It was in the course of these conversations that Bergoglio described priestly celibacy as 'a matter of discipline, not of faith. It could change.') In a significant move towards better Catholic-Orthodox relations, the spiritual head of the Orthodox Christian churches, Patriarch Bartholemew, attended the inaugural mass of Pope Francis in March 2013 – the first time an ecumenical patriarch had attended a papal inauguration in almost a thousand years since the Great Schism of 1054.

> // Indeed, there are striking similarities between the agendas of the British coalition government and the Holy See

So far as relations with Anglicans are concerned, commentators have rightly noted that Anglicans gained a new leader, Archbishop Justin Welby, at the very moment when Pope Francis was elected. They met early on and found they had much in common. Whereas the meetings of their predecessors never got beyond discussion of ecclesiological matters, under the new leaders there is a willingness to explore what we might actually do together. The upshot has been a joint initiative by Pope Francis and Archbishop Justin to tackle the problem of human trafficking. Together they have inspired the setting up of the Global Freedom Network (GFN) to reach out to the 29 million people in the world today who suffer slavery in one form or another. Muslim leaders and Australian NGOs are also involved, and together the GFN has been able to gather

continued over

enough resources to put in place a five year plan. This is a bold ecumenical step which shows that Christians can practise what they preach. And the project has given new impetus to the work of the Anglican Centre in Rome, which has been the representative office of the Archbishop of Canterbury in Rome since its founding in 1966.

Pope Francis has also seen HM The Queen, aware that she is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, a title first given to the English monarch by his predecessor Leo X in 1521. Such meetings between the British sovereign and the supreme pontiff have a deeper historical significance than is conveyed by a mere exchange of words. But it is worth noting that, at this meeting in April 2014, the Queen spoke of the contribution of the Catholic Church to 'the poorest and most deprived members of our society'. She also mentioned the 'co-operation between Anglicans and Roman Catholics for the encouragement of world peace and for the economic and social development of the less prosperous countries of the world'.

Apart from seeing Archbishop Justin and the Queen, Pope Francis has made clear that he is open to meeting and speaking with Anglicans of all sorts, not just those who inhabit the 'definite Catholic' end of the Anglican spectrum, some of whom were attracted into the Ordinariate established by Benedict XVI. Interestingly Pope Francis has said very little about the Ordinariate (the implication being that it is being allowed gently to wither). And his affection for Anglicans pre-dates his election as Pope. South American Anglicans who knew him during his time as Archbishop of Buenos Aires speak highly of his warmth and friendship. Now that he is Pope, Anglicans of whatever stripe can acknowledge him as the moral and spiritual leader of Christians throughout the world. There is a new spirit of optimism about what might be achieved working together.

As a footnote, the Anglican Centre in Rome is the representative office of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See. The Director of the Centre, and Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See, is Archbishop Sir David Moxon. If any Rivista reader is in Rome and would like to visit the Centre (which has among other things an 11,000-volume library of books on Anglicanism), they would be most welcome provided they let the Director know in advance by emailing director@anglicancentre.it.

Mark Pellew was British Ambassador to the Holy See from 1998-2002

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The Fort Durbo Incident: an example of early 20th century Anglo-Italian relations

by Sandra Fox

In December 1903, Signor Tittoni, the Italian Foreign Minister, requested the presence of Sir F.L. Bertie, the British Ambassador to Rome. His motive was not one of reprimand for some diplomatic slight or a mere discussion of topics of mutual interest to the British and Italian governments, rather it was to express the warmest gratitude of the Italian Government for the actions of a British naval officer, Commander Ernest Frederick Augustus Gaunt (formerly of Melbourne), captain of the Mohawk, a British torpedo cruiser. On 6 December Commander Gaunt had captured Fort Durbo in Italian Somaliland from the Mullah's men and, what was more to the point, had avenged the death of an Italian naval officer at the hands of the Somalis. The Italian Government was delighted by this action. They also viewed it as one that further strengthened Anglo-Italian friendship. As if the meeting of the Italian Minister and British Ambassador was insufficient, the matter was also discussed in the Italian Chamber. Il Ministro della Marina, Signor Mirabello, expressed his recognition of Commander Gaunt's services in the name of the Italian nation and stated that 'the Italian navy had always been united to the British by ties of sympathy and esteem'. Then, to the cheers of the Members, the President of the Chamber stated that, on behalf of the House, he gladly associated himself with what the Minister had just said.

A message of thanks was sent to Commander Ernest Gaunt at the time and subsequently the Italian Government awarded him the Medaglia in Argento al Valor Militare.

He was awarded this in Rome on 25 January 1904. The time lapse was presumably to allow him to recover from the injuries he had sustained at the beginning of the previous December.

Whilst this incident might be regarded as a classic example of the type of gun boat diplomacy that was prevalent at the time, what was the background to this story? Well it was one of slaves and arms trading, a somewhat 'Boys Own' type of adventure but not a million miles away from the stories of piracy and armaments associated with today's Somalia. Italy and Great Britain had been co-operating in suppressing the slave trade along the Somali coast and in preventing the landing of arms to facilitate the local Mullah's pursuit of this trade and other nefarious activities. Consequently an Italian squadron and some of the British fleet had been active in the area. Fort Durbo

Sir Ernest Frederick Augustus Gaunt

on the Somali coast was under Italian protection and a Lieutenant-Commander Grabau (or Gradam, the reports are unclear on this), in command of an Italian dhow as part of this operation, noticed that the Italian flag was not being flown above the Fort, as it should have been. He gave the Somali garrison two hours in which to hoist it. They refused to comply and so the Italian dhow opened fire. The Somalis responded in kind and, unfortunately, Lieutenant-Commander Grabau was struck by a portion of shell and killed instantly.

Commander Gaunt, who happened to be in the area with his cruiser, landed with sixty of the crew of the Mohawk (or maybe eighty, the exact number is a little unclear) and discussed Grabau's untimely death with the Mullah – who just happened to have a force of four hundred Somalis at his disposal. The Commander demanded that the murderers of the unfortunate Italian Commander should be handed over to him immediately. The Sultan asked who this person was


REGNO D'ITALIA

MINISTERO DELLA MARINA

who was making this demand of him and declared, when told, that he did not know him. So inevitably, the Mullah and the Commander retired to their respective forces and commenced fighting. Unfortunately in the process, a marine was killed and Commander Gaunt was badly wounded, sustaining a compound fracture of the thigh. However, the British triumphed and burnt Fort Durbo and killed about thirty Somalis during the battle. It was a British victory and vengeance for the death of an Italian officer. Such was the stuff of military life in this Colonial era.

Commander Ernest Gaunt went on to have a distinguished naval career, fighting in the First World War under Admiral, Lord Jellicoe at the Battle of Jutland as commander of the 1st Battle Squadron of the Fleet. He gained the rank of Admiral in 1924. His brother Guy, who it has been suggested may have been one of the inspirations for 007, James Bond, became an Admiral four years later. Their sister, Mary, was meanwhile travelling in China and Africa in an era when women did not travel on their own, writing novels and travelogues and establishing her reputation as a leading Australian writer. An adventurous family but one whose descendents have maintained their links to Italy – but not via gun boat diplomacy!

Sandra Fox is a trustee of the British-Italian Society and her husband is a grandson of Commander Gaunt

Tanto per sapere....

Besides Julius Caesar, Shakespeare also set in Italy (entirely or partially): Romeo and Juliet, Othello, The Merchant of Venice, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Cymbeline, Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, The Taming of the Shrew, Titus Andronicus, The Two Gentlemen of Verona and A Winter's Tale.

Lady Chatterley a Firenze

by Serena Cenni

Che *L'amante di Lady Chatterley* sia uno dei romanzi più famosi e più coinvolgenti del Novecento è, da lungo tempo, un dato di fatto. Quello che è meno noto (se non agli studiosi o ai lawrenciani *tout court*), è il coinvolgimento di Firenze nella creazione e nella pubblicazione di un'opera giudicata allora, da importanti editori inglesi e americani, troppo trasgressiva e immorale per poter essere data alle stampe.

Lawrence arriva a Firenze nella primavera del 1926 con la moglie Frieda von Richthofen prendendo alloggio presso la Pensione Lucchesi sul Lungarno della Zecca. Il progetto dello scrittore è di non fermarsi a lungo; ma un invito a pranzo da parte di un pittore inglese, Arthur Wilkinson, che vive in una villa sopra Scandicci, gli fa conoscere una zona collinare di estrema bellezza che, immediatamente, ravviva in lui il desiderio di trovare uno spazio in cui risiedere e dal quale spostarsi agevolmente a Sud verso i siti archeologici delle città e delle necropoli etrusche per catturare, di quel popolo così vitale ed enigmatico cancellato dai romani molti secoli prima, la possente fisicità e il senso profondo del sacro.

// Lawrence arriva a Firenze nella primavera del 1926 con la moglie Frieda von Richthofen

L'accordo stipulato con la proprietaria di un'antica dimora situata a San Polo a Mosciano porta Lawrence e Frieda a lasciare la piccola pensione sul lungarno e a prendere possesso di alcune stanze al primo piano della villa e, dal 13 Maggio del 1926 al 7 Giugno del 1928, le numerosissime lettere inviate ad amici, conoscenti, editori e agenti letterari porteranno nell'intestazione il riferimento preciso al luogo toscano d'elezione: Villa Mirenda, Scandicci, Florence.

Qui, in un'atmosfera campestre quasi idilliaca e spesso appoggiato al suo pino od olivo preferiti, Lawrence inizierà a creare la *fabula* audace e vincente dell'amore 'fallico' tra una aristocratica, sposata a un baronetto invalido, e il guardiacaccia della sua tenuta, scrivendola di getto e rielaborandola più di una volta fino alla stesura definitiva del 1928.

La consapevolezza di aver scritto qualcosa di innovativo ma di troppo provocatorio, di profondamente morale, ma di

Villa Mirenda, Scandicci

eccessivamente 'immorale' per il pubblico dei 'grigi puritani' e dei pavidi benpensanti, si rafforza sempre di più nello scrittore quando, alla fine di Marzo, il suo editore londinese, Martin Secker, lo informa che non è nemmeno ipotizzabile che un tale romanzo possa essere presentato in Inghilterra, anche se 'depurato' delle scene erotiche più audaci. Risoluto e fermo nell'idea di dare alle stampe la versione originale, integrale di quel suo romanzo che offre una visione del corpo e del desiderio mai delineata prima di allora con tanta intensità e sensualità, accetta il consiglio dell' amico Giuseppe Orioli, proprietario di una piccola libreria antiquaria sul Lungarno Corsini, di farlo stampare privatamente. Così, verso la fine di quel giugno del 1928, presso la Tipografia Giuntina, una piccola ma storica stamperia fondata da Leo Olschki, uno dei più straordinari romanzi del Novecento può finalmente vedere la luce - in mille copie firmate e numerate - stampato in carta color avorio e rilegato in una sobria copertina rigida dalla tonalità rosso cupo con impressa l'immagine di una fenice, disegnata dallo scrittore stesso, che si innalza in volo da un nido pieno di fiamme.

Nel frattempo Lawrence ha lasciato con Frieda Villa Mirenda per trascorrere in Svizzera l'estate, dal momento che il clima caldo-umido della Toscana non si confà alla malattia polmonare che lo sta affliggendo e indebolendo sempre più e non farà più ritorno a Firenze (se non per un breve

soggiorno nel luglio del 1929). Riceverà copia del romanzo il 28 giugno, inviatagli dal solerte Giuseppe Orioli che si adopererà affinché centinaia di esemplari raggiungano, da Firenze, l'Inghilterra e l'America eludendo i controlli delle rigide dogane.

La storia della ricezione del romanzo e della conseguente pirateria editoriale è cosa nota: intercettato quasi subito dai doganieri americani, solo poche copie riescono a filtrare sul mercato, mentre più di seicento vengono distribuite su suolo inglese. Come ricorda lo scrittore stesso in una postfazione all'edizione parigina del 1929 di *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, a distanza di poco più di un mese dalla pubblicazione fiorentina, già circolavano a New York facsimili dell'originale eseguiti col sistema fotografico, che vengono prontamente riprodotti anche in Inghilterra e in Francia da librai fraudolenti. E se le edizioni illecite, non autorizzate, fioriscono numerose, le critiche e le accuse di pornografia sui giornali contribuiscono ad alimentare il mercato delle vendite e a stimolare la *pruderie* del pubblico che corre ad accaparrarsi copie del romanzo, inconsapevole del falso editoriale e ignaro del messaggio profondamente etico di Lawrence: 'And this is the real point of this book. I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly, and cleanly'.

In questa ottica non stupisce, allora, che nella trama allusiva dell'inquieta Lady Chatterley e del guardiacaccia Mellors si condensi, per poi esplodere in modo vibrante, tutta la nervatura ideologica e politica della poetica lawrenciana che, utopisticamente, inscrive nella esaltazione del corpo, del desiderio e dell'esperienza fallica il riscatto intensamente morale per un genere umano mortificato e intrappolato nelle maglie soffocanti e cristallizzate delle convenzioni e della civiltà.

Serena Cenni was Professor of English Literature at the University of Trento from 2000 to 2012. She has written extensively on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, romantic poetry and modernist and postmodernist narrative. She has translated Lady Chatterley's Lover into Italian.

Fresco by Contessa Mirenda presumably showing Lawrence and Frieda in a mythological setting

Politics Italian Style

by Mark Donovan

Where does one start an attempt to throw some light on the enigma of the Italian political system? One might start with sociology, economics or social history, to get at the substance below the political 'superstructure'. A more political foundation might seem the Constitution, at least when considering a liberal democracy. Here the focus is on political parties. This perhaps takes us closer to the actual political power map. But historical context is also vital. Thus Manzoni's evocation of the need for history as a guide to understanding politics, and the claim of George Seeley, historian and founder of British political science, that politics without history has no root (and history without politics, no fruit).

If the so-called First Republic (1948-94) was, notoriously, a republic of the parties and even a particracy, that is, a state whose government was neither presidential nor parliamentary but partisan, the Second (1994 onwards) might be said to be a republic of leaders, local and national. Silvio Berlusconi is the media tycoon who has overseen this transformation of Italian politics, creating parties built entirely around him – so-called personal parties. At the time of writing in 2014 the Italian Centre-Left (as defined in and by the party system) appears to have adopted a new, more modern approach by electing the young, dynamic Matteo Renzi as party leader (and subsequently appointed Prime Minister). 'At last!' some might say. Yet Renzi is only likely to achieve success if Italy's political institutions are radically reformed. But let us put a little flesh on this skeletal frame.

> // Always a broad church, the DC party lost members to a wide range of new parties.

Political parties in the First Republic did not merely organise politics and structure the electorate, features typical of party democracies and party government. They came to organise civil society and much of the economy, thanks to the political polarisation and fierce competition between Left and Right during the Cold War, the re-emergence of civil and political society which followed the collapse of Fascism and, we should not forget, Italy's enormous economic growth and consumer revolution.

Political competition saw the creation of a wide array of parties. These included the Communist (PCI) and neo-Fascist (MSI) parties, both of which were excluded from government throughout the First Republic, and the Christian Democrats (DC), who dominated government throughout this period. From 1945 to 1981 every Prime Minister was a Christian Democrat; and even after that half of all cabinet

Matteo Renzi

ministers were DC, the other half being divided between four main parties.

With the collapse of the USSR in 1989-91 and the end of the Cold War, it no longer seemed crucial – either to the United States or to the Italian establishment and many Italians – to maintain the Christian Democrat 'soft hegemony', which had promoted pluralism and liberal democracy yet had also colluded with the mafias and had hindered state-building and the democratic integration of the Italian people. Indeed, Christian Democratic triumphalism at the collapse of communism, its historic enemy, presaged its own fall. Always a broad church, the DC party lost members to a wide range of new parties. This period also saw the rise of the Northern League – essentially before the judicial-cum-media exposé of systemic corruption in public life known as Tangentopoli.

The main political victims of Tangentopoli in the 1990s were the Centre-Right parties, which had long been in government. Since the biggest opposition parties, hitherto permanently excluded from national government, were supported by the Left, many expected the post-Communist Democratic Party of the Left (PD) and its allies to come to power when the old system collapsed. This was prevented by Silvio Berlusconi, who 'sacrificed' himself to politics in order to save his country from the Communists. His huge personal resources and the success of his new party, Forza Italia, allowed him to form alliances with the post-Fascist National Alliance and the Northern League (LN), although neither of these parties would join a single electoral alliance, as well as a splinter group from the Christian Democrats.

These four parties went on to constitute the Right in the Second Republic, with the partial exception of the 1995-99 period when the LN's secessionist positions allowed it to keep its distance from Forza Italia.

This alliance, matched on the Left by the Olive Tree alliance, and later the Democratic Party (PD), saw the creation of a bipolar party system and alternation in government. This is what reformers had sought with the introduction of a quasi-majoritarian electoral system via referendums in 1991 and 1993. This new party system was expected to enhance government performance, since the electorate could now hold governments accountable via the ballot box and replace them, if they failed to deliver, unlike in the First Republic. To an extent this worked. Popular disillusion with incumbent governments repeatedly saw them 'kicked out'. But the number of voters changing party allegiance – switching from Left to Right or vice versa – remained relatively low. These mobile voters were not entirely insignificant, and their number started to grow between 1996 and 2008. But disillusioned government supporters tended to abstain rather than switch their vote because of the 'gladiatorial', or polarised nature of competition. Government alternation, moreover, was too frequent: no incumbent government was re-elected. Successive governments disappointed.

The first Prodi government (1996-98) was brought down by parliamentary manoeuvring. It was succeeded by three Centre-Left governments, and two further Prime Ministers, before the party suffered electoral defeat in 2001. The 2001-06 Berlusconi governments gained a reputation for being primarily concerned with protecting the interests of their leader and his 'clan'. They also failed to cut taxes, as they had promised; and their major constitutional reform legislation was reversed by a referendum held after the Left and Romano Prodi had returned to power. The second Prodi government lasted only two years, not least because of a further electoral reform passed in 2005, which was almost certainly intended, among other things, to undermine the Left's expected electoral victory. The fourth Berlusconi government that took office in 2008 also failed to cut taxes or reform Italy's institutions. It collapsed in the wake of the economic crisis of 2011.

This crisis saw a second failure of party government. As in the early to mid-1990s, it led to the appointment of a technocrat as Prime Minister – Mario Monti. The parties of the two poles (Left and Right) would not cooperate openly in a grand coalition for fear of alienating their voters; but cooperate they did, and many voters did not like it. Nor were they over keen on the Monti government's policies of economic austerity. In the 2013 election many disillusioned government voters, particularly of the Centre-Right, did not abstain, as in the past. They switched to comedian Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement (M5S), a party of protest, hitherto seen as left of centre. The boom in votes for Grillo split the Senate three ways. The result meant that a majority government could only be formed by a coalition explicitly supported by both the main parties of the Right and Left, the People of Freedom (PDL) on the Right and the Democratic Party (PD) on the Left. This was because

Romano Prodi

the Constitution requires a vote of confidence in both Chambers, and neither of the two main parties could muster a majority in both Houses without the acquiescence of the other. Thus was born the short-lived government led by Enrico Letta of the PD.

In November 2013, on the eve of the vote that resulted in Berlusconi's loss of his MP's status, Berlusconi withdrew his party's support from Letta's government, splitting his party. His reconstituted Forza Italia took two-thirds of the PDL's MPs and went into opposition. The one-third of the party's MPs, who remained in government supporting Letta, reconstituted themselves as the New Centre-Right (NCD). This government was internally divided and had a weak majority. In February 2014 Matteo Renzi, elected leader of the PD the preceding December, withdrew his party's support from its own Prime Minister, Enrico Letta, forcing his resignation. Renzi himself then formed a new government.

The conclusion of this history is that political parties remain central to parliamentary politics in Italy. Of course Italy's parties have progressively lost popular support. Electoral turnout has declined consistently since 1979, as in many, but not all, other advanced industrial, or post-industrial democracies. By contrast, popular support for Italy's Presidents has remained very high, though support for Giorgio Napolitano has fallen. Some Centre-Right supporters, in particular, regard him as having engineered Berlusconi's downfall in 2011. As Berlusconi has shown, however, individual leaders are almost certainly not enough to give Italy the effective government that it needs. Institutional reform is also necessary, including reform of the political parties themselves, which remain highly unregulated. But that is easier said than done.

Dr Mark Donovan is a Senior Lecturer in Politics at Cardiff University. He has a particular interest in party system theory and in party and electoral politics in Italy and is currently writing a book on the Italian party system and its parties.

Venice Island of Studies

by John Hall

'Tradition is the passing on of the fire, not the worship of the ashes'. In citing Mahler, Pasquale Gagliardi, the dynamic secretary-general of the Giorgio Cini Foundation added in an article published in 2012 'Venice existed as a State and then became a myth. Basing its future on conservation, it has developed a strong resistance to innovation. If the city is to survive, it has to escape from the fetishism of conservation.'

The world-wide alarm after the great flooding in Florence and Venice in November 1966, and the destruction of works of art in Florence, shifted attention in Venice from 'what should the future of Venice be?' to awareness of immediate lagoon tidal and climatic dangers: it also drew attention to the neglected state of Venice's art treasures, resulting in an active and ongoing international programme of art restoration. The philosophy of Professor Gagliardi is more in tune with pre-flood Venetian thinking, which linked art and architectural restoration with recreating contemporary human activities in keeping with Venice's cultural past.

The Giorgio Cini Foundation was established in 1951 by Count Vittorio Cini in the Benedictine monastery on the island of San Giorgio in memory of his son who had died in a plane crash. The monastery had been gutted by Napoleon and used as a barracks during the Austrian occupation in the 19th century. Count Cini's restoration is still the most outstanding and inspiring restoration in Venice, not least because its purpose was not just art for art's sake but social: it included the establishment of a training college of seamanship, a school of arts and crafts including a printing press, and research foundations in various Venetian fields: art, music, theatre and relations with the Orient. The Cini Foundation immediately had a high-profile role in Venetian life.

Isola San Giorgio

In May 1966, shortly before the flood brought world-attention to Venice, Count Cini, along with a group of eminent and active Venetians, including Professor Vittore Branca, then secretary general of the Cini Foundation, directors of museums and cultural institutions, bankers and other prominent residents formed an association - *Venezia Isola degli Studi* (VIS). They believed that an international academic presence would add a modest dimension to the life of the city. With its cultural tradition, Venice was an appropriate place to study art, music, history, urban planning and various aspects of marine ecology and, with its established Biennale, contemporary art, theatre, film and ballet.

> With its cultural tradition, Venice was an appropriate place to study art, music, history, urban planning and various aspects of marine ecology

An active VIS committee set about showing that the idea was a practicable possibility. A fact-finding tour of British and American universities revealed an immediate serious interest: all that was required was a lecture room, a liaison-admin office and possibly a space for a library. From the start the VIS plan was intended to prove to a sceptical city council that the idea could work and that it should eventually be hosted officially by the city and not continue to depend on private funding; in other words that the city should provide the work space in one of its little-used or empty palaces. As early as the 1971-1972 academic year there were 670 foreign students under the VIS initiative spending more than two months of organised study in Venice, with no fewer than twenty-seven universities involved .

For four vintage years, 1977 to 1980, in return for restoring the roof and top floor of the large, semi-dilapidated Gothic Palazzo Fortuny, bequeathed by the Spanish designer to the City for use for cultural purposes, VIS was granted a short lease. With the premises and admin office provided by VIS, there was a considerable academic presence, including, from England, programmes run by East Anglia University, Manchester University, Warwick University, University College London, the Royal College of Art, the Polytechnic of the South Bank, as well as my own Contemporary Europe Pre-University Course, which had already begun at the Cini Foundation in 1965.

However, politics in the city council did not give high priority to the VIS enterprise, the Palazzo Fortuny lease was not extended and the palace remained closed for years with an *in restauro* notice pinned to its door. The city council was concentrating on the launching of a revived carnival, with a capital C for commercial. In a publication produced in 1989 marking twenty years of VIS activity, Professor Terisio

John Hall Venice 50th anniversary dinner at the Cini Foundation

Pignatti, Director of the civic museums, stated, 'We had conceived perhaps too elitist a project, given the times, and the city rushed towards the ephemeral. Whereas VIS wanted to bring Venice to Europe and the world, the city preferred to bring the province to the carnival.' With such a definitive No from the city council, the experiment of VIS came to an end. It did not die – it faded away.

In the following years there was a climate of decline in Venice. The population in the historic centre continued to shrink. The Cini Foundation lost its driving energy and San Giorgio was described by Mayor Professor Cacciari as something between an old-folks' home and a book depository.

Since his appointment in 2002, Gagliardi has set about resuscitating the Cini Foundation and adapting some of the historic buildings of the monastery to contemporary and appropriate use. The beautiful but unused *manica lunga*, a 120 metres long 7 metres wide 'corridor' of fifty-six monks' cells was converted into a new library, now part of the Vittore Branca Centre for the Study of Italian Culture, the cells being used for study by research students, and a former mechanics workshop has been converted into a residence for the Centre. The grandiose reception rooms of the *foresteria* have been altered to provide more suitable accommodation for visiting academics. A former seminary has been opened as the *stanze del vetro*, with spaces for temporary exhibitions devoted to glass. A remarkable to-scale facsimile reproduction of Veronese's *The Wedding in Cana,* stolen by Napoleon and now in the Louvre, was commissioned from Arte-Factum of Madrid, restoring the spatial harmony of the Palladian refectory.

Gagliardi has achieved considerable success in attracting funding: Telecom for the *manica lunga,* and the Pentagram Stiftung Foundation for the *stanze del vetro.* And he has restored the Foundation's accounts from red to black. Equally vital, he has had the support of the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Scola, who himself founded the *Marcianum* in 2004, an educational institution reaching out towards the East, to Islam and China, following the Patriarchate's historic role.

Of the original VIS members from the UK, only Warwick University and the pre-university course which I started and which is now known as John Hall Venice Course still maintain a regular presence in the city. We started in 1965 as warmly-welcomed guests of the Cini Foundation. Our aim is still to open the eyes, ears and minds of students taking time off between school and university, by means of outstanding teachers. The fundamental, formative and unforgettable inspiration is spending six weeks in Venice, from late January to mid-March. Some 40 years ago Lord Snowdon was quoted in The Times, 'It would be marvellous if somewhere like Venice there could be a short-course university where, away from class and work and national divisions, a group of students could get together.' Exactly what we have done. By 2014 we have already brought 3015 students to Venice for a six-week stay, including 60 whose fathers or mothers were on the course before them. 2014 is our fiftieth year- a Golden Jubilee. In these activities a steady flame still burns.

John Hall is the Founder Director of The John Hall Venice Course

Dame Emma Kirkby at the John Hall Venice 50th anniversary

A Machiavellian Connection

by Charles Avery

Charles Avery as a young man

When I was small in the turbulent wake of World War II, I knew nothing of Italy apart from generalities picked up from stamp-collecting, which was my portal into the world outside. Its stamps in those days were no more exciting than those of other countries, for pictorial issues were rare. Stamps from the British Empire were more fun, giraffes on those from Tanganyika for a start. Then, in 1951 or thereabouts, when I was a sentient being with a year or two of Latin and French behind me, my parents went to Italy on whatever foreign exchange was allowed, scrimping and saving, taking trains not planes, and buses not taxis. My mother would send me glossy black and white postcards of buildings that meant as yet nothing to me. She was learning Italian earnestly from small buff-coloured paperbacks entitled *Hugo's Teach Yourself Italian* (which were to serve me also in due time). She waxed lyrical about a 'room with a view' in Pensione Rigatti on the banks of the Arno, a little upstream from Santa Croce and the Biblioteca Nazionale. So enthusiastic did she become, that I came to the inevitable conclusion of a typical schoolboy that there must be something seriously wrong with Florence, and imagined that it was not for me.

School continued apace: through an unholy and invincible alliance between my father, a modern linguist and hence classicist-manqué, and my headmaster, Mr Dixon, who wanted to keep the Classics Sixth well-stocked with victims. I 'did' Classics and then, to avoid greater pain and harder work, I continued it through University.

By the late 1950s cheap travel for students was all the rage and, with the Youth Hostel Association offering widespread if Spartan accommodation, I began to travel. A three-day odyssey by student train took me, with an overnight break in Munich and a snail's pace journey through Yugoslavia, to Athens. It was love at first sight: the Acropolis (over which one could then roam freely), the National Museum with its gorgeous *Kouroi* and glamorous Korai, and row upon row of black-figure vases. I was taken to Epidavros, to my then horror though ensuing joy, to see a woman called Callas sing in an opera called *Norma*. We had cheap seats, right back at the upper rim of the auditorium, so I wasn't even going to hear anything! The sun gradually dropped in the West, silence finally fell, a minute figure dressed all in white, like a Greek heroine, stepped on to the centre of the stage and then her voice arrived, in the first glorious aria. All my childish prejudices were melted in a moment and I was enthralled by the big, suave encompassing voice: an opera fan was born on the spot.

I went on to back-pack round the Peloponnese, sleeping rough at Olympia and standing on Cape Sounion. Next long vacation, a chum from school, who was now reading Architecture, was going to travel round Italy in the approved manner, and I consented to join him after starting in the 'deep south' to see the Greek temples of Sicily and those of Paestum. We were to meet in Florence and he would attempt to stimulate my jaded Hellenophile appetite with later buildings and Renaissance art. And it worked! The scales fell from my eyes and I realised that Mum and Dad had been right all along. Greek art was not everything, and I couldn't get enough of Renaissance frescoes, bronze statues or brightly glazed Della Robbias.

This puppy-love was soon to be deepened by an encounter with an elderly Florentine lady who was grander than anyone I had ever known, but who kindly stooped to educate in greater depth a callow undergraduate and his school-friend. My father had furnished me with an introduction, for he had known her, or of her, for years. The reason for our unlikely acquaintance with this Grande Dame of Florentine, indeed Italian, society was that a maiden aunt of my father's had been her governess in the 1920s.

My great aunt's charge was no less than the Contessa Sofia Bossi-Pucci-Serristori (as she became by marriage) and by the time I met her she was living in the Palazzo Serristori, an enormous, neo-classical yellow-painted palazzo. The Contessa, as so often happened, loved her governess to bits and wrote to her about her posh wedding and reception at court long after my great aunt had discharged her duties and returned to England.

The one ancestral name of which the Contessa was proudest was missing from the impressive mouthful by which she became known, that of Machiavelli, a family which had died out with a last female member marrying one of her ancestors. So proud was she of this singular intellectual, literary and historical connection that she personally took me by chauffeur-driven car up into the heart of Chianti to the podere called Sant'Andrea in Percussina, where Niccolò Machiavelli spent his embittered years of exile from Florence.

Here it was, she happily related, that by night he would don his red senatorial robes and - at that desk! - gradually write *The Prince*, well into the small hours, pondering old sleights, settling old scores and purging his frustration.

By day, she explained, Machiavelli would numb his pain by resorting to the hum-drum daily life of a *contadino*. He saw to the ploughing of his fields, the reaping of his corn

and pruning, harvesting and pressing his grapes. The latter activities were most fascinating, because they were entirely new to me (for I did know a bit about regular farming in the Cotswold Hills).

The Contessa good-humouredly explained how she had personally undertaken the modernisation of the winery over the road from the manor farm-house, and she called for a bottle of her Chianti Macchiavelli to be opened in La Tavernetta, which she daringly dubbed 'my little pub'. Here Machiavelli used to make merry of an evening with his foreman and labourers, eating humble fare, as she did with me: *fetunta* (slices of fresh bread made delicious with extra virgin olive oil from the press down the hill and a dusting of salt); crostini (toast with chicken liver or chopped tomatoes, well-known nowadays to all tourists); and ribollita (bean and stale-bread soup). Washed down with liberal gulps of that smooth, stony, oaky-tasting Chianti, to which again I was an instant convert and still imbibe with glee.

Over several subsequent visits, the Contessa also expounded the ancient, Christian ethos of the Florentine nobility, who in order to justify their privileged position and wealth tried, just like the Medici, to plough back at least a tithe into the local community. She was proud of having built from her own resources a latter-day almshouse and nursing home somewhere in the *contado fiorentino* for a dozen poor people, though she spared me a visit as my time was short. The ethos of course accords well with that of the Anglo-Italian grandees whose books have made Tuscany come alive for us, from Janet Ross and Iris Origo to Kinta Beevor.

Machiavelli's study in Sant'Andrea di Percussina

Contessa Sophia certainly paid back any debt of gratitude that she felt towards the Avery family from her childhood, by taking the trouble to impart her sound knowledge and sympathy for humanity to a young Englishman. And for a wedding present she shipped all the way from Impruneta in a stout wooden crate one of those splendiferous towering arrangements of colourful ripe fruit in a handsome basin made in ceramic. It arrived intact, save for a projecting stem at the very top, which I glued back invisibly, and still has pride of place in our dining-room.

Charles Avery is a historian, writer and lecturer. He was Deputy Keeper of Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1966-1979 and subsequently a Director of Christies. He is a trustee of the British-Italian Society.

Pull out the stops

by Charles de Chassiron

Here is a tale which gave rise to an unexpected problem, but seems I hope to set fair to end well for all concerned. It involved the fate of a gift which the British-Italian Society had made almost half a century ago but which had been forgotten. It concerns an organ in Westminster Abbey.

In far-off 1961, descendants of Vincent Novello, the 19th century composer, music publisher and organist who died in 1861, approached the Dean and Chapter of the Abbey about replacing the commemorative stained glass window. In 1940 the window had been blown out of St Andrew's Chapel, set just off the magnificent Lady Chapel behind the main altar. In the end, it was agreed that an organ might be a better centenary memorial for Novello, especially as the Abbey had long wanted an organ suitable for the services held in the Lady Chapel. The British-Italian Society was asked to coordinate the project, and a (relatively) small Snetzler organ made in the late 18th century was chosen after the specialist firm of Noel Mander had restored it. On 1 July 1965, the organ was presented by the then Chairman Sir Ashley Clarke on behalf of the Society and the Novello family trust (which no longer exists). It was embellished with a handsome ivory panel recording the joint donation.

But it became apparent to the Abbey over the years that the chamber organ, though a useful gift, was not really up to the demands made of it during the many small-scale services (such as weddings) and concerts held in the Lady Chapel. The Abbey was approached early in 2013 by the then Lord Mayor of London, Roger Gifford, a well-known music enthusiast, who wanted to make a suitable donation to mark the 60th anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. A new pipe organ for the Lady Chapel also made by Noel Mander was proposed, and accepted gratefully by the Abbey. But what to do with the old one? I was contacted by my old Foreign Office colleague, Sir Stephen Lamport, now Receiver-General of the Abbey – and so in charge of all its non-liturgical activity – to be asked if we would mind if the Abbey disposed of the original instrument, and whether we could suggest a new home. Once it was established that no current Trustee had any knowledge of the gift and there was no objection to the Abbey's disposal plan, a quick decision had to be made.

The Chapel was being refurbished in 2013 and the City of London Corporation wanted to have the new instrument installed in the Abbey over the summer, after Roger Gifford had had it in use during his term in office for concerts in the Mansion House. Lady Clarke, Ashley Clarke's widow, was consulted and she recalled the gift. She had no objection to the plan to remove the organ from the chapel, but like everyone wanted to see a good alternative location found. The Receiver-General, Sir Stephen Lamport, was particularly concerned that the Society should be happy, not least because he had served at the Rome Embassy during his career in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Lady Chapel Westminster Abbey

It was fortunate that one of the Society's trustees, Dr Sandra Fox, is a music-lover and also has two grandchildren studying at the London Oratory School. She knew that the organist and head of music there Dr David Terry was on the lookout for a good-quality organ, and she immediately asked if the Abbey's Snetzler would do – and indeed it did. The Dean and Chapter gratefully accepted the LOS suggestion, and so plans went ahead for the installation of the Mayoral gift in the Abbey's Lady Chapel. That organ – to be known as The Queen's Organ - was inaugurated at a special Dedication service and concert by James O'Donnell, the Abbey's Organist and Master of the Choristers, in the presence of the Earl of Wessex, held in early November 2013. The new instrument sounds terrific, and even features a thunder pedal and an exotic 'nightingale' feature, which by means of inverted pipes in water propels revolving birds out of the top of the organ casing. The inaugural concert, which concentrated on music by Handel, Purcell and Mendelssohn, illustrated this party trick during an encore. Apparently many ancient organs in Italy, France and Germany have this feature, but it is a rarity in the UK.

The installation of the old organ at the London Oratory School is still being discussed, but in mid-2014 some unforeseen financial difficulties over the re-installation costs were encountered, and it may be that in the end a new home will need to be found for the organ. But once this is accomplished, the organ-gift saga will hopefully have ended satisfactorily. The Society's gift is out to stud, and is good for many years yet. Tutti contenti, we hope!

Memories of Bordighera in the 1920s

by Yvonne Fox

Yvonne Fox as a young girl

'Daddy, why do gentlemen raise their hats to ladies?' a six year old asked her father as he was escorting her to school. 'Out of respect,' came the reply, 'yet it was not always so...' He did not elaborate.

The child was being taken to the little French convent in the old town in Bordighera, a medieval setting of simple buildings fronting long gently sloping red brick steps that had borne the weight of many generations. The child loved these walks for she was always treated as one worthy of full attention and, despite the disparity of years,, rapport with her father was complete.

The child was English and how she came to be schooling in this small French community came about like this. Between the two world wars it proved far cheaper for retired British people to live on the French and Italian Rivieras than to struggle to make ends meet at home. Many merely wintered in the sunnier climate, hoping to miss the cold and damp of uncomfortable months at home. Others took up permanent residence. The child's parents had rented a villa up in the old town, hoping to escape the English fogs, as her mother suffered seriously from asthma.

The school was run by *les Ursulines de Nice* a community that had had to cross the border into Italy in 1901 when French law disenfranchised educational establishments under religious management. All its pupils were French and just nipped into Italy to make sure of a French education with a Catholic ethos. There were two foreigners, the child (myself) and the daughter of an Italian carnation grower. Invited to visit carnations, produced on a big scale, was disillusioning: sandy fields stretched out bearing plants ranged like sentinels at attention. The sight was not attractive, just bleak.

I was put in the charge of an elderly nun, Mere Ste Justine. I thought her elderly as her false teeth were not a cosy fit and her brother had been an engineer in the French army during the Franco-Prussian war. She was *Ancien Regime* and, besides educating me in matters of deportment and good manners, she also taught me the art of study. I was in her tender care until the age of 10 when my parents suddenly realised that, though fluent in spoken English, I could neither read nor write the language. But the four years under her tutelage were not wasted. She decided I should be confirmed, but there was a possible snag: the Italian Bishop was not sure an English child could be a Catholic. Enquiries in Edinburgh produced the necessary baptism certificate and all was well.

Many years later, when my parents rented a penthouse in Monaco, I would slip across to the Convent for a week of serious study as I feared a happy social life at Oxford was militating against the necessary focus to get a good degree.

Mere Ste Justine would take me through the French Classics and innumerable *dictées* to improve my poor spelling. Some of the books were on the Index, an old list of prohibited reading. As a university student I was exempt, but I don't think she was. Out of affection, however, she struggled with Rousseau and kept muttering, 'but there was so much good in the man.'

After a period as a day scholar at the convent, I became a boarder. My sister, somewhat older than I and bored with the little there was in the way of entertainment for the young in Bordighera, begged me to pray that we would go and winter in Gibraltar. I did so, but when preparations for the journey were taking place, I learnt I was not to be of the party but was to remain at school. My parents were happy about this as my father's sister Mary Gaunt lived down town in a flat near the station.

Aunt Minnie, Mary Gaunt, had been one of the very first undergraduates at Melbourne University. Widowed early she had to make a living and decided to try her hand at writing. She travelled widely in Asia, Africa, the West Indies and Europe and wrote of her adventures as well as using her experiences of foreign countries as background to her novels. She was moderately successful and today her work is having a come back. On retirement she decided to settle in Italy at Bordighera: the living was cheap and the climate kind to one brought up in Australia. She had a first floor flat in a modest house probably built some years before World War I. Minnie, like the late Queen Mother, had decided on her own mode of dress: a loose floral tube that camouflaged from head to calf. Her companion was a small terrier-like dog and when he eventually died and I was grown up, I went to Battersea Dogs' Home and found her another. Minnie was delighted with him. In my school days at the convent, she climbed the slight hill at regular intervals to assure herself that all was well. She was probably agnostic, but accepted that I should be brought up in my mother's faith. From my childhood time in Bordighera, until the outbreak of World War II we kept in touch. When Italy entered the war, she had to seek refuge in a residential home in Cannes where she died.

Anyone who has seen the film *Tea with Mussolini* will appreciate the flavour of this immediate pre-World War II period. Aunt Minnie, however, was free of accepted rules of etiquette and entirely free of foreign snobbery. My four years schooling in Italy were a bonus: I emerged with beautiful French and kitchen Italian.

Bordighera between the wars

The Anglican Cemetery of Bagni di Lucca

by Richard Deavin

The restoration and reopening of the Anglican Cemetery in Bagni di Lucca, initiated by the Fondazione Michel de Montaigne and carried out in collaboration with the Commune di Bagni di Lucca, was celebrated on the 14 September 2013.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries the spa town of Bagni di Lucca in Tuscany was a popular resort for the European traveller. Among the literati, the Brownings and Ouida lived here and Shelley, Byron, Scott, Dumas and Heine were visitors. The list of musicians associated with the town includes Puccini, Rossini, Tosti, Johann Strauss and Liszt. Minor royalty, including several of Napoleon's relations, were also residents or frequent visitors.

Colonel Henry Stisted, a veteran of Waterloo, and his wife Elizabeth were leading lights in the English cultural community and in 1840 were permitted by the Duke of Lucca to construct an Anglican church. They followed this in 1842 with the establishment of an English Cemetery, where they are both buried.

A total of 139 people are buried here, although many graves are now lost. Prominent among the remaining tombs is that of Ouida, which seems to be a rustic copy of the more famous sarcophagus of Ilaria di Carreto in Lucca Cathedral. Among the many British names, ranks and titles there are also to be found a number of Canadians and Americans and at least one Russian. We also find Rose Elizabeth Cleveland, sister of the then US president, and members of her team of American nurses who died here of Spanish flu in 1918 while caring for refugees of the First World War.

Entrance to the Cemetery at Bagni di Lucca

The tomb of Ouida

The last burial was in 1953 and the cemetery was closed and fell into disrepair. Until now it could only be visited by appointment. The church was returned to the Commune in 1976 and is now a library and occasional concert venue.

However, with the support of the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Lucca and Istituto Storico Lucchese and many private sponsors, the Fondazione Michel de Montaigne and the Commune have commenced the restoration of the cemetery and it is now open daily. The place has been tidied up, there is a new avenue of cypresses and the most important marble tombs have been properly restored.

Much remains to be done, and the appeal is still open. However on the afternoon of 14 September about 100 local residents and representatives of the British and American communities gathered in the cemetery to celebrate the opening and achievements so far.

Professore Marcello Cherubini, President of the Fondazione, opened proceedings and welcomed the official guests, including Simonetta Puccini (granddaughter of the composer). Following thanks to the many supporters and a short explanation of the restoration process the party was entertained by a quartet of recent graduates of local music schools. Proceedings then moved to the Anglican Church building for cocktails and a more detailed discussion of the restoration.

Bagni di Lucca remains popular with the Brits (though perhaps not as distinguished – or devout - as 150 years or so ago) and there is still evidence of the former connection in house and street names. It is good to see that the Commune still respects this significant Anglo-Italian connection.

Richard Deavin has had a second home in Benabbio, Bagni di Lucca, since 1990.

Tanto per sapere…

Called a 'Wheely Trekky', it is Italy's answer to the challenges of travel and sightseeing for the disabled. Think Sedan Chair 2014: a sturdy-framed chair mounted on one robust wheel and manned by two trained assistants, one at the front handles and one at the rear. *Rome and Italy srl* will take the eager but unable visitor to all of Rome's most loved sights just like other able-bodied travellers: the Coliseum, Ostia Antica, the Baths of Caracalla, Tivoli and much more.

Queen Victoria in Italy

by Mariateresa Wright

Queen Victoria loved travelling and the open air. She was constantly on the move. Every year she lived in turn in three different residences: Osborne (Isle of Wight), Balmoral (Scotland) and Windsor Castle. Contrary to popular belief she hardly stayed at Buckingham Palace. She dedicated four weeks each year to her Continental holiday, which started around the last week in March and usually included Easter. The reason she went abroad so early was she could not suffer the hot weather.

The first of her four holidays in Italy was in 1879, at Baveno on the Piedmontese shore of Lake Maggiore when she was very nearly 60. The previous year had been very difficult for her, culminating in the death of her daughter Alice on the anniversary of the death of her beloved husband Albert. She felt the need for a quiet relaxing holiday.

All the arrangements for such a holiday were made by her organiser of foreign travel, Joseph Kanné. And what a magnificent organiser he must have been! When the Queen travelled, a household of about a hundred people accompanied her, including her bag-piper. They all had to be accommodated and their luggage had to be seen through Customs. Kanné also had to see to all the paraphernalia needed to make the Queen's holiday as comfortable as possible. On most of her holidays she took her desk, bed, linen, silver and crockery, carriage and horses. This time the Queen did not ship her own horse but only her favourite 'wagonette', an open carriage with side seats, in which she had the courage to travel, even if it rained. And indeed it poured by the bucketful, as is traditional in that part of Italy.

The villa where she spent her holiday had been chosen with care by some members of her household who knew the area, either through diplomatic acquaintances or through their local commercial interests. The villa was perfect: it belonged to Charles Henfrey, a truly Victorian entrepreneur who forged close contacts with the VIPs of his day and who was able to entertain European royalty and leading Italian politicians. It was new, had a secluded park and its own beautiful chapel.

John Brown

When the Monarch travelled abroad the Prime Minister (in this case Disraeli) had the task of obtaining the Government's permission. Likewise, permission had to be sought from the host country. It was not until the very end of February 1879 that the good citizens of Baveno knew they would have in their midst the Empress of the largest empire the world had ever seen, and that she would be arriving on 28 March.

Joseph Kanné – Royal Collection Trust© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The Queen travelled through France in her own personal railway carriage with six other carriages for the privileged members of her entourage; the rest had gone ahead to ready every detail for her arrival. From the station she travelled by open carriage, entered the gates of the villa at great speed calling in her crystalline voice, in Italian, *'Niente musica!'* to the assembled town band eager to greet her.

The villa proved to be to her liking. It was recently built with all the latest Victorian mod cons, and the architecture was a perfect Victorian pastiche: a mixture of various styles with turrets that reminded her of her beloved Balmoral. Even the lake seemed to her like dear Loch Lomond. On her arrival the trees were still bare but the magnolias, camellias and the azaleas in the park surrounding the villa welcomed her with myriads of starry flowers. The blue lake, blue sky, snow-capped mountains reflected in the water and the pink blossoms silhouetted against the deep blue sky enchanted her and inspired her to paint many watercolours in which she used her favourite shade of heather, just as she did for her Scottish ones.

Each day the Queen followed the timetable that Prince Albert had organised for her. She would take a stroll in the morning and a short drive in the afternoon. This did not please some of her staff, who would have preferred exploring the area more but had to stay at her disposal. They passed monotonous days, particularly as it rained for half of the time and was cold. The wife of the Ambassador, who had also to be in attendance, resented it very much: she and the Ambassador had had to leave their beautiful palazzo, the Roman spring and their social life and stay in a freezing hotel waiting to be summoned. The Queen did not mind the weather at all. She loved the open air and would go for her stroll even under the rain and come back

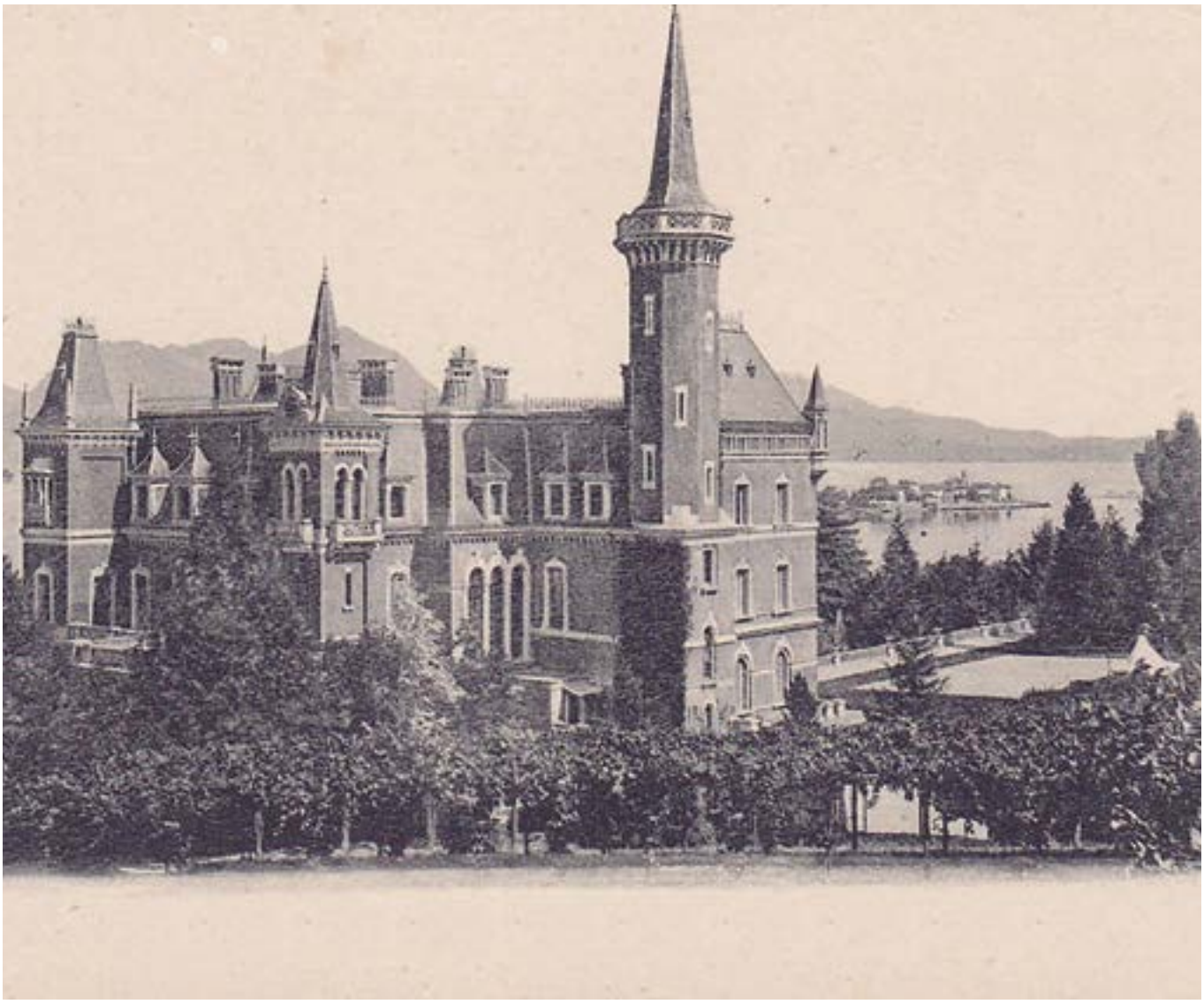
soaked. She knew Italian (through her early love of opera) and was very proud that the gardener could understand her, as could the local peasants whom she would encounter on her walks. So the days passed uneventfully, but for the usual commotion with John Brown, her personal servant. As he hated 'abroad', he was tense, drank for comfort and contracted a severe alcohol-induced skin infection. A second doctor had to be summoned from London. As soon as he recovered, the Queen went to see the sights of Milan. The visit was a disaster. The Queen had insisted on a private visit but she was mobbed in the Cathedral, and the sights were 'done' at great speed. John Brown, as usual, sat on the box of the carriage in his tartans. How could the lively and curious Milanese be indifferent to such a wondrous sight and not follow and crowd around the carriage? The Queen was not amused.

Her three other Italian holidays were all to Florence with the usual set up of her own railway carriage and her substantial household. At the preparation stage of one of these journeys it was tactfully suggested that, perhaps, the number could be reduced. After consideration, the Queen struck just one name from the list, and so the same arrangements continued until her last journey abroad in 1899. It was up to King Edward to modernise the court at the death of his mother as it had been the task of Prince Albert to modernise the court that Victoria had found on her accession.

> // The Queen did not mind the weather at all. She loved the open air and would go for her stroll even under the rain and come back soaked.

While her visits to Florence followed the same pattern as Baveno, the Queen was more sociable. She occasionally drove to have tea with various people and also entertained more. Florence was fashionable; there was a large English colony and foreign royalty was also attracted to the city. Although she became less mobile with each visit, the Queen was a good tourist and sketched or painted watercolours of many of the places she visited. On her return these were pasted into albums or given as presents. And actually they were rather good.

Mariateresa Wright is the author of Un Sogno Luminoso, an account of Queen Victoria's visit to Lake Maggiore in 1879.



Villa Henfrey-Branca

Ginori at the V&A

by Justin Raccanello

The porcelain factory founded by the Marquis Carlo Ginori in 1737, often referred to as Doccia after the villa near Florence where the original manufacture was based, has a long and illustrious history of design and innovation leading up to the present day. Carlo Ginori was a far-sighted individual with a vast range of interests that are reflected in the production of the factory, as well as the then revolutionary treatment of the workers who were cared for and educated in a manner perhaps without equal until the latter part of the 19th century. A biography of this fascinating man in English is long overdue.

The Victoria and Albert Museum holds a small but significant collection of the production of the Ginori factory, both porcelain and earthenware, which has been hitherto uncatalogued. Thanks to the Amici di Doccia, an Italian-based society devoted primarily to the study of the history of Doccia, but also to the other Italian porcelain factories, an initiative was launched to catalogue all the pieces from the Ginori factory in the V&A. As well as the best known pieces, others that were previously undiscovered or misattributed have been collected together and published in the 7th edition of the journal of the Amici di Doccia, known as the *Quaderni*. Sponsored by the British-Italian Society and the Italian Cultural Institute as well as various private individuals, the catalogue highlights for the first time the importance of the V&A's collection, with representative pieces from all the periods and styles of the factory from the early production to the 1960s.

Thanks to an invitation from the French Porcelain Society, in the first departure from their regular lectures on French subjects and following on from a visit to Florence and the Amici di Doccia in 2012, the launch of the 2014 *Quaderni* was celebrated in London by a series of lectures generously hosted by Bonhams followed by a handling session at the V&A the following day. Unfortunately due to reasons of ill health, the founder and chairman of the Amici di Doccia, John Winter, was unable to attend, but we were graced by the presence of both Lady Davson, founder of the French Porcelain Society and Honorary Member of the Amici, as well as Dame Ros Savill, doyenne of Sèvres porcelain and dilettante of Doccia.

Plate 1862 ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Proceedings were initiated by the President of the French Porcelain Society, Errol Manners whose review of the early links between the Doccia factory and English clients was both educative and entertaining. A bowl and cover with the arms of Captain Augustus Hervey in the catalogue was a good illustration of this, Hervey having visited the Marquis in 1753 when he was governor of Livorno.

John Mallet, ex-Keeper of Ceramics at the V&A, reminisced about Arthur Lane, whose book, *Italian Porcelain*, was the first great study of the subject in English. His talk managed to be both touching and amusing at the same time and went on to cover more recent scholarship on this still under-studied subject.

Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini, Vice President of the Amici di Doccia and curator of the catalogue talked about some of the star pieces in the museum collection and their connection with Florentine culture. It was interesting to hear how Sir Henry Cole, who was instrumental in the development of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the first director of what was then called the South Kensington Museum, was buying contemporary pieces direct from Ginori from the 1850s, as well as earlier pieces of porcelain from dealers. The reattribution of a beautiful sugar bowl, which was thought to be from the Cozzi factory in Venice, back to Doccia, is an example of the usefulness of the project.

Finally, Oliva Rucellai, Director of the Museo Ginori and one of the co-authors of the catalogue, regaled us with stories from the history of the factory and brought us through the 19th century production, up to the present day. The story of the Florentine dealer, Giovanni Freppa, was particularly interesting, as was the explanation of the ongoing confusion between Capodimonte and Ginori, when applied to the basso-rilievo istoriato pieces marked with a crowned 'N'.

In the presence of four of the curators of the catalogue, Livia Frescobaldi Malenchini, Oliva Rucellai, Andreina D'Agliano and Alessandro Biancalana, and with the invaluable assistance of Rebecca Wallis and Susan Newell, a group of enthusiasts were given the privilege of a guided handling tour of some of the best pieces in the collection. Some quite exquisite pieces were on display, including a snuff box with the marvellously modelled head of Medusa on the lid, as well as a teapot with a very early example of transfer-printed putti playing. But the stand out piece for me was the covered bowl and plate, painted by Giovan Battista Fanciullacci in 1782-3 with scenes from a French edition of Ovid's Metamorphosis, printed between 1767-7. Acquired as German in 1855 and only reattributed to Ginori by Arthur Lane 100 years later, the painting on this work is the equal of any other European factory and shows the influence of Sèvres porcelain on that of Doccia at this time.

This catalogue of the collection of the Ginori pieces in the V&A is a very timely addition to scholarship on the subject and will be an essential reference in the future. Congratulations are due to all those involved in its publication and special thanks go to the French Porcelain Society for extending such a warm welcome to the Amici di Doccia.

Snuff box c.1760 ©Victoria and Albert Museum,

Justin Raccanello is a member of both the French Porcelain Society and the Amici di Doccia and is a dealer in antique Italian porcelain and pottery

Italian libraries in London

Vanessa Hall-Smith talks to Stephen Parkin of the British Library and Andrea del Corno of the London Library

Tell me something about the Italian collections in your respective libraries:

SP: Many people think of the British Library as only holding books in the English language, and indeed our principal remit is to represent publishing and printing in the UK since Caxton introduced printing here in the 1470s. But you may be surprised at the depth and range of our foreign language collections. The Italian collections are particularly rich, reflecting the intellectual and cultural prestige of collecting books and manuscripts in Italian from the Renaissance onwards. We have a copy of the first bibliography of Italian books from the 15th century onwards, *Nicolo Francesco Haym's Notizia dei libri rari nella lingua italiana*, which was published in Italian in London in 1726 and was intended as a guide for British collectors to building up their own libraries of early Italian editions. Many Italian books were acquired during the Grand Tour and have ended up in the British Library. But since the 19th century we have also consistently acquired modern Italian publications in the leading fields of research.

We have the largest collection of Italian incunables, books from the first great age of printing in the 15th century, outside the Vatican Library. We also hold early popular literature and ephemera from the 16th to 18th centuries – the ballads and newssheets that were hawked in streets and piazzas throughout Italy and are very rare today.

AdC: The London Library has collected books in all the major European languages since it was founded by the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle in 1841. Carlyle consulted extensively with scholars and intellectuals, and we know from a letter written by Carlyle that Giuseppe Mazzini provided him with a list of suggestions. Gladstone also played a role, giving advice about the importance of Italian culture. We have approximately 25-30,000 volumes in Italian, as well as works in English on Italian subjects. The main strengths of our Italian collections are in Art, Literature and History. Our literature collections include all the major Italian writers as well as a number of more obscure works or editions which are no longer readily available. We hold many notable works of reference and criticism as well as an extensive collection of early 16th century printed books, or *Cinquecentine*, as well as an extensive collection of limited edition publications including *Per Nozze* (produced to celebrate weddings), *Strenne Natalizie* (produced to celebrate Christmas) and *Monacazioni* (produced to celebrate the taking of vows).

Stephen Parkin and Andrea del Corno

How did your collections come into being?

AdC: Books were acquired through various channels, including foreign booksellers. Additionally, the London Library acquired several items through the *Libreria Italiana*, the Italian bookshop based in Berners Street in Soho, London, which became a meeting point and centre for political and cultural debate for 19th century Italian political refugees. A notable example is an edition of the Divina Commedia, edited by Ugo Foscolo and completed by Mazzini, which was published in London in 1842. We have also received some very valuable donations over the years, for example from AJP Taylor, GM Trevelyan and Paget Toynbee. We have an incunable printed in Florence dating from 1500. The Library maintains an energetic acquisition policy.

SP: The core historical component of the present-day Italian collections came from the British Museum Library, founded in 1753 with the collections of Sir Hans Sloane. Other significant holdings within the Italian collections arrived with the King's Library, a gift to the nation and the British Museum, from George IV of the library of his father George III, the greatest bibliophile among all our monarchs and as such very interested in acquiring prestigious Italian books. George IV made it a condition of his gift that the books were housed together rather than just dispersed among all the other volumes in the collection. When the British Museum Library became part of the new national library in 1972 and plans were made for the building which the British Library occupies today, a six-storey glass tower was constructed to house George III's books right at the heart of the building. Other important bequests involving Italian books include that of Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the owner of Stourhead in Wiltshire, and the extraordinary library, rich in bibliographical rarities and fine editions, built up by Sir Thomas Grenville, who was a trustee of the British Museum and a personal friend of Antonio Panizzi, the Italian political exile who became principal librarian. While Panizzi remained a fervent

Italian patriot to the end of his days (in 1879), he never favoured the Italian collections above other areas since his vision of the library's place in the world was precisely that - a global one – a universal place of learning.

What are the main points of difference between your respective libraries?

AdC: The main difference is that the London Library is an independent lending library maintained, as it has been throughout its history, by subscription, donation and bequest. The fact that 96% of the Library's collections are on open access shelves so that members can browse the collections is a major difference too. We classify according to subject area, and the system, devised by Charles Hagberg Wright, Librarian 1893-1940, is unique to the London Library and was designed to facilitate browsing. Books in Italian are incorporated within the relevant subject areas across the entire collection.

SP: Yes, there's an obvious difference of scale but it's equally important that we are a reference library so users cannot borrow books or browse the shelves – they can only come to consult them here. Books have to be ordered through the catalogue and then seen in the reading rooms.

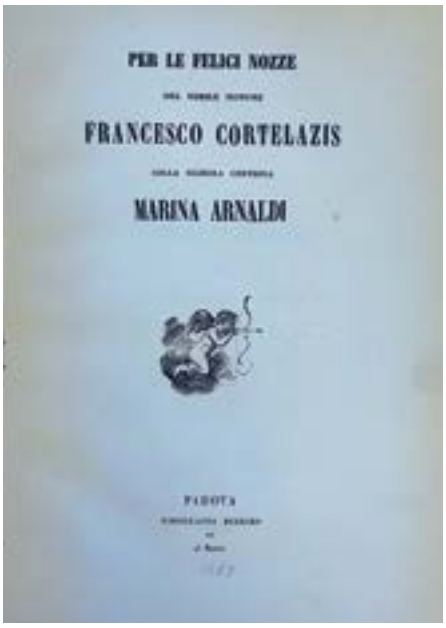
What are the current plans for your Italian Collections?

AdC: We are planning to highlight the *Nozze* Collection next year in a feature blog which will appear on the Library's website on Valentine's Day 2015. *Per Nozze* - an Italian literary genre - are literary compositions written and printed to celebrate a wedding - a custom which was almost entirely confined to Italy. The tradition established itself during the Renaissance but reached its peak of popularity during the 19th century, among the nobility and, more significantly, the Italian bourgeoisie. These writings were composed or compiled to mark the occasion of a wedding. I should point out, however, that in the large majority of cases they are not celebratory poems about marriage or love, as one might expect, but cover an extraordinary and highly miscellaneous variety of subjects for example, history, philology, bibliography and science.

Bust of Antonio Panizzi at the British Library

Per Nozze can be scholarly contributions of lasting value to a specific discipline.

SP: I'd like to mention a small display which will open at the end of October 2014 to commemorate the 500th anniversary in 2015 of the death of the great Venetian publisher and printer Aldo Manuzio, or Manutius to use the Latin form. His printing shop became one of the places that cultivated 16th century travellers to Venice had to visit. The idea behind the display is to show copies of Aldine editions belonging to important collectors over the centuries whose libraries now form part of the British Library, a kind of double focus if you like, both on Manuzio himself and as he's been seen by bibliophiles. Aldine editions were among the most highly prized Italian books for collectors – all serious bibliophiles had to own at least some of them.



Courtesy London Library

And finally, if you could take one book for your bookshelves at home what would you choose?

SP: I would take one of the most famous of all Aldine editions, with a very difficult name: the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (The Dream of Poliphilus), usually just shortened to Polifilo. We have four copies of the 1499 edition (I'd like the one in a very elegant and ornate 16th-century binding). It is a kind of novel, written in a very odd mix of Italian and Latin, about a tormented love affair between the hero Polyphilus and a woman called Polia and abundantly illustrated with extraordinary woodcuts. These were designed by one of the great masters of the Italian Renaissance though the artist has never been identified. There is also uncertainty regarding the authorship of the book but it is commonly thought to be by one Francesco Colonna, although it has also been attributed to Leon Battista Alberti and to Lorenzo de' Medici. These mysteries have undoubtedly added to the cachet of the book for collectors - it's also highly unusual in Manuzio's output since he didn't publish illustrated books. In addition to the woodcuts, it has the most elegant page and typographical design, an unsurpassed achievement of fine printing which has been looked up to as a model ever since.

AdC: My choice would be *Ricordi dei fratelli Bandiera e dei loro compagni di martirio in Cosenza, il 25 luglio 1844* - the Bandiera brothers were supporters of Italian unification and were executed near Cosenza in the region of Calabria. The book was edited by Mazzini and dedicated poignantly to Jacopo Ruffini (1805-1833) one of Mazzini's most valued companions. In the book a short letter written by Mazzini to Thomas Carlyle confirming a visit has been pasted in. Mazzini's minute handwriting is clearly recognisable.

Veronese: Magnificence in Renaissance Venice

by Helen Langdon

No artist has created a more intensely imagined world of dazzling theatrical splendour than Paolo Veronese. He is most celebrated for his large religious feast scenes, set against radiant blue skies in elegant Renaissance architectural settings. Here he sets a rich array of Venetian aristocrats and exotically turbaned men of the East, mingling with serving men, buffoons, dwarves, halberdiers, Moorish pages, monkeys and parrots. The paintings are full of sensuous pleasures, of the delights of surface and texture, of brocades and silks, metals, water bottles, brass ewers, and inlaid marble panels. Veronese, questioned by an Inquisition tribunal over the freedom with which he had treated biblical narrative, replied 'We painters take liberties, the same way as poets and lunatics do… if in the painting there is an empty space, I decorate it with figures..'

Veronese: Magnificence in Renaissance Venice, at the National Gallery from 19 March – 15 June 2014, offered an overview of this remarkable painter's entire career. It was the first monographic exhibition of the artist to be held in the UK, bringing together fifty of his masterpieces, and aimed at the general public; it was held in the upper galleries, lit by natural light, the grey and red walls uncluttered by information, and the emphasis entirely on visual pleasure. The National Gallery has a particularly fine holding of Veronese, and it was a most welcome opportunity to see these works contextualised.

// The paintings are full of sensuous pleasures, of the delights of surface and texture, of brocades and silks, metals, water bottles, brass ewers, and inlaid marble panels.

The display was chronological and thematic, and opened with one of the most interesting sections, illustrating the painter's early career in Verona, the city of his birth. Verona was rich in classical remains and in the new splendours of Renaissance architecture and, from the start, Veronese was drawn to both. A beautiful *Supper at Emmaus*, framed by the entrance arch, greeted the visitor and set the mood. Here, for the first time, Veronese mingles holy figures with a contemporary family, layering time with suggestions of both the ancient and modern world. The family, with a

Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) • Allegories of Love - Happy Union, about 1570-5
Oil on canvas 187.4 × 186.7 cm

brood of round faced blonde children, playing with their pets or clinging to their mother, is touchingly vivid. With its sharp bright colours and silvery white architecture, this painting is the culmination of his early work and suggests much that was to come. It was framed by two innovative full length portraits of a wealthy husband and wife each with a child, portrayed with a fresh immediacy and charm that remains unmatched in the small group of portraits later in the exhibition.

Veronese took this individual style, rooted in Verona, to Venice, where he became one of the most famous painters in the city. A series of religious works show his response to Venetian art, and the hang skilfully led the viewer to the next highpoint, and perhaps the star loan, the vast altarpiece of the *Martyrdom of St George*, painted for the high altar of San Giorgio in Braida in Verona. Hanging close by was the National Gallery's *The Family of Darius before Alexander*, and the two paintings, whose compositions are similar, looked good together. Here Veronese's imagined world, rich in exotic detail and opulent costumes, and showing heroic figures engaged in high drama, reaches its full maturity, recalling the quintessential Veronese of the biblical banquets. In the *Martyrdom of St George* a torrent of striking figures, exotic, ugly, threatening, clad in bright reds and oranges, yellow and greens, cluster around the saint. They are posed as on a

Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) • Martyrdom of Saint George, about 1565
Chiesa di San Giorgio in Braida, Verona
© Photo Scala, Florence

stage, close to the spectator, and the saint's gaze leads the viewer's eyes to the vision of heaven that opens, in a blaze of light, above him.

// In the *Martyrdom of St George* a torrent of striking figures, exotic, ugly, threatening, clad in bright reds and oranges, yellow and greens, cluster around the saint.

In the second half of the exhibition there was a marked change of mood. One room was devoted to Veronese's allegorical and mythological paintings, and here Veronese's range is impressive. He moves from the decorative splendour of the National Gallery's *Four Allegories of Love*, to the grave beauty of the *Mars and Venus United by Love*, and then strikes an unexpectedly comic erotic note in a small Mars and Venus, where Mars' horse bizarrely interrupts a scene of love. The precise meaning of these allegories has resisted interpretation, and it is suggested here that their themes were so personal to the patrons that their significance was very soon lost. Nor is the intended location of the *Four Allegories of Love* known. They seem compositionally related, with gestures and movements echoing one another, but here it is eloquently argued that they were painted for four different rooms.

The closing room was a little disappointing and had a slightly random feeling. In his last years Veronese seems to have controlled his workshop less tightly, although he did paint some beautiful night scenes, with newly sombre colouring, such as the *Lucretia*. But most interesting in this final room was the *Conversion of St Pantalon.* Here only a faint shadow of Veronese's theatrical splendour lingers on. The setting is stark, and expression and gesture have a new human warmth and simplicity; perhaps Veronese is responding to the demand by Counter-Reformation churchmen for a religious art that should be clear and direct. The painting dates from 1587, only a decade before Caravaggio's first naturalistic religious paintings, and Veronese's magnificent career thus closes on the threshold of a new age.

The exhibition was accompanied by a book by the curator, Xavier Salomon; an excellent introduction to his art, clear and enjoyable for the general reader, yet rich in new scholarly insights. Salomon's translation of the *Lives of Veronese*, by Vasari, Borghini and Ridolfi, published by Pallas Athene Press, has also been re-issued, with an informative introduction.

Helen Langdon is an art historian and author. Her books include Claude Lorrain, Caravaggio: a Life, and most recently Visions & Ecstasy: Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione's St Francis.

Roman Ostia: Ancient Ruins, Modern Art

by Alice Bygraves

Doves (end of the 1st century BC to start of the 1st century AD)
Mosaic 45 x 44.3 cm
Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per I Beni Archeologici di Roma

The Autumn 2014 exhibition of the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art exhibition brings together roman antiquities and modern art. *Roman Ostia: Ancient Ruins, Modern Art* juxtaposes marbles, mosaics and antiquities from the archaeological site of Ostia near Rome, many of which have never been seen in the UK, with the work of two modern Italian artists, Umberto Mastroianni and Ettore de Conciliis. Spanning classical statuary, abstract sculpture, and painting, the exhibition reflects on the enduring nature of human creativity, and its constantly changing character.

Founded in the 7th century BC, the ancient harbour city of Ostia was an essential link to the capital of the Roman Empire. At the mouth of the river Tiber, 25 km southwest of Rome, the city was a commercial hub and cultural melting pot, equipped with a theatre, baths, bakeries, warehouses, bars and shops. The earliest archaeological remains date to the 4th century BC, and include a military fort and city walls. By the 2nd century BC Ostia had developed into a trade centre and, after intense construction during the 1st century AD, it was transformed into a city of fire-baked brick.

The ancient statuary of Ostia displayed in the exhibition portrays gods, emperors and scenes such as chariot races at the Roman Circus. A full length marble statue from the 3rd century AD shows Hercules standing heroically with his club and a portrait of Faustina the Elder, (beginning of the Antonine period) demonstrates the intricate hairstyles of the time. Intricate mosaics and wall paintings from nearby Isola Sacra, Ostia's cemetery, are also included in the exhibition. The mosaics are among the finest examples from Isola Sacra, with tessera as small as 2mm and a rich display of colours. Several of the mosaics feature scenes from the twelve labours of Hercules, such as the motif showing the fifth labour - cleaning the Augean stables. Hercules is missing from the centre of the mosaic, but we can see his club leaning against a tree and a basket and hoe on the other side. An almost complete mosaic from Ostia Antica shows doves around a fountain encompassed by a border. These Roman antiquities reflect the taste and culture of Ostia's inhabitants; objects that surrounded them in life and death.

Forming a backdrop to these works of classical statuary and mosaic are number of paintings by Ettore de Conciliis (b. 1941), depicting the atmospheric play of light across Ostia's ruins and along the Tiber river valley. His works are serene and lyrical and they reflect the calm nature of the ancient ruins. Works such as *Temple of Hercules, Evening* capture light fading across the steps of the temple, with the mushrooming umbrella pines so evocative of Ostia in the background.

Accompanying these are paintings and sculptures by

Ettore De Conciliis • Temple of Hercules, Evening (2012)
Oil on Canvas 94.5 x 127.5 cm • Courtesy of Il Cigno GG Edizioni

Umberto Mastroianni (1910-1998), one of the most important figures in 20th century Italian sculpture. Initially working in a figurative style similar to Marino Marini, Mastroianni began to use abstract forms during the early 1940s and is best known today for his monumental works commemorating the Resistance, in which he fought. In 1958 he was awarded the prize for sculpture at the Venice Biennale. His dynamism is far removed from the serene character of the antiquities. With their abstract character and dynamic, even explosive qualities, Mastroianni's three-dimensional compositions almost appear as archaeological fragments themselves, recalling great gears and mechanical components which, once active and powerful, now appear frozen and without function.

Through the juxtaposition of contrasting works from two widely diverse cultures, we can reflect not only on the gulf separating our own ideas of beauty from those of our ancestors, but also how alien the cultural artefacts of today may one day seem to our own descendants.

Mastroianni and de Conciliis have both exhibited at Ostia Antica. In 2013 Mastroianni's energetic and powerful sculptures inhabited spaces among the ruins forming a dialogue with the rusty red brick walls of the 2000 year old buildings surrounding them. De Conciliis held an exhibition of his paintings in 2012 at the archaeological museum. These works reflected on the watery landscape of the Tiber and gently eased themselves between the solemn sculptures in the museum. It is therefore fitting that both these artists should be displayed amongst the ancient works at the Estorick Collection.

Alice Bygraves is the exhibition organiser of Roman Ostia: Ancient Ruins, Modern Art which has been organised in collaboration with Soprintendenza Speciale per I Beni Archeologici di Roma and Il Cigno GG Edizioni. The exhibition runs until 21 December 2014.

Members of the British-Italian Society are entitled to reduced entry admission to the Estorick Collection on production of their BIS membership card.

Hercules in the Augean Stables (2nd half of the 2nd century AD)
Mosaic 30 x 35 cm
Courtesy: Soprintendenza Speciale per I Beni Archeologici di Roma

Stories of Friendship

by Vanessa Hall-Smith

On 27 September 1943 a young Englishman set out from Foggia. He was part of a patrol on a reconnaissance mission to San Severo, a small village in Puglia. He never made it. The patrol was ambushed by the Germans and the Englishman, along with three of his comrades, was killed. Many years later his son, David Perryman, was finally able to visit the grave of the father he hardly knew and make the journey to San Severo, where a memorial had been erected in gratitude to the four soldiers who had lost their lives.

The story of David Perryman's father, Donald, was just one of the moving memories that emerged during the exhibition *Stories of Friendship – the Human Spirit in Wartime 1943-1945* held at the Museum of the Order of St John in London in August 2014. The exhibition displayed photographs showing the effects of war on the region of Puglia and the relationships between its people, the soldiers of the British 8th Army and the Jewish refugees that were sent to the Puglian village of Santa Maria al Bagno before making their way to Israel.

The first section of the exhibition entitled *War Time* showed the damage inflicted by the Allies on the transport systems of Foggia to disrupt the deployment of German soldiers, the arrival of the British troops following the landings at Taranto and the reconstruction of the socio-political life of Puglia. The images underlined the complexities of the transition of Italy from an authoritarian state to one which was open to dialogue and free from prejudice.

The second and third sections showed the soldiers and local people learning from each other and provided

British soldiers preparing food for partisans in Northern Italy

British soldiers repairing a wheel with local man

touching examples of how social interaction created deeper and, in some cases, more lasting relationships. This was a time of adjustment for both the soldiers and the people of Puglia: the former finding themselves in a place where language and customs were unfamiliar and the latter dealing with an army which had been the enemy until very recently.

The fourth section testified to the importance of Radio Bari in the liberation of Italy. Radio Bari had been used by the Fascists for propaganda purposes, but after the Armistice it was an invaluable source of information, initially broadcasting only news items but political reviews and special programmes addressed to the resistance followed.

The final section entitled *Our Jewish Friends* showed how Puglian hospitality and sunshine helped the recovery of Jewish refugees from the horrors and brutality of their oppression by the Nazis and Fascist Italy, with images evidencing the many marriages celebrated between the refugees and local people. The photographs for this section were provided by Paolo Piscane of the Associazione Pro Murales Ebraici.

The exhibition was organised by Accademia Apulia UK and beautifully curated by Tatiana Chierici, with most of the photographs coming from the archive of the Imperial War Museum. Funding obtained by Accademia Apulia UK enabled a team of researchers from Puglia to trawl through the many thousands of images held by the Museum and, in some cases, add names and details of people and events that were previously unidentified. As a result of their efforts, photographs of Donald Perryman's funeral came to light and were seen by his son for the first time – seventy years after it had taken place.

Il desiderio di essere come tutti

Francesco Piccolo, Einaudi

by Ranieri Polese

L'Italia che abbiamo attraversato: quarant'anni nella storia recente del Paese, dal 1973 (dopo il golpe in Cile il segretario del Pci, Enrico Berlinguer, prepara la strategia di un'alleanza con la Dc, che chiamerà Compromesso Storico) al lungo ventennio berlusconiano recentemente concluso. Questo è lo sfondo su cui si muove il racconto di *Il desiderio di essere* come tutti di Francesco Piccolo, Premio Strega 2014, il premio nato nel 1947, a Roma, che ha consacrato autori come Moravia, Bassani, Elsa Morante, Tomasi di Lampedusa, Primo Levi, Umberto Eco. È il più importante premio letterario italiano, quello che tradizionalmente assicura ai vincitori un notevole aumento delle vendite. Cinque volte di più, ha detto il premiato dell'anno scorso Walter Siti. Ma Paolo Giordano nel 2008 superò il milione di copie.

Costruito come l'autobiografia di un intellettuale di sinistra, *Il desiderio di essere come tutti* segue in progressione cronologica i fatti che hanno segnato l'Italia dagli anni della Democrazia Cristiana al potere alla dissoluzione dei vecchi partiti fino, quasi, ai giorni nostri. Un libro utile proprio per questo servizio reso alla memoria collettiva. Al centro c'è la figura e l'opera di Enrico Berlinguer, segretario del Pci dal 1972 alla morte nell'84 (il 'tutti' del titolo riprende la parola stampata sulla prima pagina dell"Unità il giorno dei funerali di Berlinguer a Roma, il 13 giugno 1984, seguiti da oltre due milioni di persone). Stroncato da un ictus durante un comizio a Padova, Berlinguer chiudeva la sua storia politica con un bilancio fallimentare. Il compromesso storico era stato impedito dal rapimento e assassinio di Aldo Moro (1978), il presidente della Dc che doveva includere i comunisti nella maggioranza di governo. Morto Moro, il Pci dovrà tornare all'opposizione. La questione morale, contro la corruzione di esponenti politici democristiani e poi socialisti, portò come risultato un ulteriore isolamento del Pci. Nel referendum del giugno 1985 contro il taglio della scala mobile (il sistema di adeguamento dei salari all'inflazione) voluto dal governo Craxi, l'ultimo progetto di Berlinguer veniva sconfitto.

Pur sapendo di rappresentare 'un paese civile e diverso', la sinistra pare destinata in questi quarant'anni alla sconfitta. Ma il perdere, racconta Piccolo, diventava una sorta di titolo di merito, il riconoscimento di una diversità morale, di una sostanza migliore, che porta a giudicare il resto del paese come una massa di intriganti e corrotti. Una purezza morale che però non è servita a conquistare i voti del resto del paese, anzi a far apparire i comunisti snob, antipatici, pieni di un insopportabile senso di superiorità. L'atteggiamento di rifiuto tocca, ovviamente, il culmine con l'arrivo di Berlusconi (Piccolo è lo sceneggiatore del Caimano, 2006, il film di Nanni Moretti dedicato, appunto, al Cavaliere). Si è preferito, dice Piccolo, concentrarsi sul cattivo gusto di Berlusconi, le sue barzellette, le donne, il bunga bunga, la bandana, i capelli trapiantati, il makeup, e invece non si è fatta una legge sul conflitto di interessi. Quella che ragionevolmente doveva impedire al proprietario di tre canali televisivi nazionali di diventare premier. Anzi, la sinistra 'pura e dura' rappresentata da Fausto Bertinotti fa cadere il governo di Romano Prodi (ottobre 1998), l'unico politico che si era mostrato in grado di battere Forza Italia, il partito di Berlusconi.

> // Quella che ragionevolmente doveva impedire al proprietario di tre canali televisivi nazionali di diventare premier.

In tutti questi anni, dice Piccolo, anche la figura dell'intellettuale di sinistra è cambiata. Lui, almeno, è cambiato. Se prima, agli inizi del suo lavoro come scrittore e giornalista, era sempre pronto a firmare appelli contro i nemici del progresso, e pubblicava articoli in cui ripeteva cose pensate e condivise dagli amici, ora non firma più e quando scrive per i giornali non evita di dire cose che possono pure risultare sgradevoli alla sua parte. Ma semmai cerca di parlare a "tutti", ovvero a un intero paese, di pensare cioè che quel tutti non si limita a quelli che la pensano come noi. E soprattutto non si vergogna di confessare che, nonostante Berlusconi, lui questi ultimi vent'anni non ha vissuto male, per come è andato il suo lavoro, il suo matrimonio. Non è e non sarà mai di quelli che dicono di voler andar via da questo paese (e magari poi lo dicono e basta). Lui resta, convinto che se anche le cose dovessero peggiorare, vale la pena 'restare qui a viverle, a guardarle, e a provare a raccontarle'.

Ranieri Polese is a journalist. He has written on culture for a number of Italian newspapers and for many years was the chief editor of the Culture Section of the Corriere della Sera for which he still writes.

Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo

Tim Parks, Harvill Secker

by Alexandra Richardson

'…While in the past one had maximum flexibility for price X at that slight risk of not finding a seat, something you could nevertheless sort out if you know you were travelling at a busy time by adding', -- are you still with me? –'a reservation for price X + Y, now you *always* pay X + Y and always have a seat but not flexibility unless you pay price X + Y + Z, when you have your seat and a little flexibility, but nothing like what you had years ago just paying X'.

Some reviews of Tim Parks's most recent book *Italian Ways – On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo* have characterised it as 'witty', 'hilarious', 'entertaining' – while others will see it as a troubling allegory about the state of Italy itself today. Whichever your take, all can agree that the author, a veteran of 33 years living in Italy, is a master in grasping - and explaining - the fine art of boarding a train of the Ferrovie dello Stato (FS) and what a bureaucratic odyssey it can be. He has been doing it himself for over three decades.

> // Voyages seem to be a minefield that Parks has an uncanny knack to step on, of infinite 'uncertainties'.

There are plenty for examples beyond the 'X, Y and Z' one cited above to make his case, as he graduates from his early days as a commuter between Verona where he lived and Milan where he worked, on through to the challenges of periodic travel further afield to Florence, and later on, down to the Mezzogiorno. Voyages seem to be a minefield that Parks has an uncanny knack to step on, of infinite 'uncertainties'. He warns us darkly that train travel is not to be undertaken lightly. Italy is not a country for beginners.

His *doccia fredda* begins with the task of purchasing a ticket to get from A to B. Ah, but it is not that simple. A seeming myriad of options is on offer from which to choose. Will it be travel on an *interregionale* or the Intercity or indeed a gleaming Eurostar - with whatever lies in between? Some services will require a *supplemento*, others a *prenotazione obbligatoria.* Get it wrong, the author says, and you've had it! And don't, by the way, think that turning to an automatic ticket-dispenser will fast-track you past endless queues for counter service: the machines are frequently broken or cannot fathom the pricing structures themselves.

Parks then comes to grips with the not negligible matter of FS's considerable debts. One solution was to airbrush out the services of the cheaper and slower trains at peak commuting hours, the 'milk trains' if you will, and replace them with speedier – and more expensive – ones. Giving passengers no alternative to spending more. Another ploy in the late 1990s was simply to re-cut the ownership cake of FS, to comply with European legislation on competition which, the author concludes, 'seemed more about theatre than substance'.

And so the indictment continues with substantiated example after substantiated example of labyrinthine and often seemingly illogical rules and regulations governing travel on the rails . Laced in between are interludes, describing Italian train history and the marvels of Italian engineering which made rail movement between A and B possible. And when you get it all right, there are all those unmatchable views - seascapes all along the Riviera, itineraries needling through majestic mountain valleys or the misty rice paddies of the northwest. Add to the mix the promise, perhaps, of a few memorable conversations with complete strangers and you are assured of travel with a difference. No red tape there.

Assalto al Castello

Maurizio Ferrante Gonzaga

Gilgamesh Edizioni

by Georgina Gordon-Ham

Every corner of Italy from the smallest villages to the large cities is dotted with art and historical buildings containing unknown and intriguing pages of history. Although some are often forgotten, their traces remain in the frescoes, paintings, works of art and bookshelves. *Assalto al Castello* (Attack on the Castle) brings to light the story of the Scotti-Gonzaga family and their castle at Agazzano near Piacenza in the area of the Castelli del Ducato di Parma e Piacenza. The castle and the fortress of Agazzano, an architectural combination of medieval austerity and Renaissance elegance, are the main scene of events.

The author, Prince Maurizio Ferrante Gonzaga, pulls out a page of history taking us on a journey back in time to the early 16th century dominated by intrigue, romance, betrayals and plots. The two superpowers of that period were the Guelphs supporting the principles of the Church of Rome and the Pope, and the Ghibellines, who supported the Holy Roman Empire.

The novel flows and makes pleasant reading in Italian.

'Era una calda giornata ferragostana dell'anno di grazia 1521 e due nobili cavalieri risalivano con le loro cavalcature le colline del piacentino'.

The Po Valley, known as the Val Padana, is extremely hot at ferragosto in the peak of summer. Two noblemen make their way towards the hills where the Castello di Agazzano stands in a slightly cooler area. At the time it was hidden behind a thick foliage of trees:

'Il castello di Agazzano si ergeva lontano su una collina, nascosto dagli alberi e da una fitta vegetazione che ne lasciavano intravedere la sagoma massiccia ed allungata'.

This introductory description already stimulates our imagination with what could happen behind those thick hidden walls where conspiracy and alliances were part of political manoeuvres.

The female characters emerge as strong personalities with leading roles as in the case of Aloisia Gonzaga, who married Giovanni Maria Scotti in 1493 bringing the two families together. Her husband soon died leaving her to bring up two sons after losing two other children who died very young. Countess Aloisia learnt to stand up for her family and against invading powers to such an extent that she was feared even after her surviving son Gaspare took over. She was known as *'Donna Aloisia, autorevole rappresentante familiare di quei Gonzaga', and was a lady not for turning 'Non era agevole far cambiare opinione ad una Gonzaga e tanto meno a Donna Aloisia…'.*

The author says it was his mother, Princess Luisa Anguissola Scotti-Gonzaga, who was the great inspiration for the book prompting him to write about the past, which he called his pleasant ordeal: *'Questa mia piacevole fatica'.* The novel is dedicated to her. She also became a widow with young children to bring up after her husband, Prince Ferrante Vincenzo Gonzaga (who was awarded gold and silver medals for military valour) was executed by the Germans in 1943. She had a sharp lively spirit and lived to over a hundred retaining the strong personality of the female line highlighted in Countess Aloisia including the Scottish stamina, which the Scotti family inherited from their ancestor William Douglas. He was a Scottish adventurer (son of Sciolto Douglas), who came to Piacenza between 775 and 787 AD with 4,000 soldiers to support the Holy Roman Empire and help Charlemagne fight against the Lombards. William remained in Piacenza due to bad health and married a daughter of Antonio Spettino. They had many children and were commonly known as 'gli Scotti', the children of the Scottish father. Over time the surnames Scotta and Scotti became official. The narrative is based on detailed research through family and historical documentation found in the State Archives of Piacenza and Modena, in parish registers, in documents of the Scotti and Gonzaga families

The author shows talent in his multiple role as historian, novelist, and memorialist supported by psychological insight, detail and style. We learn what these memories mean to the family towards the end of the story when the writer speaks of them as *'l'essenza del passato'* and *'l'orgoglio del futuro'* (an essential part of the past and pride in the future).

Story of My People

Edoardo Nesi
translated by Antony Shugaar
Other Press, New York

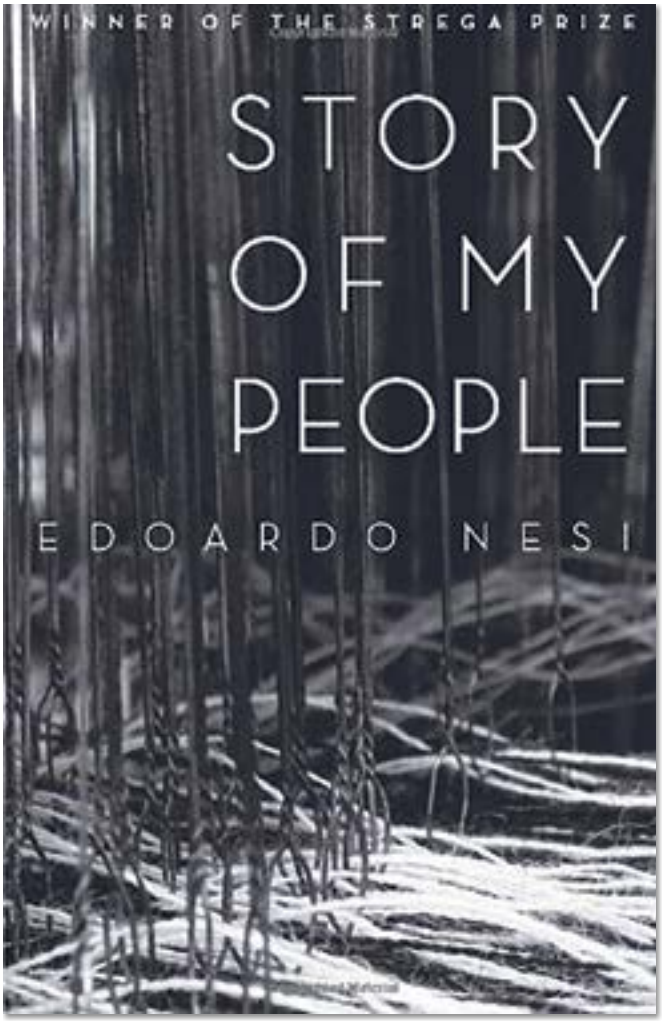
by Tom Richardson

Why aren't there more books about the decline of Western manufacturing and of the jobs in it that once seemed so secure? Where are the Dickenses, Dreisers or Zolas of today to write about the pain of deindustrialisation? Or maybe I've missed them, and in any case it's thirty years now since manufacturing in Britain – the North especially – went through its worst period. Italy is a different matter. Still the second largest manufacturing nation in the European Union, after Germany, cushioned in past years by regular devaluations and by some effective covert protectionism, yet blessed with a sea of small, thrusting, export-conscious family firms - the 'My People' of Nesi's book – it has suffered in the last few years what Britain suffered more than a generation ago.

'I was always, always angry', Nesi admits as he describes the closure of his family's weaving and woollen mills in 2004, and of countless other textile companies in Prato, a few miles down the road from Florence and one of the historical centres of the industry. His short book is as much memoir as a jeremiad against arrogant yet ignorant economists, 'wet rabbits' of Italian politicians, 'the designers who gabbled on endlessly about the Made in Italy label, only to then have the actual garments produced in China', and many other choice targets.

By his own admission, Nesi, who is now an Italian MP, was not cut out for business. His true loves were literature and films, he went to school in the States at an early age, his book is studded with affectionate references to Scott Fitzgerald, Orson Welles, Malcolm Lowry, Paul Newman and Bob Dylan, and he himself won the prestigious Strega Prize in 2011 for 'My People', the first non-fiction book to be so honoured. Nesi describes himself as 'ricocheting endlessly between an ardent passion and a muddled sense of duty' to the family business. Yet he wasn't a dilettante. When he describes the weaves and textures of his products, the velours or the lodens, you know that he knew his stuff.

He is not starry-eyed about his father's generation. They were artisans, he says, not industrialists, they worked hard 'every minute of their days' and rose with the



post war economic miracle, they kept their businesses in the family, they were parsimonious in paying taxes, they were protected in their home market by tariffs but proved indefatigable salesmen abroad – and they enjoyed themselves ('my beloved nouveau-riche compatriots'), spent money, were 'people with a lust for life, miserably happy in all that they possess'. They thought, he says again, that they and their children could carry on indefinitely in the same way, make the same things and sell to the same people – in Nesi's case, to a demanding but

continued over

conservative German/Austrian market.

Predictably Nesi dates the decline from China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in the late nineties and the ensuing dismantlement of tariff barriers. The economists, he grumbles, (with side swipes at Giavazzi and Mario Monti) preached the inevitability of Anglo-Saxon free trade and globalisation. Italy – and Europe – would enjoy cheap Asian manufactured goods; but in return what boundless opportunities awaited Italian exporters to the huge Chinese market! Nesi rejoins that it never happened. Instead, the Chinese produced their own Italian fabrics, and Italy's multinationals and designers were happy to buy them; or to buy, closer to home, from the growing colonies of Chinese sweatshops in Prato or the Naples hinterland, so ably described in Saviano's *Gomorrah*.

In a striking chapter, Nesi describes how he accompanied a health and safety inspection of a Prato factory that had been abandoned years before but then reoccupied clandestinely by young Chinese workers. It makes grim reading: the stench and squalor, the bare wires, the propane canisters tucked under rags, the cubicles where the workers and in some cases their families all lived, nine out of fifteen of them illegal immigrants, many not knowing a word of Italian, and all likely to return to Prato shortly after their deportation. They were sewing fabrics that were imported from China but finished locally and therefore able to claim the Made in Italy label. The Pratesi couldn't compete. There was a 'race to Romanian prices', to the bottom, with no regard for quality or service. Staff were laid off, the factories barely broke even, and eventually they closed. Nesi ends his book with an account of a big protest demonstration in the city in 2009. It's not clear whether it had any effect.

// Governments and industry alike in Italy have never been strong advocates of free trade and liberal economies

Now the first thing to be said about the book is that the situation it describes is hardly unique; all over Western Europe and the USA, whole swathes of industry have disappeared. The clothing and textile industries have been particularly vulnerable. But, in reading Nesi, I was reminded of two rather distinctive Italian factors. Governments and industry alike in Italy have never been strong advocates of free trade and liberal economics; their sympathies have been protectionist, and indeed Nesi clearly hankers after a return to protectionism. He doesn't really explain how to make it come about. He says that Italian negotiators in the EU should be more assertive, like the French, or go for opt-outs, like the British and Scandinavians; what he thinks of the euro is somewhat unclear. But he admits that he's fighting a desperate (read vain) rearguard action. Second, he reminds us that the problem goes beyond the clothing business. He cites ceramics, lighting, footwear, eyeglasses, goldsmiths and furniture (where Manzano in Friuli, which he mentions and which I once visited, used to claim that it supplied half of Europe's office furniture market). In other words, he is not just chronicling the decline of the traditional heavy industries like steel or mining or shipbuilding (the last of which the Italians have managed to hang on to) but is arguing that the small to medium industries which for decades were the backbone of the post war boom are now struggling too. He surely exaggerates a bit: think of the range of Italian consumer goods on sale in Britain or of the continuing success of trade fairs like the *Salone dei Mobili.* But when he argues that Rome doesn't take seriously enough the difficulties in which many businesses find themselves, I have to admit that I started thinking about Westminster too, and about the general disinterest in matters industrial displayed by the chattering classes who so dominate our newspapers.

Nesi's book had particular resonance for me because I happened to know his late father-in-law and fellow manufacturer, the exuberant, extravagant, larger than life Sergio Carpini who as a young man created some dazzling textile designs, got out of the business in time, and then built a successful wine business not far from our home. And another neighbour of ours taught in the schools of Prato, with their growing number of Chinese children working day and night, their parents, as always, complaining that western schooling wasn't demanding enough. The book is a cry of pain, not a blueprint for future action. But it is about a whole class of ordinary people whose voice deserved a hearing.

Tanto per sapere....

In his Manifesto of Futurist Cooking, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti set out a number of interesting culinary principles. Declaring that 'spaghetti is no food for fighters', he proposed the abolition of pasta on the grounds that it diminishes passion and the use of perfume to enhance flavours. He advocated eating in mock aircraft so that the appetite would be stimulated by the vibration of the engines and replacing traditional equipment with scientific instruments to bring modernity to the kitchen. In a nation of food lovers, it is hardly surprising that his revolutionary ideas failed to catch on.

A Magic Spello for Cinema

by Susan Kikoler

Umbria at the end of February may not seem the most obvious choice for a weekend away but for the last three years the *Professione del Cinema* Film Festival at Spello, an enchanting Umbrian medieval hill-top hamlet, has provided a special reason to book a Ryanair flight to Perugia Airport, a mere 15 minutes drive away.

The brainchild of President Donatella Cocchini, this is no fan-fest with roped-off VIP areas for glitzy stars but an intelligent, imaginative and enthusiastic appreciation of cinema craft. Its motto is precision and simplicity. Here the stars are the scriptwriters, costume designers, sound-recordists and cinematographers without whom there would be no magic in the lantern show. Films are chosen from the best of recent Italian releases by Artistic Director Fabrizio Cattani and the jury of Italian film industry peers. Screenings are free and are held not just in Spello but in the surrounding towns of Todi, Monte Castello di Vibio, Torgiano and even, for one night, at Perugia's San Francesco d'Assisi airport – after the last flight of course.

The ten films in the 2014 Festival (held from February 27 to March 2) ranged from Alessandro Gassman's gritty immigrant drama *Razzabastarda* and Gabriele Salvatores' unflinching *Educazione Siberiana*, to two documentaries, *L'Ultimo Pastore*, and *God Save the Green*, from the comedy of *Una Piccola Impresa Meridionale to Miele* and the popular hit *Viaggio Sola* which both explore the lifestyle dilemmas of women in modern Italy. It was noticeable how many films were either the creations of 'figli d'arte' like Gassman, son of actor Vittorio Gassman, or Maria Sole Tognazzi, daughter of actor Ugo Tognazzi and director of Viaggio Sola, or else actors venturing into screenwriting/directing such as Valeria Golino, co-writer and director of *Miele*, or Luigi Lo Cascio, writer and director of *La Città Ideale*. Film-making in Italy today, like the best of Italian industry, is very much a family affair. Craftsmanship and artistic talent are clearly in the blood.

The particular link between Italian craftsmanship and cinema was the theme of the accompanying free exhibition held at Villa Fidelia, a stunning country residence, first built by the Urbani family around 1600, later remodelled. In 1930 it was the scene of the wedding breakfast, attended by Mussolini, of Giovanna di Savoia, daughter of Vittorio Emanuele III, and King Boris III of Bulgaria.

The exhibition celebrated the 'dream factory' of E. Rancati, based in Milan and Rome, which has been providing theatre and films, ranging from *Ben Hur* to *Gangs of New York*, with props, furniture and armour since 1864, all created with masterly attention and exquisite workmanship whether forged in metal or sophisticated modern resin. Whole sets were laid out and magic tricks revealed to school children delighted to find fierce swords and heavy helmets all light as feathers.

Award Ceremony at Spello

Education, not just entertainment, is central to this Festival. Besides round-tables on craftsmanship and seminars on special effects, there was a design competition for secondary school pupils. This year's theme, *The Spaghetti Western*, produced high quality portfolios of costume design and photography. Participation even extends to the local prison at Spoleto whose inmates produced striking masks and wall-hangings, all displayed in the gardens of the Villa.

One event required a 5 euro ticket, all proceeds to the children's wing of the local hospital, for the concert of singer/songwriter Franco Simone. His first Gold-Disk may have been in 1976 but judging by the fans who flocked to Spello and knew the lyrics to all his songs, his appeal is undiminished. Imagine a much younger, Italian Charles Aznavour, sensitive in interpretation and generous in sharing the stage with two notable young Italian singers, tousle-haired pop-artist Michele Cortese and emerging star, tenor Gianluca Paganelli (who appeared in *La Boheme* in Aberdeen this April).

All three also appeared in a video of Simone's new setting of Stabat Mater, appropriately based on the original 13th century text by Jacopone of Todi, which concluded the prize-giving ceremony in the miniature jewel of the Teatro Subasio, when the public vote went to *Viaggio Sola* and the Special Jury Prize was awarded to *L'Ultimo Pastore*.

However the highlight of the evening was the Life Time Achievement Award bestowed on master cinematographer Vittorio Storaro, winner of three Oscars for *Apocalypse Now*, *Reds* and *The Last Emperor*, who had just returned from presenting his new book, *The Art of Cinematography*, at the BFI, London. The artistry and magic revealed in the brief introductory film he had prepared, *Light*, *Element*, *Colour* easily showed why cinematography has been called the Seventh Art.

continued over

Pinturicchio • Adoration of the Shepherds
Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello

There's little space left for the delights of Spello itself, worth visiting for the harmonious, fairy-tale beauty of its winding (and very steep) streets. There must be something in the air that inspires. Spello was the birthplace of Luigi Proietti, now better known as Norberto, whose charming naïf paintings of little friars are collected world-wide. Don't miss his gallery in Via Cavour.

However the glory of Spello is undoubtedly the Baglioni Chapel in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore where in 1501 Pinturicchio completed his exquisite cycle of Renaissance frescoes depicting the Annunciation, the Nativity and Jesus' debate with the doctors, each richly detailed landscape bathed in breathtaking luminous colours that seem to sing of heavenly glory.

Just ten kilometres from Assissi, Spello is an excellent base from which to visit the surrounding countryside but it is a jewel in itself. The 2015 Film Festival will run from February 28 to March 8 and World War I will be the theme of the school competition. However Festival time or not, Spello is a place for all seasons – but just remember to pack flat shoes.

BIS members wishing to attend the 2015 Festival should contact Donatella Cocchini via www.festivalcinemaspello.com or info@festivalcinemaspello.com for details of special tariffs for the week of the Festival.

Reflections on the 2014 Anghiari Festival

by Diana Darlington

British-Italian Society members will be aware that the British-Italian Society has donated money in support of the Southbank Sinfonia, a small orchestra based at St John's Waterloo, where each year young musicians from all over the world have the chance of performing in the orchestra under the directorship of Simon Over. The highlight of the orchestra's year is the annual festival in Anghiari, Tuscany, held over the course of a week in July. This is truly a wonderful collaboration between the British and Italians.

Anghiari is a beautiful hill town, famous for its battle between the Milanesi and the Florentines in 1440, which took place in the valley below the town, on the road to San Sepolcro.

For the week of the festival, the whole town is devoted to the orchestra and its followers. This year, nearly 200 of the Sinfonia's English supporters descended on the town and the surrounding countryside, enjoying not just the music but the local food and wines and magnificent scenery. Most of these supporters had been following the festival for many years, several have houses in the area and almost all newcomers were determined to come again next year. Performances were held at all times of the day during festival week and at venues which ranged from piazzas to churches, both in the town and in remote hamlets in the countryside, from the grand to the simple.

A very special pre-festival treat was a performance of Haydn's *The Seasons* in the Basilica di San Francesco with its frescoes by Giotto, in the beautiful Umbrian city of Assisi, some miles south of Anghiari. The orchestra and the London Choir were conducted by Mark Forkgen.

The festival proper commenced on Saturday with a Chamber concert and continued in earnest when Southbank Sinfonia friends, old and new, met on the terrace of *Il Giardino del Vicario* bar in the centre of Anghiari, overlooking the Tuscan countryside, for welcoming glasses of prosecco. Everyone then took their seats in the Piazza del

Popolo to be warmly welcomed by the Mayor of Anghiari for a concert which included Beethoven's *Egmont Overture* and Schubert's Sinfonia No. 5.

The charming little town of Monterchi, which acted as host as part of the Tiberina Sinfonia Festival, saw pretty Piazza Umberto 1 as the setting for the concert on Sunday evening. Monterchi is the home to Piero Della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto,* currently in the old school house on the edge of the town. Uncertain weather with threatened showers meant a quick change of plan and a brass ensemble on the *loggia* of the Town Hall kept the audience entertained with pieces by Gabrielli and Bird, whilst decisions were taken. The original programme continued, albeit in a different order, so that advantage could be taken of the shelter offered by the *loggia*. As we made our exit following the concert, there was a rousing blast from the trumpets playing *Happy Birthday* for the owner of the piazza bar, who had provided sterling service during the evening.

Two days later, a drive along the Upper Tiber Valley brought me to Caprese Michelangelo, the artist's birthplace, another delightful hill town. After a typical Tuscan lunch in a local restaurant, Buca di Michelangelo, we assembled in the garden of Michelangelo's house for a concert of chamber music.

Later in the week, I drove through Anghiari on the road to Arezzo to the wonderful ancient Castello di Montauto, situated at the end of a very long and rather rough *strada bianca* on the crest of a hill with 360 degree views over Tuscany and Umbria. Built in the twelfth century on the site of an earlier Lombard stronghold and restored during the Renaissance, it had not lost any of its massive fortress-like appearance. We were welcomed by the owner, Contessa Lucrezia Babolina di Montauto, for a personal concert chosen by Simon Over which included visiting Italian tenor, Saverio Bambi, singing Britten's setting of the first and last sonnets of Michelangelo.

The final event of the festival was Saturday's evening concert which should have been held in the Piazza del Popolo in Anghiari. However, a day of thunderstorms and torrential rain meant that the splendid Church of the Propositura had to be used instead. The grand finale was Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony.* This was most appropriate as, in a prelude to the concert, a massive bolt of lightning had struck a crane on the rooftops of Anghiari as well as the museum; thus art imitated life when the symphony's Storm movement resounded through the church.

The Anghiari Festival is a wonderful demonstration of the joyful collaboration of the people of Italy and the UK coming together through music in a spirit of friendship. I am already looking forward to next year's festival and hearing more wonderful music performed in the ancient hills of Tuscany and Umbria.

Next year's festival will take place from 20-28 July 2015 – see www.southbanksinfonia.co.uk.

Chairman's Review

September 2013 – June 2014

by Charles de Chassiron

It has been another busy year for the British-Italian Society with journalist Bill Emmott giving the annual Leconfield Lecture in November 2013 and a further 7 talks being held throughout the year. All the talks are reviewed in the pages that follow. We held our annual Christmas dinner at the Mele and Pere restaurant, and members enjoyed a visit to the V&A Museum in March 2014 organised in conjunction with the Doccia Museum in Florence, see page xxx. We also visited the Italian Collections in the London Library in May expertly guided by Andrea del Corno.

2014 marked the 150th anniversary of Garibaldi's visit to London and we played a part in the preparation of various events to commemorate his visit, including a reception at Lancaster House in the presence of Matteo Renzi, the Italian Prime Minister.

The Trustees decided to continue the policy adopted in 2012/13 of devoting up to £5,000, (the investment income from the major Hawkins legacy received in 2012), to the support of worthy artistic, academic and social causes, in accordance with the Society's aims. They considered a number of applications and made grants as follows:

• €750 towards the cost of publishing in 2014 a special edition of the magazine of the Friends of the Doccia Museum in Florence, Quaderni, dedicated to the major holdings of Doccia porcelain in the V&A Museum.

• £500 towards the holding of a special anniversary conference entitled Boccaccio and Company in September 2013 at the British Library to mark the 700th anniversary of the poet's birth.

• £500 towards the holding of a conference on Leonardo Sciascia, the Sicilian writer, in Oxford in May 2014, associated with a major research project.

• £1000 for the London-based orchestra Southbank Sinfonia who played at the Anghiari Festival and in Assisi in July 2014 – see review on page 41.

• £500 to support the launch reception at the opening of an exhibition of Garibaldi memorabilia in London – see article on page 4.

• £250 to Royal Holloway College towards the publishing cost of a Festschrift

• £500 towards the Italian School in London (and also as a mark of gratitude for continuing to house the Society's archives).

The entries to the 2013 Rooke Prize were once again of a very high standard and were judged by a panel comprising Dr Charles Burdett, Chairman of the Society of Italian Studies, Dr Sandra Fox, Trustee of the British-Italian Society, and Dr Caterina Cardona, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute. The winners (pictured right) who were awarded their prizes by the Italian Deputy Head of Mission, Ministro Vincenzo Celeste, at the Women's University Club at the BIS event on 20 May 2014, were:

Helena Phillips-Robins, University of Cambridge for her essay on *Secular Song and Vision in Dante's Commedia*
Postgraduate Category - £750 prize

Alice Hawkins, University of Leeds, for her essay on: *The changing image of the brigand: Calabrian 19th century literary representations of brigandage in the works of Vincenzo Padula and Nicola Misasi*
Undergraduate Category - £500 prize

On behalf of all the Trustees I would like to thank our Patron, HE Pasquale Q Terracciano, the Italian Ambassador, and his diplomatic colleagues, especially Minister Vincenzo Celeste and Counsellor Nicola Todaro Marescotti, for the consistent support received during the year. We also extend our special thanks to Dr Caterina Cardona, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, and her staff, for allowing the Leconfield Lecture to be held at the Institute, the Society's traditional venue. We would also like to thank all the speakers who have so willingly and generously given the Society a variety of interesting and successful talks throughout the year. Last but not least thanks go to our two excellent Secretaries, Elisabetta Murgia (Events) and John Jinks (Membership) for their dedicated and very effective work.

Welcome to new members

Mr Danny Andrews
Mr John Andrews
Ms Catherine Bayliss
Mr and Mrs Deryck Bayliss
Mr Jonathan Bellini
Mr & Mrs Meyrich Chapman
Mr Andrew Colvin
Ms Laura D'Asta
Ms Ilaria De Virgiliis
Mr and Mrs Luca di Rico
Mr Bill Emmott
Mr Enrico Franceschini
Mr and Mrs Derek Fullarton
Mrs Mary Gibson
Prof Robert Gordon
Mr John Jacobs
Mr Benjamin Katz
Mrs David Leslie
Ms Andrea Maiolla
Mrs Helena Moore
Ms Marilena Narbona
Ms Rosamund Oudart
Mr John Parmigiani
Ms Adriana Piacentini
Ms Marian Ramsay
Ms Claudia Roden
Mrs Vanessa Rhode
Mrs Joan Smith
Mr and Mrs Paul Swain
Ms Fulvia Terzaghi
Mr Mark Thatcher
Mr and Mrs Michael Thorndyke
Dr and Mrs Matthew Trewhella
Ms Anastasia Villarosa Seferiadis
Ms Eugenia Villarosa Seferiadis
Ms Caroline Webb

The Importance of being Amerigo


Margherita Calderoni

The historian and art critic Margherita Calderoni kicked off the BIS year by giving a fascinating and informative talk about the life and times of the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci and his expeditions to what he described as the New World, later named America for the first time by the German cartographer, Martin Waldseemüller in his 1507 book: *Cosmographiae introductio.*

Amerigo Vespucci (1454-1512) was a cosmographer and navigator, skilled sailor and proficient astronomer. He was the first person to demonstrate that Brazil and the West Indies did not represent Asia's eastern limits as initially thought after Columbus's voyages, but instead constituted an entirely separate landmass.

Margherita described how Amerigo's first 40 years were spent in his native Florence in the cultural atmosphere of the Medici court. He was close friends with, among others, Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Luigi Pulci. Angelo Ambrogini (commonly known as Poliziano) also frequented his home. He became part of the entourage of Lorenzo il Magnifico. His distant cousin Marco Vespucci was married to Simonetta Cattaneo Vespucci, Giuliano de' Medici's lover and Botticelli's muse and model.

In spite of being a third born son, he received a first-class education from his uncle, Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, canon of the cathedral and later priest at San Marco who taught most of the Florentine nobility and recognised Amerigo's intellectual potential. He was later taken under the wing of a second uncle, Guido Antonio Vespucci, a lawyer, man of letters and diplomat. Guido Antonio was appointed by Lorenzo il Magnifico as Florentine ambassador to France and twenty-four year old Amerigo accompanied him to the court of Louis XI as his private secretary. There he gained much practical wisdom in dealing with difficult men and dangerous situations, which he was able to put to good use after moving to Spain.

In 1482, his father died and Amerigo had to support the family. He entered the service of Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, the 'junior branch' of the leading Medici, and successfully handled all the financial affairs of his young patrons. During this time his hobbies were collecting maps and books relating to cosmography and astronomy. He lived in the Medici house as a friend more than an employee and it was Amerigo that Lorenzo entrusted to look after his business in Spain when things seemed to be going wrong at the Medici bank in Seville.

Amerigo arrived in Seville in 1492 and was never to return to Florence. Spain was the land of opportunity at that time, thanks to the unification of Aragon and Castile by the marriage of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Amerigo became a close friend of Giannotto Berardi, agent at the Royal Court and leading shipfitter, and as a result was able to glean information about Columbus's expeditions. Two years later, when Berardi died, Amerigo was sent off by Ferdinand to check on Columbus who was at that time Governor of the island of Hispaniola (what is now the Dominican Republic and Haiti) and who was claiming that he had found a new route to India. Amerigo was to discover that Columbus was wrong.

Amerigo set sail from Cadiz in May 1497. After 15 months of navigating, both ships and men were worn out and they returned to Cadiz. This was the first of four voyages that Amerigo made between 1497 and 1504: two on behalf of Spain and two on behalf of King Manuel 1 of Portugal.

Margherita described each of the voyages and the discoveries Vespucci made in great detail and her slides were a great help in bringing his voyages to life. She also favourably compared his accomplishments to those of the less educated, more blinkered and religious fanaticism of Columbus who, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, insisted that he had found the longed for new route to the East Indies. The Spanish and Portuguese monarchs of that time were more interested in self-aggrandisement through riches and empire than with the furtherance of human knowledge. Amerigo was quite the opposite. He possessed remarkable talents. He was not hungrily ambitious but brave, honest, generous, true to himself and loyal to his friends and he brought to his explorations the curiosity of the Florentine humanists, the rational spirit of research and scientific methods to achieve his goals.

Amongst his many accomplishments he was the first European, according to incontrovertible records, to have reached the shores of Brazil. He was also the first on the coasts of Colombia, Uruguay and Argentina. He named Venezuela and discovered three of the world's greatest rivers: the Amazon, the Para and the Plata. He was the first observer to record the equatorial current and the Southern Cross. By devising a method of determining longitude he proved himself one of the great original thinkers of the world. He was also the first man in history to sail through the 15 degrees of latitude between 35 degrees and 50 degrees south. Above all, instead of merely discovering a new route to India he had discovered a new and important continent. Margherita pointed out that if Columbus had destroyed the idea of the western ocean being an impassable barrier, Amerigo had given mankind the idea of a hitherto unknown hemisphere.

Amerigo died, probably as a result of recurrent bouts of malaria, in Spain in 1512, just one month short of his 58th birthday. After his fourth and final voyage in 1504 he had returned to Spain and was awarded citizenship. He had married Maria Cerezo in 1505. There were no children. Christopher Columbus returned to Spain poor, disenchanted and in poor health. Amerigo helped him by ensuring that Ferdinand paid him what he was owed. Columbus died on 20 May 1506.

Linda Northern

Blood and Beauty

The writer and broadcaster Sarah Dunant thrilled us with a talk about the Borgias and a period of history which she described as pulsating with colour and energy - a time of church corruption but also great creativity. Drawing on material from her latest novel *Blood and Beauty*, her starting point was the Sistine Chapel and the Papal Conclave of August 1492 (it was to be another sixteen years before Michelangelo began painting the ceiling). Pope Innocent VIII was dead and Rodrigo Borgia, Papal Vice-Chancellor and Spanish Cardinal of Valencia, was about to become Pope Alexander VI.

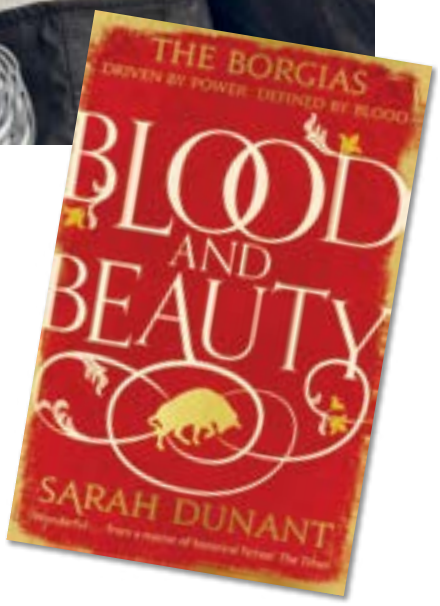
Rodrigo Borgia, father of Cesare, Juan, Lucrezia and Jofré, had already run the Papal Treasury for five popes and had become one of the most influential and wealthy churchmen in Rome. Sarah told us that she had discovered he had a sense of humour and that to her surprise she came to like him while researching her book. By contrast, his eldest son Cesare was the nearest that she had come to a sociopath; clever, good looking, charming and charismatic he was also totally ruthless and without a conscience. Was it Cesare who was responsible for the murder of his younger brother, Juan Borgia? Historians are undecided and Sarah left the question open.

She had no such doubts regarding the murder of Alfonso d'Aragona, Lucrezia Borgia's second husband. Her first marriage to Giovanni Sforza had been annulled to enable her to marry into the house of Aragon in Naples. This was a happy marriage but became an obstacle in realising Cesare's ambition of a conquest of Southern Italy alongside his new ally, the King of France. After a failed assassination attempt, Alfonso was killed while recovering from his wounds on the orders of Cesare, leaving his widow Lucrezia to be used once again as a political pawn through marriage to Alfonso d'Este, heir to the house of Ferrara and brother to Isabella. For the Borgias this would provide a secure northern border for their expanding territories and respectability through attachment to one of Italy's most established dynasties. For the Este family it would mean an ally against Venice, safety from Cesare's ambitions and a very significant dowry.

Sarah also spoke about Machiavelli and Soderini meeting Cesare in Urbino, an incident not recounted in the book, but described in the dispatches Machiavelli sent to Florence. Machiavelli used the example of Cesare in The Prince; those who seek power must choose between being loved or feared.

As for Alexander VI, in addition to his ambition and lust for power we heard about his feelings for his family and for his mistress, the beautiful Giulia Farnese the wife of Orsino Orsini, son of Alexander's second cousin Adriana. Sarah read an evocative passage from the book describing Giulia's lustrous golden hair.

Sarah Dunant



While the Borgias have become a byword for debauchery, cruelty and political intrigue, Sarah reminded us that sensation sells and that many of the rumours were without foundation. While the Borgias have been considered the bad guys for a very long time. The family was profoundly important and in her view the Spanish were not as proud of them as they should be. Alexander was certainly very attached to his Spanish roots; he had oranges planted round the Vatican and the family spoke to each other in Catalan. The talk provided a tantalising glimpse into the life of the Borgia family and a chance to sample a novel that is both meticulously researched and a gripping read.

Vanessa Hall-Smith

The 2013 Leconfield Lecture

The State of Italy

Bill Emmott, the former editor of the *The Economist*, self-described accidental Italophile and passionate student of Italy, hit the headlines in 2001 when The Economist published a cover article 'Why Silvio Berlusconi is unfit to lead Italy'. However the real concern behind the article, he revealed, was not Italy nor Berlusconi but the line between capitalism and democracy, private and public power, media influence and the pressure of business on government in the West, the difference between being pro-business and pro-market and the importance of the rule of law and the justice system, especially for the new nations of the EU.

The main topic of the 2013 Leconfield Lecture, held in November 2013, was Italy's economic decline as revealed in its economic data and the Italian public's response. The once vibrant Italian economy of the 1950s and 1960s had declined to an average growth rate of 1.4% between 1997 and 2012. Vast debt, accumulated in the 1970s and 1980s, had been used to expand welfare and appease social tension. Real household income had declined as had the Italian family's ability to save. Yet both the media and the business elite continued to say all was fine.

Fortunately, there are some heroes breaking barriers, giving hope amidst a general sense of unreality: younger people campaigning for change through organisations like *Rete per l'Eccellenza Nazionale*, the anti-Mafia *Addio Pizzo* groups in Sicily, *Se non ora quando* groups for women's rights, or enlightened entrepreneurs like Brunello Cuccinelli, and journalists like Annalisa Piras, the director of Emmott's film *Good Italy, Bad Italy: Girlfriend in a Coma.*

> // Real entrepreneurial instincts are too often stymied by regulations, unions, labour laws and the lack of a single market.

Italy has fundamental strengths. It is a major industrial nation, famous for family-run businesses the best of which combine long-term vision with responsibility to employees. There is a passion for building companies. However this is not enough. Real entrepreneurial instincts are too often stymied by regulations, unions, labour laws and the lack of a single market. There is a fear of the justice system and politics. Businessmen are defensive, aiming merely to survive rather than conquer the world. Interest groups, a too rigid society and a too rigid economy have led to economic sclerosis.

Everything becomes political. The premiere of Emmott's film at MAXXI, Rome's modern art museum, was banned as being too political by Minister Giovanna Melandri in the run-up to the general election of 2013. Amid priceless publicity it was then shown by Gruppo Espresso at the Teatro Eliseo. Political reaction then changed again. At first Emmott was accused of supporting Mario Monti. Then he was charged with supporting Beppe Grillo. All Emmott wanted to do was produce awareness. He cited Ignazio Visco, Governor of the Bank of Italy in May 2013 'What is needed is awareness, solidarity and foresight'.

Bill Emmott

Summing up, Bill Emmott indicated that in his view many people in Italy were ready to grasp the nettle for change and that the then Letta government, if it were to survive, could bring about reform. Readers will now know that Letta's government has been replaced by that of Matteo Renzi and Italy is again in recession.

Susan Kikoler

The Enduring Influence of Italian Mathematicians

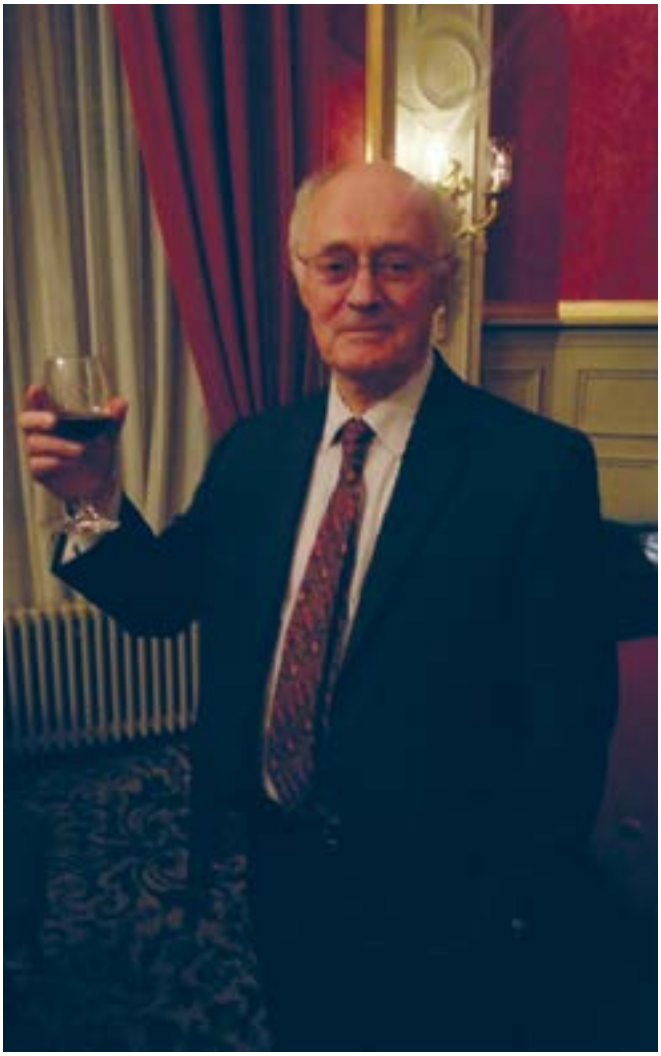
Dr John Andrews, visiting fellow in physics at the University of Bristol, opened the 2014 BIS talks, held at the Oxford and Cambridge Club on 23 January. His topic was mathematics, the 'Queen of Sciences' and he chose as his theme six legendary men in this field who emanated from Italy. He assured us that 'mathematics is a language' and began with a small test of sorts to test our 'linguistic' skills.

Archimedes of Siracuse (c 287 - c 212 BC) was the first of Dr Andrews' subjects. One slide illustrated his law of hydrostatics with a drawing of the famous 'Eureka' moment in the bathtub. Using basic circles and squares, Dr Andrews then addressed the method by which Archimedes calculated the measurement of these forms, before moving on to how he worked out the numerical approximation for π, or pi. His ingenious design (featuring an inbuilt helix) for a device to convey water upwards, the so-called Archimedes screw, was also discussed.

The 13th century Leonardo ('da Pisa') Fibonacci who grew up in modern day Algeria, was the second chosen mathematician and was most noteworthy for introducing Arabic numerals, thus bridging the mathematical cultures of the Arabic and European worlds and simplifying what had been an almost impossible task of multiplication and division using Roman numerals. The concept of the golden ratio and its application in such painting as Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel had its counterpart in nature too, in the patterns of spirals, seeds and petals.

Dr Andrews then turned to the man he described as a polymath gambler, the Pavia-born Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576), who devoted much effort to investigating the mathematical frequency of dice combinations, and along the way discovered the square root of -1. That led to a more extended discussion of the great Gallileo 'the father of modern physics', of his work on pendulums and tides and above all of his development of a telescope powerful enough to reach Jupiter and to demonstrate, to the Church's disapproval, that the planet's moons were not stationary in space but revolved around it and around the earth: indeed that the earth revolved around the sun and (despite later recantations) not the other way round.

We then moved to the 20th century in the person of Enrico Fermi (1901-1954), a mathematician as well as a physicist, a conductor of nuclear fusion experiments in the 1930s and, sadly, a refugee from Italy in 1938 when the racial laws were in force and he feared for his Jewish wife. In the United States, Fermi helped to build the world's first nuclear reactor at Chicago, and then went on to develop the atom bomb – about which he had mixed feelings – at



Dr John Andrews

Los Alamos. Dr Andrews concluded his review of famous Italians with a tribute to one who was still alive and working at Princeton, Enrico Bombieri, and his contribution to number theory.

Throughout his talk, Dr Andrews' passion for the discipline of mathematics shone out, and he told us that he believed he had cracked a number of problems relating to prime numbers – those that cannot be divided by another whole number. Some of our audience were visibly summoning up memories of their own education decades ago; others were far more at ease with Dr Andrews' clear and visually stimulating presentation. All welcomed an evening spent on what, for the Society, was a relatively rare lecture topic, and one which did credit to Italians of all centuries.

Alexandra Richardson

Bernardo Pasquini: Musical Creativity in the Age of Partimento

Benjamin Katz is a current recipient of the Frank Huntington Beebe Fellowship for 2013-2014, spending a year in London as an Early Career Research Associate at the Institute of Musical Research, part of the University of London's School of Advanced Studies. Benjamin, a very engaging and talented performer, has been playing early and contemporary music on the harpsichord since 2001. He has researched the rich *Partimento* repertoire of 17th and 18th century Naples and Rome, particularly the works of teachers Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710) and Francesco Durante (1684-1755). Manuscripts of Pasquini's music and of Alessandro Scarlatti, are preserved in the British Library and it is these manuscripts that Benjamin has studied in depth.

Partimento is a Baroque teaching method using a skeletal keyboard composition notated on one stave, most usually the base-line. From this, the composer/performer can improvise their own often complex melodies which can interact, overlap or collide. Benjamin likened this to a tennis match, with the ball constantly flying backwards and forwards, or to 'drawing a black cat in green ink'. This method allowed composers and performers to become familiar with the challenges of musical composition and to hone their keyboard skills at the same time. Much of this music was developed from popular songs and dances, orchestral concerti and church music.

Benjamin explained that *Partimento* began to be used in the conservatoires of Naples; these were not as we understand them today but were often orphanages which in the 18th century developed into music schools attracting paying students from a very wide area. He gave an insight into life in the conservatoire, where students started at 8 or 10 years of age, experiencing a strictly regimented life, both generally and musically, with long periods of silent prayer.

Bernardo Pasquini

Benjamin Katz

The popularity outside Italy of these Italian composers and performers from the conservatoires, particularly at royal courts, such as those of Louis XIV and Queen Christina, led to *Partimento* becoming known to other composers, such as Bach and his contemporaries. Handel studied under *Partimento* composers and he in turn used the technique in the music lessons he gave to the daughters of George II.

Pasquini, the founding father of *Partimento* in Rome, was an associate of Scarlatti and Corelli. Francesco Durante spent his life teaching in Naples and Benjamin believes he may have studied with Pasquini in Rome, although there is no documentary evidence of this.

Although *Partimenti* were not intended to be played in concert settings, Benjamin enthralled the audience with his own interpretation of a number of pieces by the composers referred to in his talk.

Diana Darlington

Pas De Deux: Ladri di Biciclette in Film History

Ladri di Biciclette (Bicycle Thieves) is the best-known and most highly-acclaimed example of Italian neorealist cinema. Directed by Vittorio De Sica in 1948, the film tells the story of a poor father wandering with his son through the post-World War II streets of Rome searching for a bicycle, which has been stolen from him and on which his job depends. Shooting the film entirely on location in the city and using untrained actors, De Sica presents a moving picture of the poverty and unemployment of post-war Italy, the drama of everyday life for many Italians and the dignity with which they faced it. The film quickly gained iconic status. It won an Academy honorary award (special Oscar) in 1949. Within four years of its release, several critics, including the British Film Institute's (BFI) respected *Sight and Sound* magazine, had named *Bicycle Thieves* the greatest film of all time. It has remained a highly influential film in the history of world cinema.

Robert Gordon, Professor of Italian at Cambridge University, gave an entertaining and informative talk about *Bicycle Thieves* to the Society on 20 May 2014. He had written a book about the film, entitled *Bicycle Thieves*, for the BFI Film Classics series in 2008. On this occasion, however, Professor Gordon decided to look at the film's influence in a slightly unusual way. He chose not to follow the approach adopted in most commentaries on *Bicycle Thieves*, which commonly explore how De Sica made the film and what he was trying to say, or describe the development of the neorealist movement and the film's place in it, or examine the authentic pathos of the simple story it tells. Instead, Professor Gordon invited us to consider patterns in the interactions between the father and son, the main characters in the film, and the particular way that De Sica framed them in key scenes of the film.

Using clips from *Bicycle Thieves*, Professor Gordon illustrated how De Sica choreographed the movements of the father and son in several scenes to give the film a distinct rhythm and to amplify the pathos and emotional interaction between them. The way in which the director framed the two protagonists in many shots, and positioned them in relation both to each other and to the landscape, gave their movements the character of a dance, almost a ballet, in the open spaces of the city. Professor Gordon also looked at the storyline in the film, and drew parallels

Professor Robert Gordon

with other films which depict a father and child wandering in a desolate or unforgiving world. He showed how De Sica consciously looked back and paid homage in a number of scenes to Charlie Chaplin's earlier film *The Kid* (1921). He went on to use further clips to illustrate the direct influence of *Bicycle Thieves* on later Hollywood productions, which drew on similar patterns of a parent and child navigating their way through desolate or poverty-ridden landscapes, including Peter Bogdanovich's *Paper Moon* (1973) and John Hillcock's *The Road* (2009), and echoed De Sica's motifs and techniques. Professor Gordon concluded that De Sica had incorporated three universal archetypes of storytelling into *Bicycle Thieves:* the Quest, across a challenging and isolating terrain; Friendship, in the form of a complicit, buddy relationship; and a Parent/Child interaction, in which the two characters mirror each other's strengths and weaknesses (and at different times even change roles). In *Bicycle Thieves* De Sica brought all these familiar elements together, but gave them a power and resonance that was quite new through his editing and use of spatial movement. It was this technique that transformed the simple plot of *Bicycle Thieves* into a masterpiece, and left a rich legacy for future film directors to draw on.

Professor Gordon had last addressed a meeting of the Society in 2002. But, after such a clear and stimulating presentation, the members present insisted that he should not wait nearly so long before returning to give his next lecture.

Revisiting the Food of Italy

Early evening is not the best time to schedule a talk about food – particularly when Claudio Roden is the speaker. I suspect that mine was not the only stomach to begin to rumble as we were taken on a gastronomic tour of Italy, laced with references to *burrata*, *trofie*, *orecchiette*, *moleche frite*, *peperonata*, *asparagi con salsa zabaione* and *torta di castagne* to name but a few.

Growing up in Egypt, Claudia was exposed to both the language and food of Italy from an early age. Her father imported silk from Como and her nanny came from a village near Gorizia, then in Friuli but now part of Slovenia. She cooked Italian food for the family and introduced the young Claudia to *polenta* and *potizza*.

Nearly 30 years ago Claudia was commissioned to research the *Taste of Italy* series for *The Sunday Times Magazine.* While *fegato alla veneziana and vitello tonnato* were by then restaurant standards, and ricotta and mozzarella were becoming widely available, the range and diversity of Italian cuisine were still relatively unknown, and even in Italy local regional foods were not easy to find in restaurants. At that time, Italian catering schools were teaching classic French cuisine, and high-end restaurants were serving an Italian-style *nouvelle cuisine* with kiwi and strawberries making an appearance in *risotto tricolore*, and calves liver being served with mangoes.

With the instruction to 'eat as much as you can' and prepare copy that men would want to read, Claudia set off to travel the length and breadth of Italy. She spent a year visiting every region of the country and experienced at first-hand how both geography and history shaped the food that was eaten in different parts of the country; French influence being strong in Piedmont, Austrian in Lombardy, Spanish in the South and Arab in Sicily.

She was invited to some of the most exclusive hotel kitchens where she met many young American and Japanese cooks who were working without pay in order to learn. Apparently, Tokyo has more Italian restaurants than any other city outside Italy.

She also met members of cooking fraternities (of which there were 100 in Emilia Romagna alone) and most of the time people went out of their way to be helpful and look after her. This was not the case in Sardinia where she was hoping to sample a hare sauce in a hunting lodge. Despite having a letter of introduction, the lady in charge simply said *'fuori'* when she saw Claudia in the kitchen. Later in the evening, as Claudia was enjoying dinner in a local restaurant, having joined the hunters seated at the next table so that they could give her their favourite recipes, the same lady came in, ordered Claudia back to her table and asked 'haven't you got a husband?'.

For Claudia, the cultural history that lies behind the food people eat is of particular importance. She visited the kitchens of many of the people she met; some who

Claudia Roden

lived off the land where, until the 1960s, the system of *mezzadria* or sharecropping persisted, whereby peasants would give half of what they produced to their landlords. She always asked what people ate at home, and what their parents and grandparents cooked. We were told about the *cucina nobile* and *cucina povera* of Sicily, where head chefs are still called *monzù* (from the French *monsieur*) following the 18th century tradition of having French head cooks in noble households.

These days in Italy there is still a strong attachment to traditional cooking. Many young Italians now learn to cook via the internet or TV rather than from their mothers, who are no longer likely to spend the best part of the day in the kitchen cooking for the family.

Claudia Roden's *Taste of Italy* series was followed by her book *The Food of Italy.* Both were to have a significant impact on Italian food in the UK, and these days it is possible to find all kinds of Italian regional products in both specialist shops and supermarkets. The 25th anniversary addition of *The Food of Italy,* published in 2014, includes new and updated recipes, reflecting the changes that have taken place in both Italy and the UK in the intervening years. A book beautifully written and produced that will give pleasure to all who enjoy *il piacere di mangiare e bere.*

Vanessa Hall-Smith

Expo 2015 Milan

by Susan Kikoler

Italy and food are synonymous. So it is no surprise that Milan has been chosen as the site of Expo 2015 whose theme is food - *Feeding the Planet. Energy for Life.* The exhibition which runs for six months from 1 May - 31 October 2015 will be devoted to best practices in sustainable food development and food security so that all people may have access to food which is healthy, safe and sufficient.

At the time of writing, over 147 countries have already committed to be present. The UK pavilion, *The Hive*, inspired by the honey-bee and designed by Nottingham artist Wolfgang Buttress, will contain a fruit orchard and a natural wildflower meadow. Disney, for the first time ever, has designed the official logo (with more than a hint of Arcimboldo) and the one million square metre site, north-west of Milan, will expect to host over twenty million visitors. Tickets, with an average price of 20 – 30 euro, are available online and range from off-peak (Mondays and Tuesdays), fixed day or open, single visit or multi etc. There will be special connections between Malpensa and the Expo site, including helicopters for VIPs, and over 27 million meals are expected to be consumed.

Turin will be only 34 minutes away by special train and an added attraction to that city has been the announcement that the Turin Shroud will again be on display between 19 April and 24 June 24 to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the birth of St John Bosco, founder of the Salesians.

However Expo 2015 will showcase Milan which has become an increasingly important tourist destination in recent years particularly for Russian and Chinese visitors, (up 107% and 320% respectively in the last five years). Milan has become Italy's most sustainable city with car-sharing and bike-sharing schemes. Pollution has fallen by 18%.

Special cultural events are planned to coincide with Expo 2015. There will be a big Giotto exhibition, the largest Italian exhibition ever dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci at the Palazzo Reale (15 April to 19 July 2015) and Michelangelo's last work, the *Rondanini Pietà,* will be moved to a new exhibition space in the Castello Sforzesco. Furthermore performances at La Scala will continue throughout 2015.

Ads on Italian television began in January 2014. High demand is expected for what will certainly be a historic event both for Milan and Italy.

For tickets to the Turin Shroud see www.sindone.org

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