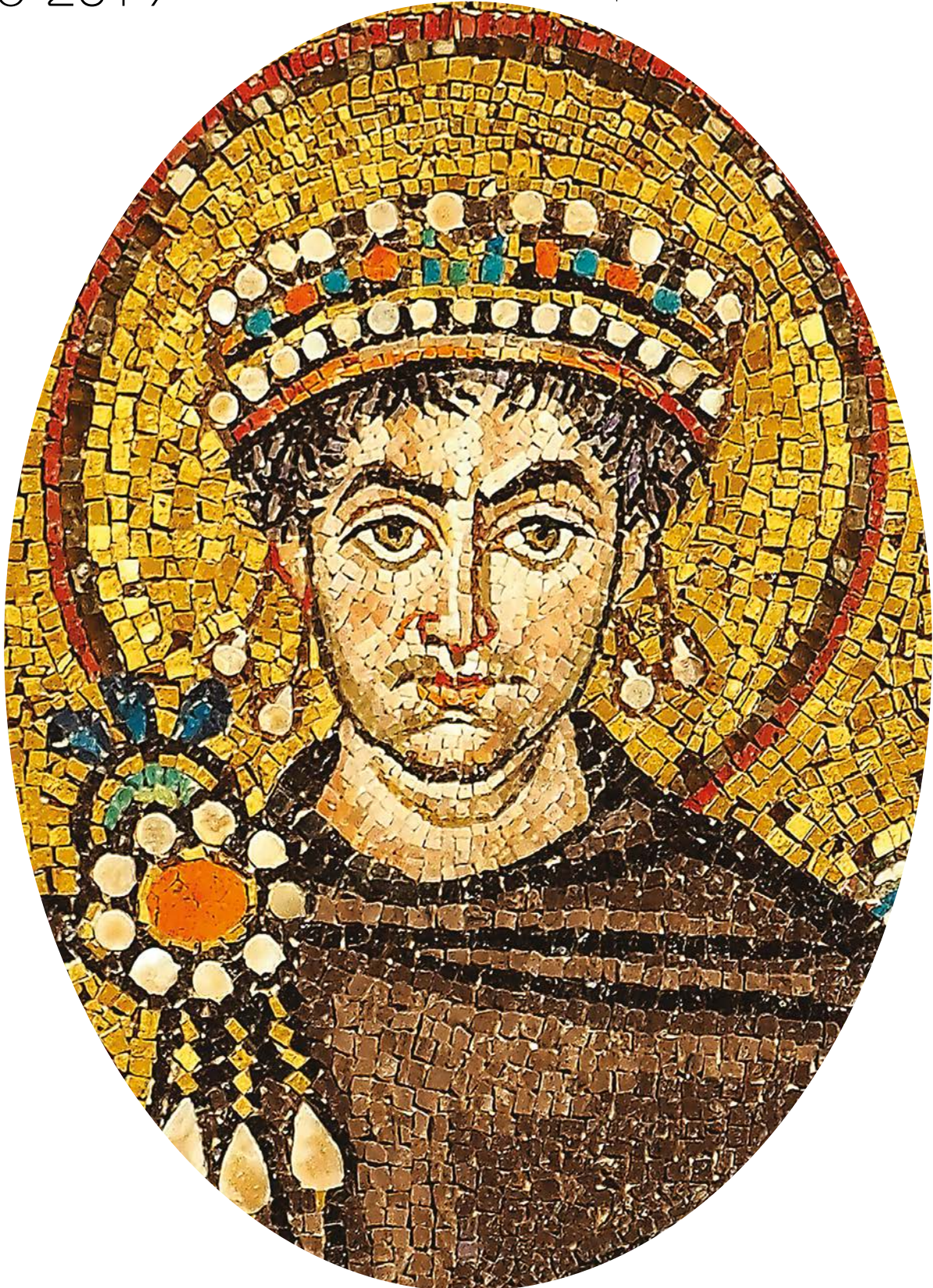


RIVISTA

2018-2019

Friuli: A Frontier Region
Immigration in Italy
The Fosse Ardeatine Massacre
John Ruskin in Venice



Dear readers

In this issue we go from the North to the South of Italy exploring the region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, a beautiful garden on Lake Maggiore and then to Sicily to focus on migration issues. We stop in Venice on the way, visiting the Ruskin exhibition at the Palazzo Ducale and, on a more sombre note, the Fosse Ardeatine in Rome. Ancient Rome is the subject of a new book which you will find reviewed on page 21. Back in England we look at Italian influences on London life, review an exhibition about Italian connections in Hull and consider the complexities of adapting an Italian libretto to be sung in English. As usual we include a summary of all the events that have taken place in the course of the year.

This is the last issue of *Rivista* that we will edit – after five years it's time to move on. We remain enormously grateful to our contributors, to all those involved in the production of *Rivista* and to you, our readers, who



Vanessa Hall-Smith



Linda Northern

have given such valuable and constructive feedback. We are handing over to Sandra Fox and Philippa Leslie and wish them every success in their new role. We hope it will be as rewarding and as much fun for them as it has been for us.

Linda Northern and Vanessa Hall-Smith

Cover photo: Detail of mosaic in San Vitale, Ravenna showing Emperor Justinian 1

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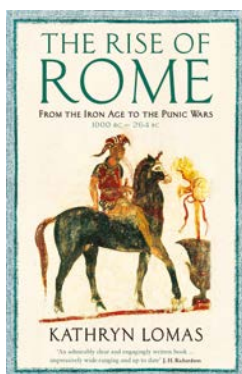
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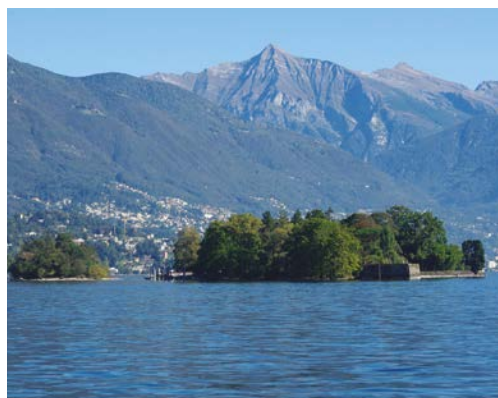
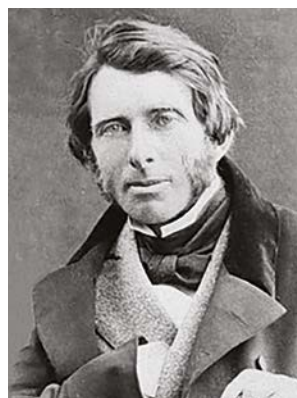
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Singing translations: Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*

by Simon Rees

There are two kinds of libretto translation in opera: the surtitle translation (a relatively recent innovation) and the singing translation, whose history goes back nearly as far as that of opera itself. Early opera (in the 17th and 18th centuries) was largely written and performed in Italian and by Italians, the two genres of *opera seria* and *opera buffa* dominating the art form. French opera got off to an early start, too, thanks to the patronage of Louis XIV. In England, after the promising start made by Purcell with English operas such as *Dido and Aeneas*, the field was soon lost to the Italian language after the arrival of the Hanoverian kings, with Handel writing all his operas in Italian, and reserving English for his oratorios. English audiences had to make do with printed librettos with facing-page English translations, easy to read in the theatre as the house lights (brightly-burning candles in huge chandeliers) were never dimmed. When Joseph Haydn was commissioned by his master, Prince Nicolas Esterhazy, to write a series of operas for performance at the remote country palace of Esterhaza in Hungary, he chose Italian librettos, and frequently cast Italian singers.

I was commissioned in early 2018 to write a singing translation of Haydn's *Il mondo della luna*. The company was New Chamber Opera of Oxford, directed by the Dean of New College, Professor Michael Burden, a musicologist and director. I had translated numerous operas for this company, for performance in the Warden's Garden (when fine) and in the antechapel (when wet). The small orchestra, intimate setting and well-informed audience always encouraged translations that would be clearly audible, so that verbal as well as musical jokes (when appropriate) could come across.

Haydn had the excellent taste to set a libretto by Italy's greatest comic dramatist, the Venetian Carlo Goldoni. As was often the case in the 18th century, Goldoni's libretto was set many times: before Haydn's version of 1777 there were no fewer than six settings, including one by Baldassare Galuppi, composed for the Venetian carnival of 1750. It tells the ludicrous story of the fake astronomer Ecclitico, who dupes the rich but simple-minded Buonafede into believing that he can travel to the moon, where he will meet all sorts of lunar beings and be introduced to the Emperor of the Moon himself. Buonafede has two daughters, Clarice and Flaminia, and a housemaid Lisetta. Ecclitico, who wants to marry Clarice, has a friend, Ernesto, who longs for Flaminia, and a servant, Cecco, who wants to marry Lisetta: all three conspire to dupe Buonafede. Buonafede is drugged into a stupor and wakes up in Ecclitico's flowerbed believing himself to be on the



Buonafede dreams of meeting the Emperor in *Il mondo della luna*

moon. Eventually everything is clarified, and the three couples pair off, with Buonafede's reluctant blessing.

One major difficulty in making a singing translation from Italian to English is that Italian favours feminine rhymes (cuore, amore; luna, fortuna; sereno, ripieno etc.) while English is stronger on masculine rhymes (heart, start; wait, late; meet, greet etc.) The distinction between the two is that a masculine rhyme or ending has the stress on the final syllable – (mad, sad) whereas a feminine rhyme or ending has the stress on the penultimate syllable (madden, sadden). A tumbling rhyme has the stress on the antepenultimate, or third syllable from the end (maddening, saddening). When English uses feminine rhymes, it is often by adding '-ing' – 'meeting, greeting; starting, parting' – or '-ed' – 'ended, mended; started, parted' – while going further from these can often lead to pairs of rhymes where there is no alternative – 'combat, wombat' is a favourite of mine – or where, as with 'orange' there is no rhyme at all, unless you permit the use of the small Welsh mountain called the Bloreng, for which there are few opportunities.

Il mondo della luna presented challenges from the title onwards, especially as the words of the title figure repeatedly in the libretto. A literal translation is 'The world of the moon'. English Touring Opera's recent translation was called 'Life on the Moon'. While the word 'luna' in Italian is a disyllable, 'moon' in English remains resolutely monosyllabic. 'Lunar' just won't do in most contexts. One solution I found, instead of the literal 'the world of the moon', was 'the world made out of moonshine', which at least had the virtue of scanning.

Italian libretto metres present fewer difficulties than Italian rhymes. The basic metres of Italian recitative are *endecasillabi* and *settenari*, 11 and 7 syllables respectively, with special rules for apocopated lines (those with a masculine ending, and therefore counting

10 or 6 respectively.) English is quite happy with these metres, as shown by WS Gilbert's agile adaptations and parodies in his Savoy Operas. Other metres used for arias and choruses are equally adaptable, as both Italian and English have strong tonic accents, stressing some syllables more heavily than others, unlike French or Japanese, which tend to give equal stress to each.

// Italian is famous for having pure vowels, and for treating diphthongs as a succession of single vowels

Italian is famous for having pure vowels, and for treating diphthongs as a succession of single vowels – try saying *aiuolo* (flowerbed) – and you will see what I mean. English is notorious for being full of slithery diphthongs and triphthongs, with words like 'ear', 'wait', 'mouth', 'eye', posing difficulties to the singer, for the interesting reason that as a sung vowel is effectively a chord (try singing 'ee-aa-oo' on a monotone and listen to the partials that form the vowel shifting, but shut the windows first so as not to worry the neighbours) the movement from one vowel to the next, without an intervening consonant, makes the pitch shift too. To explain the idea of partials it is necessary to note that most musical notes are composed of fundamental vibrations (the lowest sound in the note) with higher harmonics more or less audible according to the quality of the note. The human voice is particularly rich in these, since the mouth and sinuses make up a complex resonant cavity, unlike the simple tube of, say, a flute or an organ pipe. High front vowels like 'ee' are simply inaudible at high pitches, so they should be avoided both in the Italian original and in a translation. Finally, English consonant clusters (say 'strengths' slowly) are hard to sing without losing vocal tone.

With all of these obstacles to bear in mind, the problem comes down to this: a singing translation needs to fit the metre of the original libretto and the music to which it is set, the rhyme scheme of the original, and as much of the sense as can be conveyed. The Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland* may have said 'Take care of the sense and the sounds will take care of themselves', but that doesn't work here: more often the reverse is true.

Now for some examples. The opening chorus of *Il mondo della luna*, Act 1, reads as follows:

*Prendiamo, fratelli,
il gran telescopio, o sia microscopio, o sia canocchial.
Vedrem della luna se il tondo sereno
sia un mondo ripieno di gente mortal.*

This could be rendered literally as: 'Brothers, take the great telescope, or microscope, or spyglass. Let's see if the moon's calm sphere is a world full of mortal beings.' My version went like this:

*My brothers, take courage,
Our telescope's ready,
Our microscope's steady*

*To look at the sky.
We'll see if the people
Who live in the moonshine
As we in the sunshine
Are like you and I.*

I wrote this at the start of making the translation, and I'm not altogether happy with it. Firstly, there's the grammatical howler of 'you and I' which should be 'you and me'. Should I have worked 'see' into the fourth line 'to look and to see', rhyming with 'me' in the last line, or should I have allowed the modern laxity of the rappers (ingenious rhymers, every one) to permit 'sky' and 'me' as a rhyme? 'Ready' and 'steady' are neat, as there was no way I could use a feminine ending – 'microscopic' and 'telescopic' without making a tongue-twister.

Moving on to the recitative, we find Ecclitico making the following boast or confession:

*Oh le gran belle cose che a intendere si danno
a quei che poco fanno per natura!
Oh che gran bel mestier ch'è l'impostura!
Chi finge di saper accrescer l'oro,
chi cavar un tesoro,
chi dispensa segreti,
e chi parla dei pianeti,
chi vende mercanzia di falsa ipocrisia;
chi finge nome, titolo e figura:
oh che gran bel mestier ch'è l'impostura!*

This is, as expected, in sevens and elevens, with 'che a in' in the first line being sung as a single syllable by the usual process of elisions. This is what I did with it:

*Oh, what a load of nonsense!
These fools are happy to believe whatever notions I can foster.
I'm not ashamed to boast I'm an imposter.
Some say they know the trick of making treasure,
some make gold at their leisure,
some tell tales of the planets to other foolish gannets,
some sell their merchandises at elevated prices,
some make their titles, take their place on the roster.
I'm not ashamed to boast I'm an imposter.*

There were several problems here, again, which could only be solved by compromise of one kind or another. 'Foster' and 'roster' are obviously there to rhyme with 'imposter'. 'Gannets' is a good word for a greedy, gullible person, and like many good rhyme words is encountered in the songs of Ian Dury. 'Treasure/leisure' is as much a cliché as 'capture/rapture' or 'anguish/languish' but is often unavoidable.

I am sure I will find, when the show opens in July 2018 that Michael Burden and his cast will have picked out problems and found solutions for them. Only a singer can identify what is possible and what is impossible to sing, and I am not a singer. However, I do my best in this art of the impossible to bring across something of the original libretto in an English translation which can be sung, understood and, with luck, enjoyed.

Simon Rees spent 23 years as Dramaturg at Welsh National opera, as well as publishing novels and poetry. He is now a freelance writer, lecturer and translator.



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R/18

Friuli: A Frontier Region

by Tom Richardson

The Friuli region – officially Friuli Venezia Giulia or FVG, of which more below – doesn't attract many British visitors. This may be why the editors asked me to contribute a few notes. It sits of course astride one of the main German and Austrian routes to the south, and in summer the beaches heave around Lignano and Grado. But there are so many more reasons to visit it. I am not writing a travelogue, which others can do far better, and I'll simply list a few of Friuli's many attractions: the splendid Roman and medieval ruins of Aquileia, early Lombard Cividale, Venetian Udine, the gracious Habsburg architecture of old Trieste, Emperor Maximilian's palace of Miramare, the cemeteries and battlefields of the First World War's front line, and Gemona's rebirth after the terrible earthquake of 1976. I could add the Julian Alps, the coastal lagoons, San Daniele ham, gnocchi stuffed with plums, barley and bean soups, strudels and the superb wines, such as Ribolla Gialla, from the vineyards around Cormons and Gorizia that hug the frontier with Slovenia.

// It also feels, even today, a little different from the rest of Italy. It's the gateway to Mitteleuropa.

Friuli offers a lot. It also feels, even today, a little different from the rest of Italy. It's the gateway to Mitteleuropa. For much of medieval and early modern times its history and ethnic composition set it somewhat apart. It has always been borderland, marchland, between Latin Italy and its German, Slav and Hungarian neighbours. The Julian Alps to the north were lower and easier for an invader to cross: Alaric, Attila, the Lombards, the Magyars, various German emperors all came this way. But equally it was an easier transit route for the wealth of Venice to penetrate into the German world. As with many borderlands the population is mixed, though less so since the border changes after the Second World War. Even so, there is a Slovene minority, fewer Germans but an unmistakable feel about Trieste's famous cafés, and a local dialect that is now proudly displayed on every road sign in the region.

Friuli doesn't have the settled historical sweep of a Milan or indeed a Mantua. Like the Alpine regions of Italy's north-west it remained in feudal hands for long after communal government had grown and blossomed elsewhere. The feudatory in question was the Patriarch of Aquileia. That city, once on the coast and a huge port in Roman times, had been sacked by Goths and Huns alike; but it remained an ecclesiastical centre, its Patriarchs, often of German nationality, were major landowners, and

German emperors conferred on them jurisdiction over large parts of Friuli. The region's modern history, however, starts with its cession to Venice in 1420. There were the occasional uprisings, mostly over taxes, but on the whole Venetian rule respected local institutions. So matters stood until Venice's own collapse before Napoleon. After his fall the Habsburgs moved in, and held the Veneto and Friuli – the latter essentially the then province of Udine – until the newly minted kingdom of Italy acquired them in 1866, following the Third War of Independence. The new frontier with Austria had no natural features, and in the hothouse atmosphere of the late nineteenth century irredentism grew.

At that point Venezia Giulia enters the equation. The further east you travelled, the less 'Italian' the territory became. The Venetians had had settlements all along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, though they were seldom contiguous. They lived in the port cities. Elsewhere the Slavs were easily in the majority. They lived and worked in the countryside and it was only really in the nineteenth century, with the need for industrial labour that they too moved into the cities and the merchant marine. From Vienna, the Habsburgs ruled the area, with its useful access to the sea, and they had done so for centuries. Pope Clement VIII might declare in 1597 that 'no one has the slightest doubt that Trieste is in Italy'; but Italy was an elusive concept and Venice had only ever briefly held the town. In 1719 the emperor Charles VI declared it a free port. Under him and his daughter, Maria Theresa, exports and imports were tax-free, a naval shipyard and arsenal built, beautiful districts rose, and by 1914 Trieste was the third largest city of the empire, after only Vienna and Prague. It was all the more important to the empire after the loss of the port of Venice in 1866, and its shipping and insurance companies were famous. Geography helped. For a Briton – as for other north Europeans – the quickest route to India and the Far East lay in taking a train to Trieste and then a ship through the Suez Canal. It was cosmopolitan, some said rootless. James Joyce lived and taught there. Svevo (born Schmitz) was a native son.



Statue of Italo Svevo in Trieste Photo Vanessa Hall-Smith

There were important Armenian and Jewish quarters. In the wider picture, Trieste was one of the many multinational Mediterranean port cities of the time, like Salonika, Beirut, Alexandria or Smyrna, all of which have since become ethnically purer and less outward-looking.

For the tragedy of the First World War's Italian front, one need look no further than to read Mark Thompson's excellent book *The White War*, which he introduced at a BIS meeting some years ago. We often forget that the Italians lost some 700,000 soldiers, and up to a million more were seriously injured. It proved impossible to scale and hold the jagged heights of the Carso, beyond the river Isonzo after which no less than twelve battles were named. Winters were freezing, and the many southern Italians in the army entirely unprepared. Trench warfare was as bad as in Flanders, and military discipline draconian. There is the remarkable, if over-ornate, sacrarium at Redipuglia, but a better guide to the battles is the museum at Caporetto, now just over the border in Slovenia. Although it marks the scene of an Italian defeat, it is in the museum's favour that it seems scrupulously neutral as between the combatants.

The next thirty years were no happier. The Italians gained territory, but Trieste lost its central European hinterland. There was a new province of Istria, largely Slav in population. Under fascism Slav education and the Slav language were suppressed. Resistance followed, and intensified after Italy joined the Second World War and occupied large chunks of Yugoslavia. When the armistice was signed in 1943 the Germans were well prepared. They occupied Italy's frontier districts and Trieste became the capital of the *Küstenland*, a German province in all but formal designation. That was when Globocnik – an Austrian Nazi born in Trieste – created Italy's only extermination camp with a gas chamber, at the Risiera di San Sabba.

// These last fifty years have been a huge success story, and part of the explanation must lie in the hard-working nature of the Friulians themselves.

Revenge came in 1945, when the Italian population of Istria either fled, was deported or perished in the *foibe*, the sinkholes or crevasses of the limestone hills. Tito's Yugoslavia and the Allies contested what remained of Venezia Giulia, and at times were close to war. I'll pass over the tangled story of the Free Territory of Trieste, simply to say that the city was returned to Italy in 1954, but its territory was amputated and the city itself cut off still more than before from its natural markets. A small rail museum run by volunteers tells you something of the rise and decline of its traffic. It was not only Trieste that suffered. Friuli did too. Even without the impact of all the wars, its economy – like that of much of Italy's countryside – was fairly desperate. There had always



Patriarchal Basilica Aquileia

been migration, at first seasonal, then permanent to northern Europe or, increasingly, to the Americas and Australia. It continued after the war. The hill farms in particular were too small to provide a living. It was only in the 1960s that Friulian returnees started to outnumber emigrants.

These last fifty years have been a huge success story, and part of the explanation must lie in the hard-working nature of the Friulians themselves. The restoration of Gemona, devastated by an earthquake, was largely due to their own efforts; they did not wait for help from Rome. When you travel through Friuli these days, it's hard to realise how desperately poor it once was. It looks much like the Veneto – that is to say, a jumble of small family enterprises, houses and factories back to back, some scattered fields, new roads everywhere. Many Friulians are uncomfortable that Trieste and not Udine is the region's capital, just as not all in the Veneto are wild about Venice. What happily unites them is the creation of the FVG region itself, a region of special status that with four others enjoys a number of tax breaks and investment incentives. Trieste – until the EU's enlargement a border town – received special funding, and wise mayors like Riccardo Illy (of the family coffee business, and Trieste is Italy's coffee capital) used it to promote the city as a scientific and research hub. Elsewhere the state has kept the huge Monfalcone shipyards going, and with the explosive growth of the cruise ship industry they are enjoying a renaissance. Back in the nineties, when I visited it, the village of Manzano proudly claimed to make half Europe's office furniture, while a nearby factory made a good living importing and dying Russian and Polish furs. Indeed, the end of the Cold War and EU enlargement have torn down many old barriers. Trieste may never recover its privileged nineteenth century status. But it can dream of doing so, and the new motorways to Zagreb and Ljubljana testify to the ambition. For a frontier region like FVG, the EU's four freedoms, assuming they survive, open up opportunities that would have been unthinkable for most of the last century. Friuli is a gateway again.

Sir Tom Richardson has been British ambassador to Italy, and until recently honorary president of the British-Italian Society

Italians in London

by Jonathan Keates

We don't know whether Elizabethans in London ever played the game of word-association, but if you tried them with 'Italian' some fairly unsavoury linkages would have been the result. Italians, according to popular belief, were treacherous, fawning, bloodthirsty, cruel and depraved. While Italy itself was seen as a source of everything sophisticated in the worlds of culture and luxurious living, it was also viewed as Europe's ultimate sink of wickedness. Here Machiavelli, after all, had invented the dark arts of politics and the Borgias knew all the latest refinements of toxicology and just how to use them.

The drama of this period gives free rein to this concept of an Italy where anything goes as long as your stiletto is kept sharp and your poison freshly brewed. Ruthless Italian intrigue in the plays of John Webster or Thomas Middleton dooms its victims to death by everything from a portrait varnished with venom to a 'giant caltrop', a monster spike concealed by a trap door. A general feeling that this sort of thing simply could not happen in England is meant to induce a comforting shudder. When William Davenant presented his tragicomedy *The Just Italian* in 1638, the title was deliberately oxymoronic. Italians just? You must be joking. Doubtless predictably, the piece was a flop.

Yet outside the playhouse, on London's own streets, were Italians who gave the lie to such crude stereotypes. To the Lombard bankers and Venetian merchants of the Middle Ages, the Tudor and Stuart city now added a whole range of artisans, technicians and what are nowadays called 'creatives'. Take the Ferrabosco family, for example. Alfonso Ferrabosco, born in Bologna to a family of musicians, came to England in 1562, aged nineteen, and delighted Queen Elizabeth so much with his skill as a composer that she granted him an annual pension. This was conditional, however, on Alfonso's readiness to return to Italy from time to time for the sake of conducting a little low-level espionage. For the next twenty years, under the watchful scrutiny of Elizabeth's spymaster Thomas Walsingham, he zigzagged between London, Rome, Turin and his native city, as a composer and performer with a sideline in information-gathering, till the queen, anxious not to lose 'the most artificial and famous Alfonso Ferrabosco of Bologna' to the Pope or the Duke of Savoy, refused to let his English-born family join him and finally summoned him back to London.

A musical son, another Alfonso, proved just as versatile as his father, performing lute solos at Elizabeth's funeral, teaching King James I's promising heir Prince Henry to play the bass viol and collaborating with Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones on a spectacular sequence of court masques. For a selection of his songs from these, published in 1609, Jonson wrote a commendatory poem to 'my loved Alfonso', praising his music's power 'to sweeten mirth and heighten



Emilia Bassano Miniature portrait by Nicholas Hilliard

piety' and its therapeutic value 'to a body often ill-inclined, No less a sovereign cure than to the mind'.

Not all Italian musicians came to London simply to expand their career prospects. In the Elizabethan city we catch a foretaste of that refugee community which, three centuries later, would welcome political exiles, led by Giuseppe Mazzini, during the Risorgimento. In Tudor times, however, it was religion which drew asylum seekers to England, among them the Bassano family, Jewish singers and instrumentalists from the Veneto. Though Jews were officially forbidden residence in the kingdom, a small number of fugitives from the Spanish Inquisition had managed to settle in London and practise their faith on a characteristically English don't-ask-don't-tell basis.

The Bassano clan seems at length to have found it easier to blend with London society by embracing Protestantism. One of them, the multi-talented Emilia, went into print with a collection of theological poems, *Salve Deus Rex Iudaeorum*, 'Hail God, King of the Jews', presenting a controversial feminist perspective on the Crucifixion and a defence of Eve against the traditional view of her as Adam's temptress. Appearing in 1611, Emilia Bassano's work is notable as the first book of English verse published by a woman, but this was just one feature of her enduring originality and resourcefulness.

To her skills as a musician and poet Emilia added teaching – she founded and ran a school in London – and a practical knowledge of the law. Brought up in the cultured household of the Countess of Kent, she was an adept networker at

court and became mistress of Queen Elizabeth's elderly chamberlain Lord Hunsdon, who probably commissioned the enchanting miniature portrait of her painted by Nicholas Hilliard. Not surprisingly, this *anglo-italiana virtuosissima* has been hailed as the genuine 'Dark Lady of the Sonnets' worshipped by William Shakespeare. Though no absolute proof of this has yet emerged – we're still at the 'evidence would suggest' or 'surely you can see' stage – the idea of gifted and beautiful Emilia Bassano as the playwright's muse is hard to resist.

By the time she died in 1645, other Italian religious fugitives were finding a safe haven in London. Protestants from the city state of Lucca, long suspected by successive popes as a nest of heretics, had chosen England as their refuge. Most of them, arriving by way of Geneva, Paris and Amsterdam, were merchants, including members of the Burlamacchi and Calandrini families who became financial advisors to the Stuart court. A few, like Francesco Manucci, took on the increasingly valued role of Italian secretary to leading diplomatic or government figures.

Other immigrant *lucchesi* practised medicine, Teodoro Diodati the most eminent of them all. Anglicized as 'Doctor Deodate', he figures in household accounts of gentry families across England, rescuing most of them from the often drastic therapies prescribed by native-born physicians through a regime based on fresh air and common sense. Diodati was used to wandering. Born in Geneva and trained in Leyden, he reached London in 1598, sponsored by the great John Florio, translator of Montaigne's essays and author of the first Italian-English dictionary. The young doctor set up practice in Brentford and was soon appointed household physician to King James I's children Henry and Elizabeth, living at nearby Kew. His reputation was clinched through a cure worked on a 76-year-old gardener, suffering from 'a most violent inflammation of the lungs, a terrible fever, shortness of breath, stitch of both sides and an unquenchable thirst'. Diodati's solution? 'Profuse and beyond measure successful Phlebotomy', drawing several pints of blood from his elderly patient over three days, to produce 'an extraordinary lightsomeness and ease, so that he survived this cure 8 years'.

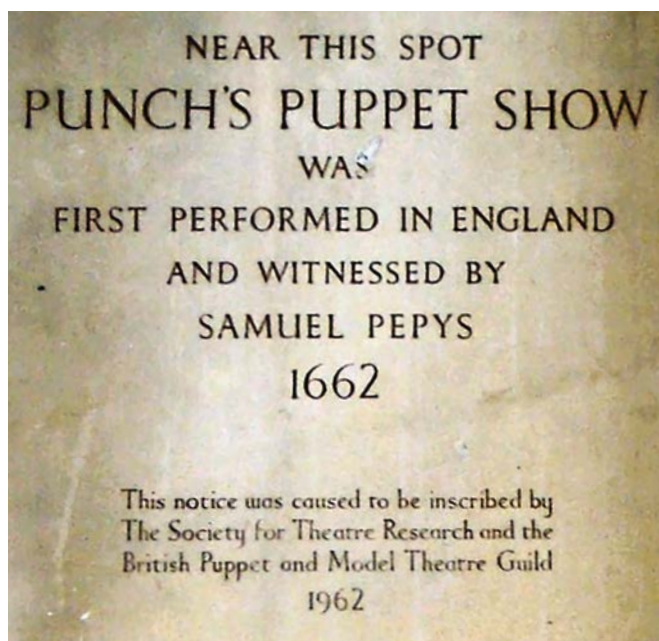
By the seventeenth century's close, the Italian impact on London life was growing ever more vibrant, smoothing the capital's rough edges via the arts of good living, ingenious entertainment or sometimes just pure fun. At one end of this scale stands the painter Benedetto Gennari, nephew of the great Guercino, brought to England in 1674 by the young princess Maria Beatrice d'Este, 'Mary of Modena', wife of the future King James II. Gennari's eye for colour and elegance of design captivated the pleasure-loving Restoration court. At the other extreme is Pietro Gismondi or 'Gimonde' from Bologna, an itinerant showman in Covent Garden who beguiled Samuel Pepys one May morning in 1662. 'Thence to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rails there, which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw, and a great resort of gallants'. Appropriately making his first appearance in London's very own Piazza, directly modelled by Inigo Jones on an Italian town square, this was none other than Pulcinella, the *commedia dell'arte* character

who would eventually turn into a very British 'Mr Punch'. Somewhere in between Gennari and Gismondi stands the young castrato Giovanni Francesco Grossi, known as 'Siface', whom Pepys invited his fellow diarist John Evelyn to hear at a private concert. 'His delicateness in extending and loosing a scale with incomparable sweetness was admirable', declared Evelyn, 'but for the rest I found him a mere wanton effeminate child'.

The international mania for singing eunuchs like Siface added a fresh dimension to London life when a state-of-the-art opera house, the Queen's Theatre (on a site now occupied by Her Majesty's Theatre) opened in the Haymarket in 1708. Everything operatic - that's to say, everything Italian - suddenly became the last word in smartness. The new season's stellar castrato or pyrotechnic diva was the star turn at aristocratic parties, audiences learned to cry 'Bravo!' at the close of an aria and the sneering label 'opera queen' for those of either sex who got rather too carried away by the whole experience of *dramma lirico* found its way into the language.

And talking of language, 'the Italian squalling tribe' and their stage-door hangers-on made an unusual impact on London slang in the form of 'Polari' or 'Parleearee', an argot specific to gay Londoners in the days when homosexuality was outlawed. Students of this weird mixture of back-slang, thieves' cant or words borrowed from Romany and Yiddish have largely ignored its obvious Italian beginnings in the wings and dressing rooms of the opera house. The very name comes from 'parlare' and words like 'vada', meaning 'look' (a Venetian dialect form of 'guardare') 'bona' 'good', 'manjari' 'eat', or 'scarper' 'run away' (from 'scappare') suggest that it was from among these Haymarket 'theatricals' that this secret language took wing. Italy, in one form or another, had come to stay in London for good.

In addition to his role as Chairman of Venice in Peril, Jonathan Keates is a prolific author of novels, biographies, history and travel

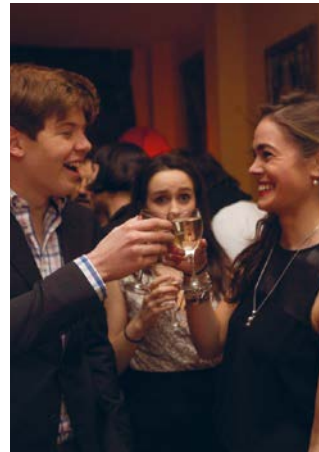


Plaque St Paul's Church Covent Garden



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Immigration: The Changing Face of Italy

by Susan Kikoler

Statistics published in August 2018 showed that more than 19% of the population of Milan are foreigners. The largest communities are Filipino (domestic servants), Egyptian (pizza-makers) and Chinese (shopkeepers). A 2013 census in Florida, a small Sicilian village in the Comune of Syracuse, revealed 10% of its population were non-Italian – 600 Romanians, 100 North Africans, 60 Somalis and Nigerians and 8 Brazilians. Immigration into Italy is not confined to those arriving by boat from Libya. It is far more complex. Many different communities have settled in Italy over the last 40 years. Italian agriculture both north and south is heavily dependent on its foreign workforce. Since 2006 over 40,000 Sikhs from the Punjab have settled near Sabaudia in Lazio, while Singh is now the second most common surname in the Cremona phone book and the production of Grana Padano cheese dependent on this labour. The expansion of the EU brought many Eastern Europeans seeking a better life. Polish women, in particular, followed by Sri Lankans, provide much needed domestic care for the elderly and some marry Italians.

Beyond the labour force, Italy's low birth rate means that Italian couples hoping to adopt find very few Italian-born children. Since the 1990s many Romanian orphans have been adopted, and today it is common to turn to South America or Africa.

North African Muslims have long settled in Sicily attracted by traditional trade links. The first major mosque was established in Catania in the 1970s. Trade has now declined through war and political unrest in the region (but a reverse

immigration has recently evolved in Tunisia, where small groups of elderly Sicilians have found an easier life on their limited pensions).

The transformation of Italy from a basically homogeneous white Catholic society into a multi-ethnic one, within a few decades, has been culturally challenging especially when dealing with an increasing Muslim population. The *Legge Nord*, incited by Roberto Calderoli,

opposed the creation of many mosques (notoriously leading pigs over one proposed site). There are, nevertheless, many examples of enlightened action: workers' rights amended to allow extra time for prayers in factories and longer absences for bereavement. Ethnic food is provided in some hospitals while in June 2018 there was the heart-warming story of school pupils voting to delay the end of term party until after Ramadan.

However, immigration to Italy is generally associated with the drama and tragedy of the clandestini – those would-be asylum seekers risking their lives crossing from Libya. It was on 4 October 2013 when over 300 people drowned in a shipwreck off the island of Lampedusa that the world finally took notice, but it is a story going back at least 25 years. In 1996, 283 people drowned off the coast of Portopalo in the Province of Syracuse. According to *La Repubblica*, it has been estimated that 34,361 people have lost their lives in the Mediterranean during this 25 year period.

Cassibile is another small village in the *Comune* of Syracuse. Over the last 25 years I have witnessed a significant North-African Arabic-speaking minority change, from 2009 onwards, to an African one as people arrived first from Morocco and Tunisia and then from Senegal, Darfur, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Ivory Coast, Bangladesh and Iraq. The early immigrants were poorly organised. Boats were few and there were no mobile phones to summon help. A 19 year-old Somali I met in 2007 had taken three days to make the crossing, his pockets stuffed with pieces of roast meat for the journey (and to offer the captain in order to ingratiate himself). Most had no idea how to claim asylum or anything about the Dublin Accord forcing them to remain in the country where they first applied. Officials were generally sympathetic and police often turned a blind eye. Today people trafficking is big business, and those fleeing risk not only the sea but being tortured and held captive for ransom in Libya. Yet numbers continue to swell – Italy has taken in 650,000 migrants in the last five years.

From 2013 Syrian refugees joined the influx. In Sicily they were highly organised and knowledgeable, refusing to be fingerprinted or to identify themselves and then escaping, through some diversion, with a network of transport in place. In the same year the Italian government set up *Operation Mare Nostrum* sending a fleet of ships to intercept all boats and save the migrants. After its cancellation through lack of resources and money, the Gentiloni government signed an accord with Libya to stop boats departing, examine claims for asylum there and air-lift to Italy those considered in greatest need, leading to more than an 88% drop in sea-crossings in the first six months of 2018 compared to 2017. Meanwhile the new 2018 Italian government of *La Lega* and *Movimento 5 Stelle*, with Matteo Salvini as Interior Minister, is taking an even harder



The Lampedusa Cross made by Francesco Tucci from pieces of the boat wrecked in October 2013 off the coast of Lampedusa. 311 Eritreans and Somalis were drowned en route and the inhabitants of Lampedusa helped save the lives of 155 others © Trustees of the British Museum

line, attempting to refuse all rescued migrants unless other European countries also take their share.

The financial and social problems for Italy are considerable. When boats reach port the migrants are examined for infectious diseases, illness, pregnancy, and possible effects of torture. Then the local health department must supply health cards and medication, initially without an increased budget. The migrants are then taken to *centri di accoglienze* where they are held while their cases are examined.

There is EU funding but bureaucracy is slow. In August 2017 lack of regional funding led to a temporary refusal by mayors in Sicily to accept more immigrants. Also, where the average local pension is only 654 euro a month, the knowledge that between 35 and 45 euro a day are spent on each immigrant inevitably causes resentment. This is not helped by rumours of Mafia involvement in the 'business' of the *centri di accoglienze*, in particular at Mineo near Catania.

There are unexpected consequences. Those who die must be buried and many towns are now suffering an acute lack of cemetery space. (Recently the first Muslim cemetery was established at Ragusa). There are highly visible groups of young Africans in the streets with nothing to do and national or tribal differences sometimes lead to fights. People beg at traffic lights and women, particularly Nigerian, have been forced into prostitution.

A major challenge is presented by the influx of unaccompanied minors who make up about 15% of the successful migrants from Africa. In 2017 almost 10,000 unaccompanied minors sought asylum in Italy – an increase of 65% on the previous year. Schools and social services are tested. Monitored by the Tribunale Minori in Catania (and once limited to lawyers) volunteers are trained to be *Tutori*. Assigned a young person, they oversee their welfare, education and guide them in their new lives until they are 18 (or 20 if still studying). There are also special courses for women in language and literacy, and in 2017 Syracuse was chosen as the site of the first World Health Organisation summer school on refugee help.

// There are immigrant success stories. Many settle down well, gain jobs, some intermarry. Others achieve fame through sport, like Mario Balotelli, or politics, like Cécile Kyenge, formerly Minister for Integration in the Letta government and now a Member of the European Parliament

There are immigrant success stories. Many settle down well, gain jobs, some intermarry. Others achieve fame through sport, like Mario Balotelli, or politics, like Cécile Kyenge, formerly Minister for Integration in the Letta government and now a Member of the European Parliament. The Italian national cricket team has greatly benefited from the arrival of young Sri Lankans. A recent government survey reveals, however, that around 32% of immigrants are living in abject poverty.



Installation created by Ramzi Harrabi, Tunisian artist, poet, singer and activist for migrants' rights, President of the Immigrants' Council for Siracusa

There is still much debate around the question of citizenship. Italy is the country which grants the highest number of citizenships to those born abroad (of Italian ancestry) but does not grant citizenship to children born in Italy to immigrant families, placing them at a disadvantage and, one could suggest, hindering their sense of identity.

I have seen Sicilians continue to accept and help the endless wave of migrants with humanity and charity, but there is now increasing exasperation and concern that would-be terrorists might be hidden amongst those arriving. Open hostility is thankfully rare but there is an atmosphere of increasing demonisation.

Last summer I was asked to interpret at a preliminary hearing in the Law Court in Syracuse. (The local interpreters refused to interrupt their holidays). A young Nigerian had gone berserk at a café after smoking cannabis and attacked another migrant. Since he had no previous convictions both the judge and the prosecuting lawyer went out of their way to be lenient.

After all, it was once the Italians who had to emigrate – some 24 million between 1876 and 1976. People still remember encountering racism and discrimination. Desperate people will continue to seek sanctuary; in the night of 24 July 2018 at my beach, Fontane Bianche, a boat arrived from Turkey with 18 men, 6 women and 9 children, all Iraqi. If Italy has to face this crisis alone then continuing repercussions in Italian politics are inevitable.

Susan Kikoler is Honorary Director of the British-Italian Society and lived in Syracuse, Sicily between 1972 and 1977. She has visited the island every year since 1981.

The Botanic Garden of the Brissago Islands

by Steven Desmond

Vast crowds each year march through the deservedly famous island gardens of Isola Bella and Isola Madre on Lake Maggiore, in the foothills of the Alps north-west of Milan, but hardly any press on further north along the lake to the equally desirable Isole di Brissago. These lie in the northernmost part of the lake, in the unredeemed portion which extends into Switzerland. Those pilgrims who do reach this choice destination are in for a singular treat.

The two little islands, visible as tufts of trees on the glassy surface from the shore, nowadays form the Botanic Garden of the Canton Ticino. The larger island is maintained as a superb garden of exotic flora from all over the world, in which the curator has managed to strike that difficult balance between labelled order and scenic beauty. The smaller island, a few metres away, is left entirely to its own devices as a home for native flora and fauna.

The idea of a botanic garden arose in the 1950s, after the death of the last private owner. The Isola Grande had been assiduously cultivated as an ornamental garden around a substantial house since the late 19th century, and the intervention of the combined local authorities was a timely one. Now all of us can stroll where once only the select were invited.

The islands had been occupied by minor convents of religious orders throughout the Middle Ages, including one belonging to the ill-named *Umiliati*. Both houses were suppressed as a consequence of the 16th-century reforms enacted after the Council of Trent. The chief reformer, indeed, was St Charles Borromeo, whose family still own the two illustrious garden islands in the Piedmontese part of the lake.

A long period of gentle crumbling ruin then followed, but this was decisively interrupted in 1885 by the unexpected arrival of a new owner in the form of Antoinette Fleming, or, as she preferred to style herself, Baroness St Leger. Those who enjoy looking up such titles on the many websites devoted to noble genealogy can save themselves the trouble, because as far as I can see she invented it herself.

This eyebrow-raising remark means we must pause a little and investigate Antoinette's life history before she arrived on the Brissago Islands. The difficulty here is that



The Brissago Islands from the lake, two little forests afloat with the daunting alpine peaks rising behind Photo courtesy Steven Desmond

hers is a biography shrouded in mystery, partly of her own creation, compounded by careless writers ever since. I have done my best to sift the truth from the tripe, but this is uncomfortable territory for any serious researcher.

Antoinette Bayer was born in Russia in 1856. All her life she cultivated the rumour that she was the natural daughter of the Tsar Alexander II. She married in Naples in 1873 and became Antoinette Stolte. This state did not endure, and a few years later she married again, and became Antoinette Jaeger. This, too, was not to last, and, like a film star before her time, she married Richard Fleming in 1881.

Richard Fleming is considerably less shadowy a figure than Antoinette's previous husbands, because we have a photograph of him (in a military officer's uniform) and because he lasted much longer than his predecessors. He is widely supposed to have been Irish, and conceivably a distant relative of Viscount Doneraile, whose family name was, and is, St Leger. It was perhaps on this slender basis that Antoinette was henceforth addressed as the Baroness St Leger, though her husband seems never to have pretended to be a baron of any description.

In 1885 our interesting couple bought the Brissago Islands and began to transform the larger one into a luxurious retreat. A comfortable villa was erected, and the remainder of the island was made into a woodland garden of groves of trees, shrubberies, open lawns and winding walks. A conservatory was placed near the house, and a kitchen garden formed on the eastern shore.

In her splendid isolation, Antoinette warmed to the

task of burnishing her mysterious reputation. She even persuaded the Swiss Post Office to allow her her own postmark, so that letters and parcels arrived on the mainland franked 'Isole St Leger'. The house was gradually filled with beautiful objects, including portraits of the Baroness.

In 1897, however, the mask began to slip. Richard Fleming left, never to return, first to Naples and then onwards to the USA, where he disappears from our narrative. We should nevertheless honour his memory, because the drive behind the formation of the garden appears largely to have been his.

Undaunted, Antoinette (you've guessed) married again, this time to an Albanian aristocrat (!) named Perikles Tzikos. By this time the garden was acquiring an international reputation, as we know from Antoinette's lecture to the Royal Horticultural Society in London, written up in that Society's august *Journal* in 1912. Those who seek the original text should be advised that her name is given there as Madame Tzikos de St Leger. Do try and keep up.

In the article we gain the first meaningful glimpse into the character of the garden. We know that there were specimen eucalyptus, bananas, vigorous clumps of hydrangeas, and a notable rock garden, as well as the crowds of pot plants among which Antoinette was pictured outside the door of her conservatory. All this sounds very much like the ancestor of the garden we see now, and whose style can also be found on the Borromean island of Isola Madre on the same lake.

Until this point, Antoinette seems to have led a charmed life, seeing off successive husbands and always living an expansive lifestyle. It seemed like the most implausible fiction, and that, apparently, is just what it was. Antoinette made investments in hopeless projects and got into hopeless debt. After the First World War she began selling off artefacts from the house, and the situation became untenable. Is it possible that the fall of the Romanovs had cut off her flow of money? I wonder.

In 1927 a knight came riding to Antoinette's rescue. A German entrepreneur, Max Emden, bought the island estate, wrote off the owner's debts and installed her in a house on the mainland. Max Emden had built up a hugely successful chain of department stores in that golden age, including the famous Kaufhaus des Westens (KaDeWe) in Berlin. Now he wanted a secluded party house in an ideal location, and the Brissago Islands were just the thing.

Emden was a man of taste, and of action. He demolished Antoinette's decaying villa and built something much more distinguished in its place, designed by Professor Breslauer of Berlin. It looks somewhere between a villa and a hotel, with a row of statues along the parapet and a conservatory at either end. The interiors are superbly elegant, with floors inlaid in swirling patterns of marble, and marvellous ceiling plasterwork.

Emden expanded and extended the garden, and changed the little kitchen garden into a deliciously elegant frame for his swimming pool. At one end of the

pool is a sleek bronze female figure, a last remnant of the nude partygoers shown draped all over the place in period photographs. It was a brief golden age, brought to an uncomfortable halt in 1933 when Max Emden's properties and assets were all seized by the new German government, because he was a Jew. Fortunately for him, he had got out in time, and was able to remain here while all hell broke loose outside Switzerland's borders.

In 1949, with both Antoinette and Max dead, the islands were bought for use as a botanic garden open to the public. Fortunately the management has been visionary. Everywhere the visitor walks, we come, as it were, face to face with the founding owners. We may despair of the tinsel dreams of the imaginary baroness, and hardly blame her many husbands for despairing too, but it is her legacy which defines the character of everything we see. Surely she grudgingly resented Max Emden bringing her whimsical world to an end, but he carried on where she had left off, and worked in sympathy with the style she had established.

Now Max Emden's refined party house is an excellent café with rooms, and we can look out from its well-placed terraces over the rock gardens, the pools, the pergolas and lawns to the magnificent Alpine peaks across the lake. Great care has always been taken to ensure that the garden is a foreground to the undeniable glory of the natural backdrop, so that we view the flora of the northern and southern hemispheres alongside the granite outcrops along the shore, the Florida swamp cypress with the waves lapping at its feet, and the richly varied bird life quietly waiting among the reeds for the last visitor to leave.

Konrad Adenauer, a frequent visitor in the 1950s, thought this was the loveliest place on earth. Max Emden's generous welcome is everywhere apparent, and somewhere under a shrub are Antoinette's ashes, who had a lovely time while it lasted. There is, of course, only one way to form your own opinion.

Steven Desmond is a chartered horticulturist with a special interest in historic gardens. His book Gardens of the Italian Lakes is published by Francis Lincoln



Max Emden converted the former kitchen garden into an Art Deco pool party paradise, complete with elegant bronze lady friend Photo courtesy Diriye Amey

Remembering Renewed: The Fosse Ardeatine Massacre

by Augusto Cherchi

Rome, Via Rasella, 23 March 1944, 3.45 pm. In the centre of Nazi-occupied Rome a homemade but powerful bomb exploded as a troop of German soldiers was passing by. Thirty-two soldiers and six civilians were killed. The operation was carried out by the *Gruppi di Azione Patriottica*, small groups of partisans from the Communist party and the *Partito d'Azione* intent on sabotaging and attacking Nazis and Fascists. A few minutes after the explosion, the



One of the three statues in travertine marble, known as *The Three Ages*, by Francesco Coccia on the left of the square leading to the Mausoleum Photo Mario Setter Courtesy Archivio ANFIM

German military commanders together with representatives of the Fascist government established in northern Italy after the fall of Mussolini arrived on the scene, the last being the SS and Gestapo chief, Herbert Kappler. The entire area was searched at gunpoint; 250 men were lined up opposite Palazzo Barberini, their hands tied behind their backs. Some were residents of Via Rasella, others happened to be passing by. Ten of these would die in the Ardeatine Caves.

In less than an hour the news of the attack reached German army headquarters on the Eastern front. Hitler's response was ferocious. He ordered a reprisal which would 'make the world tremble': 50 men to be shot for every German soldier killed by the bomb. Kesserling, the commander-in-chief of the German troops in Italy, decided to reduce this number to ten. The execution had to be carried out within 24 hours. Kappler was given the task of drawing up the list of the 320 men. To begin with, political prisoners were selected but there turned out to be only three in Roman prisons so, during the night of 23 March, the list was widened to include activists working for all the different anti-fascist groups. Over 70 came from the *Fronte Militare Clandestino*, consisting of men from the Italian army who had remained loyal to the government operating in southern Italy under Allied protection. Making up the list were prisoners accused of 'insulting German soldiers' together with 65 Jews. But there were still not enough: as dawn broke on 24 March 50 names were still needed to reach the new total of 330 (since another German soldier had died in the meantime). The job of finding them, by 1 pm, was given to Pietro Caruso, the head of police in Rome, and Pietro Koch, the notorious chief of a special Fascist police squad. But they worked slowly and by the time they had completed the list the Germans had already taken 30 detainees, chosen at random, from the Regina Coeli prison.

Meanwhile Kappler planned the executions: killing 330 men in a few hours was no easy task. Firing squads were not an option since they would take too long. It was decided to kill the men in groups of five: their hands tied behind their backs and forced to kneel, five SS men would fire a single bullet into the backs of their necks, saving ammunition and time. Less than seven hours would be needed to complete the operation. The right place still had to be found: it needed to be isolated and allow the Germans to hide all traces of the massacre. Along the Via Ardeatina, near the catacombs of San Callisto, there were empty caves, a maze of tunnels in the rock, used as a rubbish dump; it was ideal for the purpose. At 2.30 pm on 24 March the first lorries carrying the victims started to arrive on the open space in front of the caves; the prisoners were told to get out and the German captain Erich Priebcke read out their names. At 3.30 the first group of five entered the cave and the massacre began. The pace intensified. At 8 pm the Germans discovered that five extra prisoners had been rounded up by mistake; they were shot anyway, since no witnesses could be left alive, bringing the total number killed to

335. When the executions were over, there were two heaps of corpses at the end of the tunnels in the cave; explosives were used to destroy the tunnels so concealing the bodies. At 10.55 pm the German command issued a communiqué, the only official reference to the episode: 'On the afternoon of 23 March 1944, criminal elements launched a bomb attack on German police troops in Via Rasella. As a result, 32 police were killed and many more wounded. This vile attack was planned by Communists and supporters of Badoglio. [...] The German high command ordered that for every German killed ten Communist criminals should be shot. The order has been carried out.'

The executions at the Fosse Ardeatine were the largest massacre to take place in a major European city under Nazi occupation during the Second World War.

The families of the victims received a letter in German informing them of the deaths and inviting them to come and collect personal effects; no mention was made of how their relatives had died or where their bodies were. In reality, the soldiers, the shooting and the explosions had not gone unnoticed by residents or visitors to the area during the afternoon of 24 March. In the days following, families started to visit the site to try and find out what had happened to their missing relatives. After the Allied liberation of Rome on 4 June 1944, a representative of the victims' families requested a meeting with the commander of the Allied military police. She asked him to arrange for the identification and proper burial of the dead. The task seemed impossible; the corpses had been heaped on top of each other and identifying them would be extremely difficult. But Italy's leading forensic scientist Attilio Ascarelli, when asked for advice, declared: 'The idea's crazy ... but it can be done'. On 27 July 1944 the exhumation of the corpses was begun; by 30 November 322 had been identified. Over the following years five more victims were named, the last two in 2011, thanks to DNA testing.

On 24 March 1949, five years after the massacre, the Mausoleum of the Fosse Ardeatine was inaugurated, one of the first such memorials in the world to the victims of Nazi violence. The massacre and where it took place have become symbols of Italian national identity: the victims came from all parts of the country, from different walks of life, social classes and political allegiances, and their ages ranged between 15 and 74. Yet until 2017 there was no official website for the Mausoleum except for some brief information about the monument on the Defence Ministry web pages. In 2016 the president of the Lazio region, Nicola Zingaretti, together with the ministries of Defence and of Culture, asked the national association founded in 1947 by the victims' families in memory of the murdered men (ANFIM) to prepare an audioguide for visitors to the site. This project soon turned into the creation of a website, meaning that all the content of the web pages, above all the guided visit, are available, in Italian and English, to visitors to the site on their mobile phones.

The account of the massacre is told through a series of 'storyboards', each consisting of a short text, a picture and a map showing the location. The section on the victims opens with photographs of the faces of the 335 men, linked to the locations of their niches in the tomb, which can be selected either in alphabetical order of their names or, most poignantly, by age. In addition to the photographs, there are short biographical details for each man, including his



Orlando Orlandi Posti (1926-1944) Courtesy Archivio ANFIM

military service, political affiliation, and how and when he was arrested and detained. In many cases there are also official documents, personal writings, other photographs, and recorded interviews taken from different national and local archives and other sources such as relatives or the companies the men had worked for. So we find the cabinet-maker Otello Di Peppe D'Alcide, with eight images from his family album, the seventeen-year-old Orlando Orlandi Posti, with the secret notes he hid for his mother in the dirty laundry she collected for him from the prison in Via Tasso, the tenor Nicola Ugo Stame, and the army colonel Giuseppe Cordero Lanza di Montezemolo, who led the *Fronte Militare Clandestino*. These individual stories with their accompanying documents and images form the many strands which make up the overall account of the massacre.

A team of historians, archivists and web-designers worked on all aspects of the project relating to content and presentation to make it as effective as possible. But the reaction after the website went live was still quite unexpected: new unpublished documents relating to the victims and the massacre started to pour in from institutions and above all the victims' descendants. All of these make further valuable contributions to the building up of a collective memory, in tribute to the victims and the significance of their sacrifice at the Fosse Ardeatine 75 years after the massacre took place.

Augusto Cherchi is vice-president of the Italian National Archives Association (ANAI) and founder of Alicubi srl, a new media agency specialising in innovative cultural heritage projects. This article was written in Italian and translated by Stephen Parkin. The Fosse Ardeatine website can be found at www.mausoleofosseardeatine.it

John Ruskin: The Stones of Venice

Palazzo Ducale, Venice, March - June 2018

by Jonathan Keates

Venice belongs to John Ruskin. More than anyone else he shaped the way in which we nowadays look at the city, he helped us to grasp its unique significance in the history of civilization and he was a crucial influence on the preservation of its built environment for future generations. Those of us involved with modern conservation and rescue enterprises in Venice are essentially continuing the work that he began.

Hence it's entirely appropriate, as we near the bicentenary of Ruskin's birth in 1819, that Venice itself should dedicate a major exhibition to him and locate this in the Doge's Palace. The building obsessed him, not just for its sculptures and painted ceilings, but from the aspect of its actual construction. 'I cannot help teasing him', wrote his wife Effie, 'about his sixty doors and hundreds of windows, staircases, balconies and other details he is occupied in every day'. At risk to life and limb, he clambered up rickety ladders and teetered along crumbling ledges and balustrades to get closer to the physical actualities of the way in which medieval Venice was put together.

The result was *The Stones of Venice* (1851) a work whose major impact on aesthetics and art history is owing in good measure to the energy, fervour and stylishness of its author's prose. He viewed the city as inherently 'a ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak - so quiet - so bereft of all but her loveliness' and felt a mission 'to record, as far as I may, the warning which seems to me to be uttered by every one of the fast-gaining waves, that beat like passing bells against the Stones of Venice'.

This note of melancholy derived partly from the grim realities of recent history. In 1797 the thousand-year-old Venetian Republic, '*La Serenissima*' as it called itself, surrendered to the army of Napoleon Bonaparte, who promptly handed its territories over to Emperor Francis I of Austria before resuming control and ransacking Venice itself of works of art to fill his new galleries at the Louvre. When, after Waterloo, the Austrians were once more rewarded with the city, they treated it as a trophy, a symbol of former greatness subdued by Habsburg imperial power.

Deprived of political significance and losing much of its maritime trade to the fast-developing port of Trieste, Venice settled into a gloomy decline, a favoured spot for travellers in the Romantic era to moralise on the vanity of empire and evolve a myth of the old *Serenissima* as a regime of oppression and cruelty whose pride had received its merited downfall. Whether Ruskin bought into this '*leggenda nera*', as it has become known, is unlikely, but he saw no harm in



Austria's presence as the new governing authority. What disturbed him far more was the degree of physical decay being allowed to overtake the city, as the old Venetian patrician clans lost their wealth, sold off their art treasures and finally parted with their palaces. The French had already suppressed more than fifty churches and convents, looting their paintings and sculpture, and the Austrians now followed suit, scattering Venice's artistic heritage across the Habsburg Empire. Meanwhile commercial enterprise was being allowed to desecrate the place's unique atmosphere with office buildings, factories, a gasworks and, to Ruskin's particular horror, a railway station with a viaduct to the mainland. *The Stones of Venice* is therefore a wakeup call to the civilised world on behalf of fast-vanishing magnificence.

This year's *John Ruskin: The Stones of Venice* exhibition commemorated both this groundbreaking book and the varied talents of the man himself as critic, historian and artist. The show's prime movers, Gabriella Belli as its commissioner and Anna Ottani Cavina as its curator, designed it partly as a way of introducing its protagonist to the Italians, who, while they know his name, aren't necessarily aware of him as a creative spirit in his own right. It offered a comprehensive glimpse of someone who, in Cavina's words, 'crossed every border in the name of an interdisciplinary vision, practised when the term did not exist'.

The trawl of exhibits was impressive, including many of Ruskin's own intensely focused watercolours and drawings, which reveal an astonishing eye for the details of line and surface in the smallest object, natural or man-made. 'If you can paint one leaf,' he famously observed, 'you can paint the world', and the display here showed how effectively the theoretician could put his teaching into practice. The Alpine scenes, 'these great cathedrals of the earth', made a particular impact in the context of an exhibition mostly centred on architecture and the Venetian cityscape. We perceived how central to Ruskin's vision was the idea of medieval building and sculpture as carrying on the work begun by God in creating nature. In this respect the bible-reading Protestantism in which he was reared never lost its hold on him.

How the fieldwork for the *Stones* was carried out provided a central theme. We were shown every aspect of the complex process, including sketchbooks, various sorts of plan, cross-section and meticulous measurement, the writer's manuscript drafts and, most interesting of all, the recently discovered daguerreotypes of different angles and spaces surrounding the buildings he studied so indefatigably. In addition, the show acknowledged Venice's vital hold on Ruskin's imagination before he even paid his first visit there

in 1835. 'My Venice, like Turner's', he declared, 'had been chiefly created for us by Byron', and there indeed, among the larger items, were two stunning Byron-inspired Turners, a view of the Piazzetta and the amazing white semi-abstract *Venice with the Salute*.

All this made potentially for a splendid Venetian tribute to the man who described himself as 'a foster child of Venice'. It was drastically undermined, however, by the mounting of the show itself. Though Pier Luigi Pizzi, doyen of Italian theatre designers, had a hand in this presentation, the

overall experience was a dismal one. We wandered about in cavernous purple spaces through the archetypal 'dim religious light', so very dim, at many points that certain items faded into near-invisibility. Worst of all, the labelling was wholly inadequate, its lettering reduced to proportions which needed a magnifying glass or distance-vision lenses. As a gesture of homage to Ruskin, this was also, embarrassingly, an object lesson in how not to present an important didactic display of this kind.

Jonathan Keates is Chairman of Venice in Peril

Italian Connections

Streetlife Museum, Hull, February – July 2018



by Noel Clarke

At a time of heightened apprehension and controversy about migration, the story of Italian immigrants to Britain is a welcome antidote and offers reassurance that migration can be of great benefit to both migrants and the host country. In the context of the celebration in 2017 of the City of Hull as UK City of Culture, the Ferens Art Gallery exhibited a panel by the 14th-century Sieneese artist, Pietro Lorenzetti, known as *Christ between Saints Paul and Peter*. This panel in turn provided the inspiration for an exhibition at the Streetlife Museum (adjacent

Hilda and Albert Penna with thanks to the Penna Family

to the home of William Wilberforce) in the historic centre of Hull city. The exhibition recounted Hull's historical links with Italy from the medieval and early renaissance period, when the panel was painted, to the present day.

While the legacy of the Roman Empire in terms of artefacts and mosaics has been on public display in Hull and East Riding museums, the more recent impact of Italian trade and migrants, while documented, is less familiar but no less significant. In 1293 Edward 1 bought the land of an early settlement located where the river Hull joins the Humber, renamed it Kingston upon

REVIEWS

Hull and gave it a royal charter allowing it to trade. In the 14th century, thanks to a new port, trade and other links grew rapidly. Italian merchants imported English wool, exported wine to Britain and lent money to Edward II. Both sides prospered until customs duties were imposed in the following century and the Italian presence in Hull waned.

Later Italy acquired a new allure for the British as wealthy young men and, in some cases, women embarked on the Grand Tour to complete their education and see for themselves the remains of ancient Roman civilisation and the cities of the Renaissance. These grand tourists collected as they went along and the 'souvenirs' they brought back included paintings, sculpture and books which in turn had in influence on style and taste. Although East Yorkshire's William Constable was 59 when he embarked on his Grand Tour with his sister, Winifred, and a retinue of servants, he had already used Italian craftsmen for the extensive refurbishment of his home at Burton Constable Hall

The word may well have got round that England was a place of opportunity and the 19th century saw a wave of Italian migrants coming to Britain, including skilled craftsmen from Northern Italy followed later by poorer people in search of a better way of life, many making the journey on foot and earning their passage to Dover as strolling musicians. Small Italian colonies established themselves, initially in London and Manchester, and subsequently in cities such as Hull. The new arrivals quickly adapted and integrated successfully into British society, working their way up from unskilled work as fishermen or corn porters to skilled employment ranging from ship's carpenter to watchmaking and engineering. An important element of the cohesion of the Italian communities was their Catholic faith. Further to a rebellion by the Protestant Association in 1780 in protest against the Catholic Relief Act of 1778, riots had caused the destruction by fire of Hull's Catholic chapel. Fifty years later Catholics acquired a new home in which to practice their religion in the rococo church of St Charles Borromeo which opened in Jarratt Street in 1829. The organist, who was born to Italian parents in 1835, started his working life as a

wood carver's apprentice and later became a music teacher and then a professor of music.

The explosive growth of public, commercial and domestic building in Victorian Britain also generated demand for creative artistry in the form of mosaics and terrazzo floors. By the mid-19th century such was the local acceptance and interest in the Italian movement for national unity that the indigenous burghers of Hull signed a petition to their Mayor John Lumsden in April 1864 to invite Garibaldi to visit the city. He came to Britain twice, but not to Hull, which honoured him nevertheless as a Patron of the Port of Hull Society. But it was undoubtedly the making and selling of ice cream that raised the awareness of the general public to Italian communities, their dynamism and entrepreneurship.

By the early 20th century, Italian communities through their industry and outgoing character had largely settled and integrated successfully in British society. But further immigration was restricted, initially by the enactment of the Aliens Act of 1905 and then by the Defence of the Realm Act which came in to effect at the start of WW1. Italy and Britain were allies on this occasion and while British-born Italians could serve in the British armed forces, they were not forced to do so and non-naturalised Italians had to return to Italy to serve their country. Hull acknowledged its Italian communities however and observed the Italian Flag Day on 9th October 1915.

By the time of the outbreak of WWII in 1939, Italy had allied itself with the Axis forces and civilians of Italian heritage living in Britain faced travel restrictions, the requirement to carry identification and the threat of internment. In 1940, some 4000 Italian men aged between 16 and 70 were arrested and sent to camps on the Isle of Man or deported. In June 1940, the SS *Arandora Star*, a passenger ship carrying German and Italian 'enemy aliens' to Canada was torpedoed by a German submarine. Among the 886 who died were 446 internees who had made their home in Britain, including three Hull Italians.

Italian prisoners of war on the other hand were held in camps at Beverley and other localities in East Riding and worked unsupervised on the docks, the railway companies



Christ between Saints Paul and Peter Courtesy Ferens Art Gallery purchased with support of the Heritage Lottery Fund

The Rise of Rome from the Iron Age to the Punic Wars, 1000 – 264 BC

Kathryn Lomas (London:Profile Books 2017)

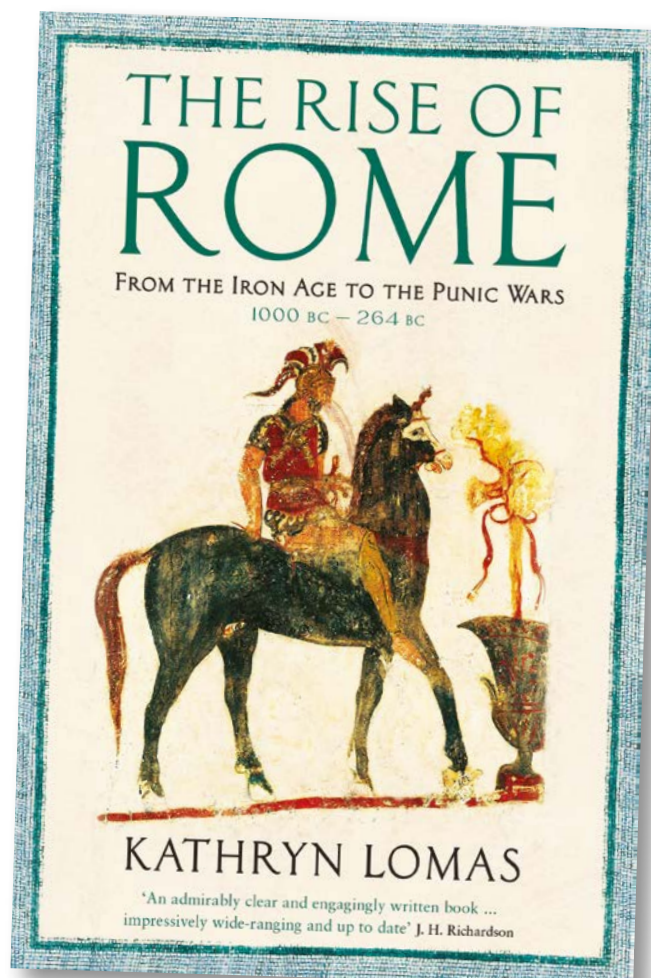
by Mark Grahame

The question of how Rome emerged from humble beginnings as a small community on the banks of the River Tiber to being on the threshold of establishing an empire is one that intrigues scholars and captures the public imagination alike. Answering that question is no easy task, because early Rome straddles mythology and fact, history and prehistory, and the boundary between them is not always clear. Yet, this is the task that Kathryn Lomas has set herself in her new book, *The Rise of Rome*.

Lomas pays particular attention to the archaeological evidence, which is the primary source for early Italy. Roman historical writing is much later. The first Roman historian, Fabius Pictor, wrote in the third century BC and his work is now lost. By the time the Greeks took an interest in Rome, it had already become a Mediterranean power. In the absence of written sources, Lomas picks through the archaeological evidence for the late Bronze Age (twelfth – ninth centuries BC) and the Early Iron Age (eighth and seventh centuries BC), and in Part 1 of her book, she pieces together a picture of Rome as one of many communities emerging in Italy. During this period clan groups appear to be coalescing into larger polities with more marked social stratification, which are realised in more extensive settlements that Lomas describes as 'proto-urban'. By the eighth century BC, Rome was one of these. Lomas envisages it as something more substantial than a village, but not fully urban. The Forum, which to this point had been used as a cemetery, ceases to be a place of burial and points to its origins as a shared civic and ritual space for the community.

The archaeological evidence produces an intriguing picture of the origins of the city, but the Romans, of course, had their own traditions about its foundation. The story of Romulus and Remus suckled by the she-wolf is the best known of them. Lomas does recount the foundation myths of Rome, but if readers expect a reconciliation of the mythological tradition with the archaeological evidence, then they are to be disappointed. The conclusion Lomas reaches is that the myths provide a fascinating insight into Roman beliefs about their own past but are unreliable as history. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that key cultural characteristics such as the Roman willingness to accept outsiders and the organisation of Roman society into curiae (clans) do appear to be reflected in the myths.

The narrative moves into a period known as the 'orientalising' (c. 700 – 575 BC) marked by the intensification of contacts between Italy and Egypt and the Near East. Again, the archaeological evidence features prominently with discussion of the funerary and settlement



evidence that Lomas argues points to social stratification and the rise of elites. By the seventh century there were signs that Rome was developing into an urban centre.

The strengths of this book are many. The use Lomas makes of the archaeological evidence to place the rise of Rome in a broader Italian context is well-done. The role of external influences on Rome, both within Italy and beyond, are also brought into focus. From this context Rome emerges as a significant power and Lomas draws attention to the innovations that made Rome different from the other developing city-states in Latium and Etruria. The willingness of Rome to accept outsiders and the novel institutions of the Rome state, which organised a civic society along military lines, are present from the early history of the city. They had far-reaching effects that set Rome on a path to imperial power.

Lomas is careful, however, to avoid any sense of Rome having a manifest destiny. There were periods in its history where the long-term survival of the city was in question and its rise was not inevitable. The city moved decisively from aristocratic forms of social and political

organisation based on the lineage and clan (gens) to the foundation of the Republic (traditionally 509 BC). She sees this transition as part of the process of state formation rather than a historical event, and the breaking down of traditional family and clan loyalties in favour of a new identity based on the state was crucial in liberating the potential of the new city-state. This required increased participation by non-elite citizens, and the capacity of Rome to adapt its institutions to allow for this was crucial to the expansion of the Roman state. These political and economic changes all serve to underscore the point that the rise of Rome was neither inevitable nor a case of continuing and unrelenting expansion.

Internal changes to the state did not mean that Rome was obsessed with her own workings. Political interactions with other states and groups in Italy did take place, with warfare a common means of interaction running in parallel with internal political changes. Lomas makes the interesting point that the seizure of land was not necessarily an innovation of the state but grew out of social competition between the Italian communities. Opportunities for social mobility in aristocratic societies are limited and the need to reward followers with gifts, including land, to secure power and prestige, results in endemic warfare.

War is often regarded as an arm of diplomacy. Again, diplomacy is not an invention of the Roman state, but it grew out of the social and political context of aristocratic society. Warfare may be lucrative, but it is also dangerous. Strategies exist in all societies to create alliances and extend

influence and such alliances are key to developments in the fourth century BC. After difficulties in the fifth century, with Rome fighting in Latium and the Gallic sack of the city, a resurgent Rome begins expanding into Italy. Lomas is not always clear about the reasons for this resurgence, other than to say that the economy recovered, and social tensions eased. Had being under constant threat, not to mention the scars on the Roman psyche of the Gallic sack, made Rome more aggressive than her neighbours? Whether this was the case or not has been a question with which scholars have wrestled. Lomas largely avoids the debate but points out that Rome did start to extract tribute and sequester land from the defeated during the fourth century. These are the first glimmers that Rome may be becoming aware of the benefits of imperialism, but the extent to which Roman expansion was motivated by economic gain is still unclear.

The Latin War between 341-338 BC has been viewed as a turning point. The settlement of 338 BC sets the stage for the clash between Rome and the Samnites and it is tempting to see 338 BC as the beginning of an embryonic Roman Empire. The three Samnite Wars were already underway by the time of the Latin War, which shows once again that Roman history was anything but a smooth rise to dominance, but as Lomas notes, the first Samnite war (343 – 341 BC) is poorly documented. The Samnite Wars have been portrayed as a clash between ‘barbarian’ hilltribes and Roman ‘civilisation’, but Lomas deftly avoid such crude stereotypes. Her analysis of the Samnites demonstrates that they were a dynamic and non-urban state that had taken a different historical trajectory to that of Rome and Latium. While there is no reason why a state has to be urban, this conclusion is a little awkward given the connection that Lomas makes between urbanism and the state when discussing Rome. Nevertheless, her narrative of the Samnite Wars is not a triumph of Rome over the barbarians, but the culmination of incremental social, political, military innovations over an extended period that drew on Rome’s past. To put it crudely, Rome was just better organised. That organisation would serve her well in her first conflict with a non-Italian power, the Hellenistic king Pyrrhus from 281-272 BC, but by this point, there is a sense that Rome had emerged as a dynamic regional power with the capacity to build an empire.

There is very little to criticise in this book. The level of detail can distract from the narrative, particularly in the early chapters where Lomas discusses the archaeological evidence. While she writes in a lucid and engaging way, it is, nevertheless, difficult to see this as a book for the general reader. It has the feel of a scholarly work. Her prose has none of the panache of the popular histories of Mary Beard or Tom Holland but it is a worthy introduction to the archaeology and history of early Rome for the serious-minded reader. If one asks whether Lomas has achieved the goal that she set herself, the answer must be a resounding yes.

Dr Mark Grahame is Director of M-Arch Heritage I which offers a personal and independent heritage service with a national focus He is a member of the Chartered institute for Archaeologists and an Affiliate of the institute of Historic Building Conservation.



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Chairman's Review

September 2017 – July 2018

by Richard Northern

Lord True gave us an outstanding Leconfield Lecture in November, with a fascinating talk on Byzantium and Italy. A previous Leconfield Lecturer, David Willey, proved equally popular, when he spoke to a packed audience in October about Pope Francis. Other themes covered in our lectures included Opera, Neapolitan Porcelain (at Bonhams), the Impact of Italian Occupation in World War II on Greek Islands, Hemingway and Italy, Princess Marguerite Chapin Caetani and a sociological analysis of British cultural representations of Italy. Two talented young musicians, tenor Freddie De Tommaso and pianist Michael Pandya, entertained us with a stirring recital of Italian music in January. We hope to add similar concerts to our programme in future. All these events are summarised in the pages that follow.

A visit in May to Strawberry Hill House, Horace Walpole's Gothic Castle in South West London, really whetted our appetites to return for a major exhibition being held there from 20 October 2018 to 24 February 2019. We were fortunate to be guided by Silvia Davioli, leading expert on Walpole's remarkable collection of art and antiquities, which was sadly dispersed after his death. Silvia has painstakingly tracked down and secured the loan of many of the original items of Walpole's collection for the forthcoming exhibition, of which she is Curator.

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

- a donation of £1000 to the Southbank Sinfonia, including for their performances at the Anghiari Festival in Tuscany in 2018;
- a donation of £250 towards the costs of the Living with Earthquakes Conference at Jesus College, Cambridge in October 2017. This was a joint UK-Italian initiative focused on support for reconstruction and restoration in Le Marche after the 2016 earthquakes;
- a donation of £1,070 to fund the restoration of a Pietro Alemanno triptych in the Pinacoteca Duranti at Montefortino (Le Marche), which suffered earthquake damage in 2016;
- a donation of £250 towards the costs of a workshop on Science in Early Modern Naples held at University College, London in April 2018;
- a donation of £250 to the Gloria e Marco Award Scheme, a scholarship programme set up to honour the memory of two young architects, who died tragically in the 2017 Grenfell Tower fire; and
- a donation of £300 to the Italian School in London, partly in payment for their housing of the BIS Archives.

We appointed a new President of the Society at our AGM in June 2018. We are delighted to welcome Mrs Olga Polizzi, who is already making a significant impact as President. We also thank Sir Tom Richardson for his contribution as President until 2017. Tom and Alex continue to be active

members and regular contributors, including to *Rivista*. We are grateful to Vanesa Hall-Smith and Linda Northern for producing five editions of *Rivista*, all of very high quality and well-received, during their time as joint Editors. Linda and Vanessa are now passing the baton on to our new co-Editors, Sandra Fox and Philippa Leslie, to produce the 2019 edition. Previous editions of *Rivista* can be found on the Society's website.

Sadly, the year was overshadowed by the untimely death in April 2018 of Charles de Chassiron. Charles had been Chairman of the Society for ten years until 2015, and a contributor and member for much longer. He had a deep interest in, and love of, Italy and Italian culture, and worked hard to ensure that the Society's programme and activities remained relevant and respected. Many members attended Charles' moving funeral service in Epsom. The Trustees decided to dedicate the lecture following the AGM each June to Charles' memory.

Thanks are due to our Trustees, including our Accountant, Silvia Pieretti, for their work in putting together and directing the Society's programme of cultural and social activities for members and for its charitable work. We are particularly grateful once again to Elisabetta Murgia for her tireless and

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dedicated work throughout the year in her role as Secretary of the Society.

We were sad to bid farewell in January to Ambassador and Signora Terracciano, who had given the Society unstinting support during their tenure in London, and wish them well in Moscow. We warmly welcome Ambassador Raffaele Trombetta, who took over as our Patron on his arrival in late

January 2018. We also thank Dr Marco Delogu, the Director of the Italian Cultural Institute, for hosting the Leconfield Lecture and for his generous support in making a room available for regular Trustees' meetings.

We look forward to welcoming all *Rivista* readers to our new season of events in 2018-19, of which details can be found on our website.

Welcome to new members

Richard and Penny Alford

Elisabetta Angeleri

Mark and Angela Astarita

Rosemary Aylmer

Kate Bailey

Charles Barber

Matteo Basso and Giulia Pecce

Marie Louise Burness

Angela Carola-Perrotti

Alessandro Caronia and Cinzia

Papaya

Roberta Cerone

Philip Chambers

Noel Clarke

Brian Clesham

Erica Coope

Elizabeth Cura

Silvia Davoli

Paul Foster

Virginia Fraser

Tessa Keswick

Nicholas Langley

Sebastian Latwiel

Sheila Lecoeur

Gloria Mele

Andrea Motori

Catherine Niessen

Richard Owen

Andrea Palazzo

Denis Potemkin

Emanuela Roberti and Neil

McLaren

Mary Scoltock

Stefan Steinmair

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In Memoriam

Charles de Chassiron

Charles took over the Chairmanship of the BIS in 2006 when he retired from the FCO. Sadly his illness meant that he had to step down in 2015 and was unable to complete what he had hoped would be 10 years in the role. He was an indefatigable chairman, dedicating much time and energy to the Society, and was well-equipped for the task following his long and distinguished diplomatic career.

The first of his overseas postings was to Stockholm. He took to Sweden immediately – learning the language and prompting his immediate boss to think that he had ‘gone native’. Well he had in a way. He met Britt-Marie not long after his arrival and was to marry her the following year. She remained his great love and support throughout his life. They honeymooned in Italy, not knowing then how important the country was to become for them in the future.

Mozambique was the next port of call where he and Britt-Marie landed with their 3-month old daughter Anna in 1975 (they were to return from this posting with son Hugo who was born in Pretoria in 1976). These were interesting times with the volatile political situation unfolding in neighbouring Rhodesia, as it then was. Charles was to meet many southern African leaders, including Robert Mugabe, who set up his HQ in Maputo following his release from prison and who lived just opposite the de Chassiron household. Both Charles and Britt-Marie became fluent in Portuguese during this time. Back in London, Charles acted as Conference Spokesman for the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 which led to the establishment of an independent Zimbabwe. He was present in Harare for the elections in February 1980 and remained there until the ceremony in April of that year, when Prince Charles granted independence to the new state of Zimbabwe.

Charles' next overseas posting was Brazil. The first global debt crisis was exploding in South America and was to dominate the three years the family lived there from 1982-1985. While much of his time was spent dealing with the concerns of the Treasury and Bank of England regarding the effect that the crisis could have on western economies, Charles was still able to develop expertise in Amazon deforestation and raw energy and at one point owned a car powered by alcohol distilled from sugar cane.

Although Italy was the country where he and Britt-Marie lived for the longest period outside the UK, nine years in total, it was not until 1987 that he obtained his first posting there as Economic and Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy in Rome. He had spent the prior three months learning Italian at the British Institute in Florence and was later to be elected a member of the Board of Governors in 2007 (Italian was another language which Charles quickly mastered). In the late 1980s Italy was engulfed in the *Tangentopoli* scandal which nearly brought about the collapse of the Italian political system, and indeed Charles was briefly entangled in it. His name was found in the diary of the Rome representative of Agusta, a helicopter company with links to the British aerospace company Westland. They had been discussing the possibility of funding for a show at the British School in Rome. Although Charles was protected by diplomatic immunity he made contact with the investigating officer and quickly explained the innocuous

nature of his meeting and that it had nothing to do with the crisis threatening the country.

He returned to Italy as Consul-General in Milan, a post which he held from 1997-2001 (handing over to the current BIS Chairman, Richard Northern). He arrived the day after Princess Diana's funeral and left on an almost empty aeroplane during the week of 9/11. One of his memories of that time was the need to double the amount of wine available at receptions when most of the attendees were British. Charles played a pivotal role both in preparation for and during the Queen's state visit to Italy in 2000 and he was awarded a CVO, as well as being appointed *Commendatore*, in recognition of his service.

In 1994 Charles took up the post of Ambassador to Estonia – a move that he described as the filling in the Italian sandwich. It was a time of great change as the country was shaking off half a century of Communism and was gearing up to join NATO and the EU which it did 10 years later. Charles was delighted to return to Tallinn in 2011 when it was European City of Culture.

Charles had many interests and loved art, visiting galleries and museums whenever he had the opportunity. He was also a committed European. He spent two years at Harvard after completing his degree at Cambridge and was to say later that living in the US in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a political education in itself and that he felt increasingly European as the years passed. However, a spell back in London in the FCO's European Community Department in the early 1980s was to deflate what he described as ‘some of the romantic illusions of our European destiny’. What Charles would be thinking as Brexit draws nearer is not hard to imagine.

His untimely death, shortly before his 70th birthday in April 2018, was and remains a source of great sadness to the many members of the BIS who had the pleasure and privilege of enjoying his intellect, wisdom and friendship. We will miss him and it is fitting that there will be a lecture dedicated to his memory following the Society's AGM each year.

Vanessa Hall-Smith

Keith Killby

We are sad to record that Keith Killby, the Society's oldest and longest-serving member, passed away in September 2018 at the age of 102. A remarkable and much-loved character, Keith will be sorely missed.

A pacifist and conscientious objector, Keith served with distinction during World War II, as a paramedic, in what later became the SAS. Captured several times, in Libya, in Sardinia and much later in Germany, he was imprisoned in central Italy before escaping in 1943. After the War, he devoted his life to the causes of peace and unity in Europe, and to Anglo-Italian friendship in particular. In 1989 he showed his gratitude to the Italian *contadini*, who had risked their lives to shelter and protect him and fellow prisoners in 1943, by creating the Monte San Martino Trust to provide scholarships for their descendants to spend time studying English in the UK. Keith joined the BIS in its early days, and served as a Trustee. A full account of Keith's inspiring life can be found on the San Martino Trust website.

Richard Northern

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Jan van Eyck to Hieronymus Bosch: Early Netherlandish Magnificence, 12-15 March 2019 from £1,185pp. Single supplement £190 with Georgina Trevelyan-Clark



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Jewels of Northern Tuscany from Pisa to Prato, 12-16 April 2019 from £1,695. £200 single supplement.



Lucca, Pistoia and Prato lie like jewelled links in a chain between Pisa and Florence. All three have fine churches, palaces and houses that provide us with a cohesive survey of styles and developments from the Romanesque to the late Renaissance. Accommodation is in a 4-star hotel within the medieval walls of Lucca.

Madrid: The Art and Architecture of the Spanish Capital, 20-25 May 2019 with Thomas Abbott from £1,995. Single supplement £200.



Madrid is renowned for its rich repositories of European art, including the Prado Museum's works by Goya, Velázquez and other Spanish masters. The heart of old Hapsburg Madrid is the portico-lined Plaza Mayor, and nearby is the baroque Royal Palace and Armoury displaying historic weaponry, including that of Charles V. A day is spent in Toledo, the "Imperial City" for having been the main venue of the court of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.

The Dutch Golden Age in Amsterdam, Haarlem and The Hague, 26-30 March 2019 from £1,775pp. £200 single supplement.



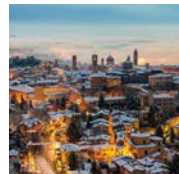
The Dutch Golden Age was one of the most exciting and intensely creative periods in the history of art. It was a time of unprecedented change; socially, economically and culturally. This tour starts with lunch cruise on a private boat along Amsterdam's canals. We visit the Rijksmuseum to see work by artists including Rembrandt, Frans Hals and Vermeer; the Rembrandt House and the Frans Hals museum.

Glasgow & Edinburgh: Charles Rennie Mackintosh, The Glasgow Boys & The Gluepots, 30 April - 4 May 2019 from £1,275pp. Single supplement £175.



This tour will include trips to see the architectural gems of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and eclectic artworks and designs produced by the Glasgow School. It will also feature iconic Scottish artworks, for example, Raeburn's 'Skating Minister' in Edinburgh, and key European paintings such as Salvador Dali's 'Christ of St. John of the Cross'.

Brescia & Bergamo, 4-8 June 2019 from £1,595. £175 single supplement.



The northern Lombard cities of Bergamo and Brescia were fought over by the two mighty powers of northern Italy; Milan and Venice, with Venice emerging triumphant. Bergamo's Accademia Carrara houses 1,800 paintings from the 15th to the 19th centuries by artists such as Raphael, Bellini, Botticelli, Canaletto, and Pisanello. Brescia's historic centre is full of impressive monuments: one of the oldest Roman sites in Italy, the Capitolium.

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Opera: Passion, Power and Politics

In September 2017, Kate Bailey, Senior Curator and Producer of the V&A's Theatre and Performance Department, delivered a talk to the BIS on the creation of the V&A new Sainsbury Gallery's first exhibition, *Opera: Passion, Power and Politics*, which ran for five months from September 2017.

The exhibition came about through a partnership between the V&A and the Royal Opera House, whose conductor Antonio Pappano became Music Director of the exhibition, with Robert Carson as Artistic Director. An impressive creative team of theatre, lighting and sound engineers was assembled to oversee the transformation of the Sainsbury Gallery – essentially a large subterranean box connected by an impressive staircase to a new courtyard facing Exhibition Road - into a venue suitable to the vast and complex subject of opera.

At the first planning meetings in 2012, Kate Bailey put forward the idea of telling the story – or better, the history – of opera through the premieres of seven operas from the 17th to the 20th century, in seven different cities. This afforded the opportunity of exploring not only the operas in question but also the cities and the socio-historical background in which they were performed. And the themes of passion, power and politics were used to further define this exploration. The creative team set about transforming the Sainsbury Gallery by a system of whirls into seven different stage settings - each an historic, artistic 'still'. An eighth space was dedicated to operas and opera houses of the 20th and 21st century.

The operas chosen were Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Venice 1642; Handel's first London opera, *Rinaldo*, 1711; Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Vienna 1786; Verdi's *Nabucco*, Milan 1842; Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Paris 1861; *Salome* by Richard Strauss, Dresden 1905; and *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* by Shostakovich, St Petersburg 1934. State-of-the-art audio guides playing extracts of the operas helped the visitor pace through the exhibition within the suggested 90 minute tour, though the exhibition warranted a much longer visit, or – in my case – repeated visits.

Part of the remit of museums is to make their permanent collection better known to the public, and temporary exhibitions provide an ideal opportunity to highlight a selection of artefacts. In the case of this exhibition, 60% of the exhibits were in-house, with musical instruments, costumes, sculptures, writing implements, posters and drawings among them. The remaining 40% were on loan from fifty lenders both British and foreign. Amongst the latter: the contract between the theatre and the first Ottavia in *Poppea*; the piano played by Mozart himself in Prague in 1787; a letter from the publisher Ricordi to Verdi; a Rodin sculpture of the head of John the Baptist; a film of Shostakovich at the piano composing *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and costumes by Salvador Dali and Gianni Versace. Amongst the British lenders were the Royal Collection, the British Library, the National Gallery, the Museum of London, the Fitzwilliam

Museum and the Buckinghamshire County Museum. The operas featured in the exhibition both reflected and inspired the mood of the cities in which they were premiered. In the case of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, with its scandalous story set in the Roman period, the opera could not have been staged anywhere but in Venice, which in the 17th century was losing its trading supremacy, whilst pursuing the pleasures afforded by carnivals and other festivities. Furthermore, Venice was the first city to boast commercial theatres rather than more restrictive, private commissions that composers had previously been required to fulfil, for instance Monteverdi at the court of the Gonzagas in Mantova.

In 1717 London under Queen Anne was being rebuilt in the Renaissance style, soon to be overtaken by the Baroque. Trade, immigration and coffee houses were growing exponentially. Yet there was a backlash against these trends. No wonder then that Hogarth satirised Handel – a German immigrant, writing *Rinaldo*, an opera in Italian, in London, for castrato singers, and presuming to usurp Shakespeare's position. The highlight of this section was the recreation of the stage set, complete with rolling waves, a moving ship and even floating mermaids.

Mozart's *Figaro* – based on the play by Beaumarchais – was premiered in Vienna, which in the 18th century was the city at the centre of the Enlightenment. Viennese salons were frequented by philosophers, and music was at the heart of these encounters, where traditional ideas of hierarchy and rigid social classes were being challenged. This is reflected in the opera, where the servants Figaro and Susanna get the better of their master the Count.

In 1842 Milan, like most of the surrounding territory, was under Austrian rule. Discontent and nationalism – inspired by art, literature and music – were rising. Indeed, Verdi became the symbol of this patriotism and *Viva Verdi* (shorthand for *Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia*) was its rallying cry. The chorus of the Hebrew slaves from *Nabucco* was adopted as the anthem of the movement, and the visitor could listen to its rendition by the Royal Opera's Chorus – each member individually miked – while looking at the theatre-shaped collage of the ceilings of 150 Italian opera houses.

In Paris in 1861, during the Second Empire of Napoleon III, there was enmity between France and Prussia, a war of styles between Verdi and Wagner, the rebuilding of the city by Haussmann, and a strong tradition of Grand Opera with its rigid inclusion of ballet. So it might seem surprising, and a credit to the French sponsors of the exhibition (Société Générale) that Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, in a re-working of its Dresden premiere, was chosen as this city's premiere. Paris was the capital of culture, attracting artists such as Degas, Monet and Baudelaire, but also many from other



Kate Bailey

countries. Amongst these was Wagner, an exile who set about upsetting the established order of opera. Forced to include a ballet, he set it at the beginning of the work, much to the annoyance of the Jockey Club de Paris (one of the most prestigious private clubs in Paris), whose members habitually arrived late and therefore booed the performance. Furthermore, the 'Venusberg Music' ranks amongst the most extreme depictions of sex in music, and the collage of videos from different productions showed us the opportunity for scantily dressed or nude figures in the ballet. At the time it was fashionable to attend - and be seen at - the opera, witness the numerous genteel paintings by the Impressionists of this subject. The work divided the critics, who were mostly in favour of the opera, from the conservative public, which was hostile to innovation.

We were introduced to the 20th century by Dresden's premiere in 1905 of Strauss's *Salome*. This coincided with the emergence of the psychoanalytic movement of Sigmund Freud and the contemporaneous consolidation of feminism - though one could debate whether the former advances or is detrimental to the feminist cause. Berlin had refused to premiere the risqué opera, but Dresden was a fashionable town, home to the expressionist movement *Die Brücke*, and open to different visions of women. The placing of an analyst's

couch beneath the disturbing video of the final scene of the opera in David McVicar's visceral production, in which Salome kisses the severed head of John the Baptist, exemplifies the complex relationship between psychoanalysis and women's sexuality, complexity and emancipation.

In 1934, at the time of the premiere of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, St Petersburg was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Shostakovich's opera, which deals sympathetically with the heroine, and concentrates more on her love rather than the murders she commits in her revolt against the male world, enjoyed great success and was premiered in Moscow four days later. Yet two years later Stalin banned the work, and the brief window of Soviet modernism was over. Shostakovich now had to concentrate on his symphonies, though he did revise the opera in 1962.

The eighth and final section of the exhibition, entitled *Opera: Today and Tomorrow*, explored the current world of opera by taking us around the globe, by means of a set of projections, to see new opera houses from Cairo, Oman, Dubai, Sydney, Beijing, New York, Los Angeles to Oslo, with a montage of films from operas from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Patrizia Dina

The Promise of Francis: the Man, the Pope and the Challenge of Change

In October 2017 members and their guests at the Oxford and Cambridge Club were privileged to hear a fascinating talk by David Willey, the BBC's longest serving foreign correspondent, who has reported from Rome on Vatican affairs under five popes, from Paul VI to Francis. His latest book, *The Promise of Francis* has just been reissued in an updated version.

David Willey started by telling us that this was not going to be a religious talk (he himself is a lapsed Catholic) but a talk about the extraordinary person who was elected as Pope four years earlier and the problems he faced (and still faces) in Rome. He stressed that the Vatican was an extremely complex subject and he made no claim to detailed knowledge and insights. But he had recently met Pope Francis and been able to present him with a copy of his book. He had also previously met two saints - Pope St John Paul II and Mother Teresa of Calcutta!

After some 14 years training as a Jesuit priest, at the age of 36, barely a few years after his ordination, Francis had found himself appointed as head of the Society of Jesus in Argentina in 1973. He was consecrated Archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998 and was created a cardinal in 2001 by Pope John Paul II. David Willey had been to Buenos Aires to research the Pope's background there. Francis had to deal, first, with the military regime of the 1970s and the tens of thousands who 'disappeared' under that harsh regime. He is the first pope from the third world, with its 'mega-cities'

where dire poverty exists cheek-by-jowl with modern affluence. The future of the Catholic Church lies in these third world areas, in Latin America and Africa. Francis sold the archbishop's limousine, preferring to travel on the subway. He moved into a tiny flat by his cathedral and was a volunteer in the soup kitchen for the poor.



David Willey

Francis was elected Pope at a time when the papacy itself was in disarray after Benedict XVI's sudden and unexpected resignation. No one knew who Francis was or what the significance of his election would be. From his own point of view, becoming Pope was a great shock. Unlike many of his predecessors, he had never worked in the Vatican. In his previous ministry he had concentrated on the slums of Buenos Aires.

Three main problems confronted Francis in Rome: the legacy of the sexual abuse of minors by priests, the problems of the new liturgy and its translation, and financial scandals. His first reaction, on being shown the papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, was to observe that they were more suitable for 200 people, and that he would reside in three rooms in the Santa Marta hostel in the Vatican.

Francis shocked the 40 or so cardinals resident in Rome (out of a College of around 120) at their customary

Christmas meal by presenting them with 16 criticisms. They were told to stop gossiping and partying. Christianity was not about prosperous living. Cardinal Law was removed from his position as Archbishop of Boston, where there had been a history of covering up paedophile priests by transferring them. He had then been found a job in Rome, and his former palace in Boston had been sold to help pay compensation to victims.

Other difficulties had been with the American Cardinal Burke, a leading traditionalist and the Vatican's chief legal officer, whose duties included counter-signing all international marriage annulments, for example. He and his supporters were determined utterly to oppose any reform of traditional Catholic teaching, but Francis had sacked him, making him Patron of the Knights of Malta, where there have also been recent difficulties. Cardinal Burke, however, has many supporters in the US, Switzerland and France.

Francis is not so much interested in enforcing discipline in the Church as solving some of the world's hunger problems. He is a believer in climate change, and booked a telephone call to those orbiting the earth in the international Space

Station. As part of his efforts to help the homeless in Rome, he invited them to view the Sistine Chapel, as well as providing washing and laundry facilities.

At the time of the talk Pope Francis had so far made 20 trips abroad, contrary to David Willey's expectations. He broke the mould by meeting with the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church while they were both in Havana. But his audience with President Trump and his wife and daughter in May 2017 was clearly not one Francis enjoyed, judging from his expression in the photograph we were shown!

At 81, Francis shows no sign of resigning and our speaker judged that he should be good for several more years. On the other hand, Pope Benedict's resignation had opened the way to possible future resignations, rather than soldiering on as Pope St John Paul II had manfully done. In fact many of the present problems of the Vatican can be traced back to those years when the Vatican was not being effectively run. And Pope Francis has made a point of renewing his Argentine passport!

Richard Martin

The 2017 Leconfield Lecture: The Two Eyes of Europe: Byzantium and Italy

The 2017 Leconfield Lecture took us on a thrilling journey criss-crossing the Byzantine world. We set off from the Palatine Chapel in Palermo looking at the mosaic figure of St John the Evangelist, created in the middle of the 12th century for a Norman king by craftsmen from Constantinople.

We then went back to the formation of the Roman Empire by Augustus in 27 BC and its division into East and West by Diocletian in 285 AD. In 330 the 57th Emperor, Constantine, formally dedicated the old city of Byzantium as Constantinople, New Rome. Though an Orthodox Christian he declared freedom of faith for all. The city grew rapidly and by the 6th century the population had swelled to close to half a million. Ninety Roman Emperors ruled there for over a thousand years until the last, Constantine XI, was defeated by the Turks in 1453. This, Lord True maintained, was when the Roman Empire was finally buried. Contrary to the popular view, it did not end with the Battle of Ravenna in 476, when the German general Odoacer defeated what was left of the Roman army, forcing Romulus Augustulus, the last Western Roman emperor, to abdicate.

Ravenna was where the Imperial Court was based in the early part of the 5th century. Imperial rule passed to Emperor

Zeno in the East who tolerated Odoacer initially, even agreeing to him becoming King of Italy, but eventually turned against him. There followed three years of war and in 475 the Ostrogoth, Theoderic, became King of Italy. His massive Mausoleum can still be seen in Ravenna.

Justinian I became Emperor in 527. He inherited vast wealth from his predecessors and spent on a grand scale. His achievements included the building of the two greatest churches of Constantinople, Hagia Sophia and the Holy Apostle (the latter being demolished by the Turks in the 15th century), the revision and codification of Roman law and peace with Rome's rival Persia. That peace was not to last as Persia began to flex its muscles on Justinian's eastern front and troops were called away from Italy. This weakened Justinian's position in Italy, resulting in a long drawn out war with the Goths – Rome changed hands five times and was besieged on three occasions. A pandemic of bubonic



Lord True

plague is estimated to have killed up to half of the Empire's 30 million citizens. Justinian eventually triumphed over the Goths and Ravenna was liberated.

Justinian's masterpiece in Ravenna is the magnificent church of San Vitale: the apse portrays Christ in imperial purple flanked by angels and San Vitale – the patron saint of Ravenna – and Bishop Ecclesius bearing a model of the church. The scene portrays majesty, order and confidence, which was to be turned upside down three years after the death of Justinian by the invasion of the Lombards.

Two centuries of instability followed. The Empire was at war with Persia losing much of its territory in Egypt and Asia, and in 625 Constantinople was besieged. Emperor Heraclitus finally defeated Persia in 629, recovering Syria, Palestine and Egypt as well as the True Cross which the Persians had stolen from Jerusalem.

It was at this point that Islam burst out of the desert conquering two thirds of the Empire's territories, resulting in the loss of three quarters of its revenue. The fact that Byzantium survived at all was due to the breaking of the third Arab siege of Constantinople with the help of 'Greek Fire' - a flame-throwing weapon used to set light to enemy ships.

These events transformed the Mediterranean world. The population fell, trade lessened and cities declined, although Constantinople remained Europe's largest city, followed by Rome. The Lombard invasion divided Italy politically. Language was also a factor: Justinian was the last of the Latin-speaking Roman emperors, although Latin continued to be the language of elite culture in Italy. From the 7th century the central Byzantine administration operated in Greek, and it was that language that was spoken in the Roman Empire to the East, in Sicily and in the Byzantine part of Southern Italy. Religious disagreement was another factor in the progressive estrangement of East and West, with differences of opinion about Christian doctrine. The 8th and 9th centuries saw the emergence of Iconoclasm, Constantine V (741-775) being one of the proponents of the doctrine which banned production and reverence of holy images. Eventually the differences between Orthodox and Roman churches resulted in the Great Schism of 1054.

Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD ending the unrivalled claim of the line of Roman Emperors at Constantinople to be Emperors of Rome, although this did not mark the end of Byzantine Italy. The Islamic challenge continued and by 902 almost all of Sicily was under Muslim control, although the Byzantines were able to strengthen their hold on Calabria and Puglia and restore Basilicata to the Roman Empire. They were able to withstand periodic Arab raids and occasional local resistance until the mid 11th century, when the Normans, who had initially been brought in as mercenaries, gained power and wealth. This resulted in the liberation of Sicily from Islam and the crowning of the Norman, Roger II, as King of Sicily in 1130. The Normans were not immune to the Byzantine influence as demonstrated by the magnificence of the mosaics in the Capella Palatina in Palermo, and in the cathedrals of Monreale and Cefalú.

The Crusades saw huge western armies moving through Byzantine territories in the 11th and 12th centuries and although the crusaders sought help from Byzantium there was distrust on both sides. The people of Constantinople resented the arrogance and wealth of the Latin traders and in 1182 the city mob attacked the Latin Quarter and killed thousands of Italians. The Fourth Crusade marked the point of no return when the Latin crusaders sacked Constantinople and returned with their spoils, many of which remained in Venice, including the Pala d'Oro which had been seized from the Monastery of the Pantocrator. By this time Venice had built for its doge the new Basilica of San Marco, imitating Justinian's Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.

The old Roman Empire was in steady decline after the Fourth Crusade and in 1453 Sultan Mehmet laid siege to Constantinople bringing it to an end. Byzantium was dead.

In concluding his excellent lecture, Lord True considered how Byzantium has been viewed in successive eras. It was scorned by the Enlightenment, Orthodox identity was seen as victimhood, and the current OED definition speaks of it as 'excessively complicated' and 'characterized by deviousness and underhand procedure'. He finished by posing a number of challenging questions about our ignorance of Byzantium and why it is that its contribution to the culture of western Europe is not given greater recognition.

Vanessa Hall-Smith

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A Winter Recital: an Evening of Italian Opera and Song

In January 2018 we were treated to a superb evening of Italian opera arias and song at the University Women's Club. We were fortunate to have two very talented young musicians performing for us: Michael Pandya at the piano accompanied tenor, Freddie de Tommaso. In Freddie we had the winner of this year's Barcelona, 55th Tenor Viñas International Singing Contest, held the previous week in the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona. Not only did he win first prize overall but he was also awarded the Domingo and Verdi prizes. Already the agents are circling and his future is assured, including a role at the Barcelona Opera House, which launched the careers of Jose Carreras and Victoria de los Ángeles amongst others. At this recital, we had the good fortune to be listening to an opera star of the future!

The programme that Freddie and Michael had chosen was carefully balanced between opera arias and Italian song, much of the latter with a Neapolitan flavour. All were very familiar melodies and expertly performed. The evening opened with 'Questa o quella' from Verdi's *Rigoletto*, an instantly recognisable aria and much suited to Freddie's voice which has considerable power. We then moved on to the first of three Tosti songs, 'Marechiaro'. This reflected Tosti's original Neapolitan musical education. He remains very well known here in the UK as a composer due to his having been a Professor at the Royal Academy of Music, during which period he took British citizenship and was knighted by his friend, Edward VII. The second Tosti song, 'Ideale' which followed on from the first was a delightful contrast, much slower and with a beautiful piano accompaniment in which Michael Pandya brought out on the piano all the contrast and various voices of the composition. Freddie sang this with considerable voice control, arriving at the very soft passage at the end with

seeming consummate ease. However, with the voice, one of the most difficult things is to control it sufficiently well to sing softly. He performed this with great skill. The final Tosti song came in the second half of the programme and was 'Non t'amo piu', for which Michael and Freddie extracted all that they could from the piano and voice respectively. We were left stunned and more than one member of the audience had their hands to their mouths in awed anticipation.

The programme contained four Verdi arias in total and progressed from the *Rigoletto* aria to 'Lunge da lei' from *La Traviata*, and on to 'Ah la paterna mano' from *Macbeth*. In this latter, all the drama and pathos of desolation was sung for us. A lady sitting at the back was so moved that she wiped a tear from her eye. This aria opened the second half of the recital and the last Verdi aria came in the middle of this second half with 'Tutto parrea sorridere' from the little known and performed work, *Il Corsaro*.

As a contrast to the drama of Verdi and the Neapolitan sunshine of Tosti, the first half of the programme ended with a piece by Buzzi-Peccia, 'Lolita, serenata spagnola', a song known and beloved by many over the years and recorded by Caruso and Corelli, amongst others in Buzzi-Peccia's lifetime and by many famous tenors since. By contrast, the recital ended with 'Core ngrato' by Cardillo and Cilea's 'Frederico's Lament' from *L'Arlesiana*. The Cardillo (otherwise known as 'Catari, Catari') is a song made familiar in the first instance by Caruso and later by Domingo, Carreras and Kaufman amongst others on their various CDs. Despite by then living and working in the States, Cardillo wrote the music to words in the Neapolitan dialect. Michael admirably complemented Freddie in his performance of this familiar piece by pulling all the emotions from the piano accompaniment, especially in the introduction.

The Cilea which ended the recital was a fitting finale and displayed all the musicianship of both performers. Again, the thread of Caruso ran through this aria as he originally made it famous and left others after him to perpetuate its popularity. Unfortunately for this Calabrian-born composer, the opera *L'Arlesiana* was not a success in his lifetime and is rarely performed today. However, we are fortunate to have this aria survive so well and to have this as our final memory of a recital that, for all who attended, will be forever memorable.

Sandra Fox



Freddie de Tommaso and Michael Pandya

Mussolini's Greek Island



Sheila Lecoeur

In February 2018 Dr Sheila Lecoeur, who teaches 20th Century European History and Post-War History at Imperial College, spoke to members of the Society at Senate House, London University. She called her talk Mussolini's Greek Island, which is also the title of her book first published in 2009, and she accompanied it with a showing of a film which she and her son, Julien Lecoeur, have made on the subject.

Undoubtedly, what she told us came as a surprise, even a shock, to many of us. The circumstances of the Italian, German and Bulgarian occupation of Greece from 1941 onwards and of the deadly famine which occurred are almost forgotten in the West. They are still remembered, though, by many people in Greece and Dr Lecoeur suggested that this was one of the factors which stirred resentment against the austere German attitude to the Greek financial crisis of 2009 onward.

She concentrated her talk on the island of Syros, one of the Cyclades group, south east of the Greek mainland. Further east, and closer to the Turkish coast, lie the Dodecanese Islands, including Rhodes, which at the time belonged to Italy. Mussolini's imperial ambitions, which led not only to the invasion of Abyssinia but also to gaining control of parts of the Dalmatian coast and of Albania, prompted him to cast eyes on the Cyclades which would be a link in his Mediterranean empire around the *Mare Nostrum*.

Syros is not a fertile island and it is a place where memories are long and prejudices run deep. But its capital Ermoupolis enjoyed a period of prosperity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, being briefly the most important port in Greece and had some other industry. By the 1940s, however, that prosperity had waned and poverty and starvation were already rampant, especially in the agricultural areas, which became designated as a 'food deficit zone'.

The Italian army invaded Greece over the border from Albania in October 1940. The attack was ill-organised and was eventually repulsed by the Greek army. This was a humiliation for the Italians but a brief moment of triumph for the Greeks. But, with Hitler becoming frustrated by his Italian allies, in 1941 the German army joined the fight and, despite some British intervention, it was not long before Greece was in the hands of the Axis powers. The country was divided between the victors. The more fertile north was under German and Bulgarian control. The much larger

area of the south, and hundreds of islands, were ruled by the Italians.

One of the consequences was that the German and Bulgarian authorities were reluctant to allow agricultural produce from their territories to be shipped to the south where it was desperately needed. In addition, the Italian administrators clamped down on trade between the islands. What had, in effect, been barter between the island communities became impossible. Syros was particularly hard hit.

The Italians were attempting to control the whole of the Cyclades with a force of just 3,000 troops. Dr Lecoeur was quite frank about the realities of war and occupation and her film showed distressing archive footage of a starving child and of black marketeers plying their trade but she stressed that some, at least, of the Italian officials showed compassion. They made disregarded pleas for help from the Dodecanese and for a reversal of the policy of shipping produce from the islands to Italy; and clinics and distribution centres were set up. But the Italians themselves were struggling to feed their troops. And there was desperate inflation. The situation exacerbated tensions between communities who had co-existed for generations: Catholics versus Orthodox. And the British blockade of shipping bringing supplies into the Mediterranean did not help. Finally, some food did arrive in a Swedish ship sent to the island by the Red Cross. How many people died during the famine on Syros is disputed. Was it 4,000? Or 8,000? This on an island where the population was something over 20,000.

After the fall of Mussolini and the Italian Armistice of September 1943, the German army quickly took control of Greece. Conditions on Syros did not improve. Interviews recorded in the film make it clear that opinion on the island is divided: were the Germans worse than the Italians or not? Then, the end of the Second World War was followed by the Greek Civil War which lasted until 1949 and was fought to determine whether the Communists would gain control of the country.

This talk not only described the tragedy but also posed questions about collaboration with the occupiers, social tensions, selective memory, the growth of myths and much else. It was not only instructive but also extremely thought-provoking.

Anthony Cooke

Hemmingway in Italy

'm so homesick for Italy that when I write about it it has that something about it that you only get in a love letter', Hemingway's words sum up his feelings about Italy, which surely resonate with the *Rivista* readership.

Former Rome correspondent for *The Times* and author of a recently published book *Hemingway in Italy*, Richard Owen gave an illuminating and colourful talk, peppered with fruity anecdotes and insights into Hemingway's time spent in Italy and its influence on his writing. He approached the subject in chronological order, starting with Hemingway's time as an ambulance driver in the Dolomites during the Great War aged 18. Although young Hemingway desired to serve on the front line, this was denied due to an eye defect. His opportunity came when he volunteered to deliver cigarettes and chocolate to the troops at Fossalta di Piave, however in his excitement, he went too far resulting in injuries sustained from an Austrian mortar shell landing nearby.

This early episode, which could have been an embarrassing encounter causing havoc on the front line, became transformed into a mythological tale of heroism and honour. There was uncertainty about what actually happened at Fossalta and what Hemingway wanted people to believe had occurred; which seems to describe perfectly his early years in Italy.

The period spent in convalescence was formative for his writing and his relationship with Italy. He fell in love with an American nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky whilst in hospital, which she claimed was a platonic relationship. It seemed however to be an experience he tried to recreate several times with future partners, taking them to the same places they had visited. His heart was truly captured by both Agnes and Italy.

Shortly after his rejection by Agnes he married Hadley Richardson and moved to Paris for a role as international correspondent for the *Toronto Star*. This gave him the opportunity to take his new wife to northern Italy and relive his days there. Following a difficult walk over the St Bernard Pass into Italy, which Hadley described as 'something of a nightmare' they caught a train into Milan. Here they visited Biffi's, the Duomo, San Siro racetrack and the hospital where he had recuperated. After Milan the Hemingways went on to Fossalta di Piave, the place where he was injured during the war. His description of the visit was one of disappointment, especially with the 'plaster church' that had been rebuilt following the fighting. The reconstructed town

felt false to him, as if it had betrayed the past and its stories of glory and tragedy. His impending marriage to his second wife Pauline Pfeiffer became the impetus for another visit to Italy, this time a road trip with his friend Guy Hickok to rediscover Don Giuseppe Bianchi, the priest who had 'baptised' him in hospital in Milan. Pfeiffer was a devout Roman Catholic and he needed word from the priest to prove he was a Catholic before they wed. Following an extensive journey this was all conveniently confirmed so that the marriage could proceed. It is unclear how conclusive the proof was as there was no written evidence.

In the following years Hemingway had been occupied with other important activities in Spain and Cuba, which drew his attention away from Italy. With his third wife Martha Gellhorn he planned a holiday in Provence after being influenced by the paintings of Cézanne. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, a storm encountered en route caused a diversion to Genoa. The memories of Italy all came back, and again he took his wife to visit the places of his youth, including the river at Fossalta di Piave.

During this trip he became enchanted by Venice spending time with three prominent Venetian families, the Kettlers, the Francettis and the Ivancichs. It was here that the 18 year old Adriana Ivancich captured his attention. Although their friendship was not romantic, Hemingway was certainly infatuated by her, a feeling that inspired *Across the River and into the Trees* and the relationship between the characters of Cantwell and Renata. Hemingway's last visit to Italy was in 1954 to Alassio at the age of 55, just before he retired to Idaho. There were rumours of another sighting in 1960, which would have been shortly before his final downfall.

Hemingway's suicide in 1961 followed a period of increased drinking and health issues. His own father had shot himself and there was a history of suicide in the Hemingway family. The night before he took his life, Mary Welsh, his fourth wife, described singing a gondolier's song together as they were preparing for bed. A sad end to an exciting and full life; we hope he rested that night with thoughts of lagoons, mountains and the spirit of Italy.



Richard Owen

Kamlesh Bava

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The Making of an American Princess



Laurie Dennett

The British-Italian Society has a history of arranging interesting lectures and Laurie Dennett's absorbing talk in April 2018 on her recent biography *An American Princess: The Remarkable Life of Margerite Chapin Caetani* was no exception. She began by pondering the question of why Marguerite, whose life was indeed 'remarkable', should be so relatively unknown. One reason, surely, is that her two literary reviews, the Paris-based *Commerce* and the Rome-based *Botteghe Oscure*, became almost the entire focus of her accomplishment, leading to many excellent academic publications (notably by the Camillo Caetani Foundation in Rome, which owns her literary estate) but limited diffusion. Another reason, is that while there is a treasury of private correspondence with family members and with members of her literary and artistic circle, there is a curious absence of diaries and journals with which to paint her definitive portrait.

Our speaker conveyed Marguerite's distinctly privileged New England upbringing, the dynastic and successful Chapins, her desire to make a break from the conventions and expectations of her family and peers, and to express, with the 'passion of a crusader', her love of music and the arts. With her inherited wealth, of course, she could make a difference, and this began to happen soon after she settled in Paris, where, according to Gertrude Stein, the 'twentieth century was'. By 1910, she moved to the Left Bank to live with greater independence. Comfortable in the highest of social and cultural circles, it was not long before she commissioned paintings from Bonnard and Vuillard. In June 1911 she met tall and handsome Prince Roffredo Caetani, a gifted composer and member of one of Italy's most illustrious families. They were married that same year and within four years had two children. For the duration of World War I the family moved to Italy. Then, in 1924, and living now in Versailles, Marguerite launched ground-breaking *Commerce*, the first of her two literary reviews. *Commerce* published – in some instances for the first time – translated work by an international array of contemporary writers from Boris Pasternak, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Federico García Lorca, to Virginia Woolf, Giuseppe Ungaretti, St John Perse and André Gide. After eight years and 29 editions, Marguerite and Roffredo, anxious about the fall-out from the Wall Street Crash and the darkening political climate in Europe, sold their house and returned to Rome.

The war years were grim. The historic and incomparable Ninfa, which the Caetani pope Boniface VIII added to the family's extensive Pontine estates in 1301, is now synonymous with one of the most alluring romantic

gardens in the world. It provided an indispensable country retreat for Marguerite and Roffredo at this difficult time. However the loss of their only son Camillo on an Albanian battlefield in 1940 was a cruel blow, worsened by the desolate political and economic aftermath of the war. It also bought about the extinction of the Caetani dukedom, Roffredo being the last duke. Ninfa, flowering anew somehow not only as a garden but also as a stimulus for the arts of the imagination, gradually became a beacon for artists, writers, poets and intellectuals. Marguerite's second review *Botteghe Oscure* took flight in 1948. Manuscripts poured in, and she, as editor-in-chief, deployed her 'sixth sense' in an exacting editorial process, closely helped by her friend the novelist and intellectual Giorgio Bassani. Its 25 volumes contained previously unpublished work by Italo Calvino, Guglielmo Petroni, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote, Dylan Thomas, W H Auden, Albert Camus, and André Malraux – a few names among so many. As Alan Pryce-Jones wrote in 1958, in celebration of *Botteghe Oscure*'s tenth anniversary:

'It is an aspiration to great literature, written and published in the frank knowledge that great literature does not turn up, however warmly encouraged, at the bidding of the clock.'

Dennett devoted the last part of her fascinating lecture to describing how, in the mid-1950s, Marguerite began to wind down. Age was catching up with her, and Roffredo, her exemplary husband, was on his last stretch. He died in 1961, she two years later. Fulsome tributes followed her death. Theodore Roethke described her as 'a symbol of grace and a different life where order reigns and art matters', while Robert Lowell found poignant words to describe the significance of *Botteghe Oscure*: 'Your review is part of the liberation of Europe from the madness and desolation of the war'.

A selection of slides at the end of a fine lecture gave added context and texture to Dennett's account of Marguerite's extraordinary world. And it became so clear, from the way she spoke of Marguerite, how much the research and writing had ignited a passion in her, of wanting to bring Marguerite's remarkable life to wider public recognition.

Esme Howard

An American Princess – The extraordinary Life of Marguerite Chapin Caetani is published by McGill-Queens University Press, Toronto. Discounted copies are available from the International Friends of Ninfa (UK): Tel 01825 712994.

Charles de Chassiron

Memorial Lecture 2018

What have the Italians ever done for us?
Culture and Representations: Lessons from
the Past for Imagining Britain's Future.

Following the death of our much-loved former Chairman in April 2018, the Society decided that the lecture following every AGM should be styled The Charles de Chassiron Memorial Lecture. Though in fact arranged before Charles's death, the first such lecture was certainly an appropriately thought-provoking occasion.

Dr Christopher Thorpe is a young academic sociologist (now at Exeter University) whose doctorate (from Aberdeen) examined English and British representations of Italy from 1450 to the present. Any possible differences between English and British attitudes were not gone into in the talk. However, Dr Thorpe's general theme was that how we view (in his words, how we 'imagine') Italy is neither natural nor inevitable, contemporary 'imaginings' standing at the end of a very long historical trajectory, which is neither coherent nor linear, and which involved radically different British imaginings of Italy in different past periods. He argued that one needs to know as much about economic organisation, politics and religious differences as about straight history and social attitudes. 'Imaginings', he suggested, told one as much about the state of the British (doing the imagining) as about Italy (the imagined).

The language in the last paragraph comes straight from my notes of the talk. If one may be forgiven a personal (and possibly over-lawyerly) reflection, there seemed to be a great deal of theory going on and relatively little evidence to back up the theory. The talk unquestionably came most alive at those (relatively few) points when examples were introduced, though the examples certainly did not all point towards any particular conclusion. Thus, we were told that eighteenth century British attitudes to Italian cuisine (and to garlic in particular) were very different indeed to modern adulation of the healthy Mediterranean diet. And then we were told that the Earl of Burlington apparently wondered where all the men were in Italy, before adding the roundly Protestant reflection that one had to bear in mind that so many of them were asleep in convents. (Did His Lordship mean monasteries, one wonders? Or did he really mean convents in the English sense of the word? The Italian *conventi* covers

monasteries as well.) Certainly, the English meaning would add an extra barb to his sourness.

At the end of the day, perhaps, the very vastness of Dr Thorpe's topic and the innumerable possible themes and sub-themes could not easily be reduced into a forty minute talk. There have been huge changes and contradictions in British attitudes to Italy over the centuries – for example, from the suspicion, nay hatred, of Rome as the headquarters of an enemy religion to the simultaneous obsession with Italy's ancient culture. And the BIS itself, while now doing its humble best to promote knowledge of Italian culture, was paradoxically founded at a time when our two countries were actually at war.

One unquestionable merit of Dr Thorpe's talk was that it immediately provoked much spirited discussion. The redoubtable Lady Hale got the debate going by asking when did 'imagining' become knowledge? – suggesting that perhaps it was only people who do not know about Italy who have to 'imagine' it. (One reflected that the accounts still lying on one's knees from the AGM proclaimed the Society's aim of increasing 'the knowledge and understanding in the United Kingdom of Italian culture in its widest sense, in terms of history, institutions, way of life, language and contribution to civilisation'. Was an analysis of mere 'imaginings' a brave step too far in this robust forum?) Another member raised the obvious other side of the coin – what might Italian 'imaginings' of Britain tell us about Italy and the Italians? That, Dr Thorpe suggested, was entirely uncharted territory, even in Italy: what dragons might lurk there, one wondered? And finally and inevitably, the dreaded topic of Brexit raised its ugly head, at which point, mercifully, we adjourned into another room for drinks and the debate continued.



Christopher Thorpe

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