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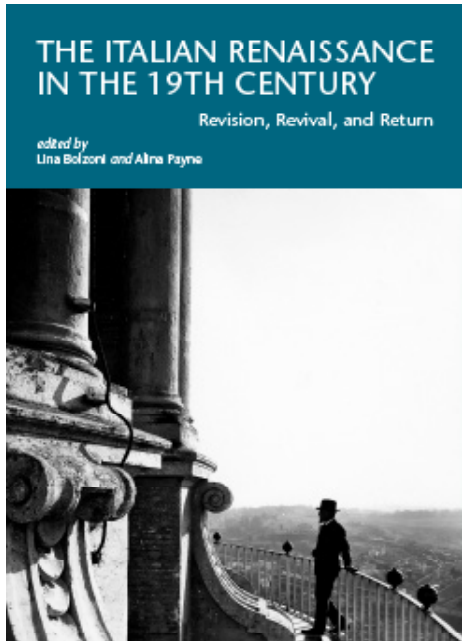
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THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Revision, Revival, and Return

a cura di Lina Bolzoni e Alina Payne



554 pp., broccura con alette
17 x 24 cm, 136 ill. col. e bn
39,00 € testi in italiano e inglese
isbn: 978-88-99765-49-1

in coedizione con

Villa I Tatti
The Harvard University Center
for Italian Renaissance Studies

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Il revival rinascimentale è un fenomeno complesso che fa parte dello storicismo ottocentesco e coinvolge l'intera Europa, contribuendo a modificarne la fisionomia.

Il Rinascimento visto come età dell'oro influenza l'intera società ma suscita anche critiche, come per esempio in De Sanctis che lo dipinge come un periodo lontano dalla realtà.

Nel presente volume questo fenomeno viene indagato scandagliando la storia, la letteratura, la musica, l'arte, l'architettura e il collezionismo e analizzando l'opera di personalità del calibro di Jean August Dominique Ingres, E.M. Foster, Adolf von Hildebrand, Jules Michelet, Jacob Burckhardt, H.H. Richardson, Rainer Maria Rilke e Giosuè Carducci.

Questa raccolta di saggi ricerca i legami tra il Rinascimento italiano e la modernità ottocentesca, mettendo a confronto visioni e interpretazioni diverse e facendo emergere i tratti caratteristici del fenomeno: dalla riformulazione della storia italiana nella cultura popolare, all'interesse verso le forti personalità della letteratura, dall'ambizione artistica nel ricreare architetture rinascimentali, alla fascinazione verso Giotto e il XV secolo fiorentino.

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Fig. 3. Paul Delarocha, *The Translation of Lady Saint Gero*, 1835, oil on canvas, 214 x 207 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Roma.

Figures or characters in narrative scenes, as examined in this article. The case of the Venetian *Caterina Cornaro* (1454-1510), Queen of Cyprus and Lady of Asolo (also subsequently awarded the honorary title "Daughter of Saint Mark"), the subject of numerous visual works. The second is another sixteenth-century Venetian noblewoman, Bianca Capello (1586-1657), who had a divorce from the Duke of Tuscany and, like Caterina, established a Republic in Venetian territory. The third heroine is the modernist figure of Isabella Bolognese, future Pope Urban VIII's Duchess of Ferrara by marriage. That these figures had already inspired literature is all the more testified to

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with nineteenth-century interpretations. It will be added to what extent the latter reworked the old legends and which aspects they added.

Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus and Lady of Asolo
Born in 1454 into one of the richest and most powerful families of Venetian nobility, in 1472 Caterina Cornaro was married for political reasons to the King of Cyprus, James II of Lusignan (1430-1472), following the sudden death of her husband and infant son in 1474. Caterina became the island's nominal regent until Venice's formal annexation of Cyprus in 1489. She then returned home and was compensated with the towns and estate of Asolo in the Venetian hinterland. This led to the problematic situation of a queen's presence in a republican political system.¹

Caterina is best known today through a portrait in Budapest by the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini, executed around 1500 (fig. 2), and through a scene in his sketch of the *Plaza di San Lorenzo* for the Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista in Venice (dated 1500).² Neither image made much of an attempt to localize the queen's physical appearance. In addition, there is a literary description of her life in the eulogy of a local author, Lorenzo Colledara (1536-1607), written toward the end of the sixteenth century but then available only in manuscript versions and finally published in 2012.³ As a key figure in early modern European politics, Caterina Cornaro represents the exceptional case of a Venetian noblewoman represented in portraiture as early as around 1500. Due to nineteenth-century propaganda, however, depictions of the queen underwent a radical change in the course of the nineteenth century. These new images, shaped under the influence of the Venetian Republic, had a considerable effect on her reception in later periods, particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since Gentile Bellini's portrait of Caterina (fig. 2) was probably its primary meaning, one then considered what it entered the Museum of Fine Arts of Budapest in 1836-41 did not play any role in this process. Gentile's images of Caterina and her Cypriot ladies-in-waiting from the *Sketch of the Plaza di San Lorenzo*, on the other hand, were central to the

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Fig. 3. Caterina della Spina's house, 1585-87 (reworked by Adolfo Bolchini in 1979). Bologna.

state in terms of their opposition to the overarching patriarchal rule. The civic prosperity that marked Giovanni IV's reign (1463-1506) proved that Bologna could in fact flourish even without papal protection.⁴ In the meantime, the pure *Androsica* was discarded. It was Giovanni's tyranny that mostly weakened the political structures of the ancient commune, draining it of its civic energy and leaving it vulnerable to papal conquest.⁵ Nevertheless, it was precisely in the Bolognese era that Bologna became a modern city: usually roads were widened and paved, canals were dug, and numerous small brick palaces (rather than churches) were built and decorated with frescoes and rich ornaments in architectural fragmenting techniques, which had exceeded Bergamo's ruling that he had found Rome a city of brick and left a city of marble. Bolognese architect Jacopo Pagani's assertion that Giovanni IV had found Bologna a city of wood, and left it a city of brick, "it was this constant and veridical transformation of a medieval city

into a Renaissance one" that determined race and for all Bologna's particular urban character—its very essence, which was exactly what Bolognese left had to be preserved for the future.

Ceto was the dominant, locally extracted "material" that gave Bologna its unique appearance. The color, texture, and decorative patterns of brick walls and architectural ornaments (especially because one of Bolognese's primary focal points in both theoretical and practical terms, in 1882, he was hired by the Banca Popolare di Credito, the proprietor of the reconstruction, to restore the facade of the mature Christiano della Spina's house, built for the Catholic monks by an unidentified architect between 1481 and 1494 (fig. 3). These date were, in fact, discovered by Bolognese, who initiated his project by conducting extensive archival research in the newly constituted Archivio di Stato.) His account of the restoration opened with a long and detailed history of the period and a discussion of the facade's stylistic features, before delving into the exact nature and extent of his own interventions. These were, it appears, relatively minimal and executed with great philological precision and reverence for the original program. Pieces missing from the spectacular facade—cladding were made using models obtained from the facade itself.⁶ The essential figures of St. Benedict, Mary, Jesus, St. John, and St. Catherine in the medallions were cleaned of all later varnish, to reveal traces of their original polychromy, which was then reintroduced on and around them. The

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Fig. 4. Christiano della Spina's house before restoration, c. 1492. Bologna.