This is the first multi-disciplinary study of the dissemination of Italian culture in northern Europe during the long eighteenth century (1689–1815). The book covers a diverse range of artists, actors and musicians who left Italy during the eighteenth century to seek work beyond the Alps in locations such as London, St Petersburg, Dresden, Stockholm and Vienna.

The book investigates the careers of important artists such as Amigoni, Canaletto and Rosalba Carriera, as well as opera singers, *commedia dell'arte* performers and librettists. However, it also considers key themes such as social and friendship networks, itinerancy, the relationships between court and market cultures, and importance of religion and politics to the reception of culture, the evolution of taste, the role of gender in the reception of art, the diversity of modes and genres, and the careers of Italian artists and performers outside Italy. Contributions include essays by an international team of scholars specialising in history of art, music history, and French and Scandinavian Studies.

SHEARER WEST is Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of History of Art, The Barber Institute, University of Birmingham.

CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ITALIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

# ITALIAN CULTURE IN NORTHERN EUROPE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

# CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN ITALIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Edited by GIGLIOLA FRAGNITO, Università degli Studi, Parma
CESARE MOZZARELLI, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan
ROBERT ORESKO, Institute of Historical Research, University of London
and GEOFFREY SYMCOX, University of California, Los Angeles

This series comprises monographs and a variety of collaborative volumes, including translated works, which concentrate on the period of Italian history from late medieval times up to the Risorgimento. The editors aim to stimulate scholarly debate over a range of issues which have not hitherto received, in English, the attention they deserve. As it develops, the series will emphasize the interest and vigour of current international debates on this central period of Italian history and the persistent influence of Italian culture on the rest of Europe.

*For a list of titles in the series, see end of book*

# ITALIAN CULTURE IN NORTHERN EUROPE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

EDITED BY

SHEARER WEST

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK http:/ / www.cup.cam.ac.uk
40 West 20th Street New York, NY 10011-4211, USA http://www.cup.org
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant
collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Bembo 11.5/13.5 pt [VN]

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library*

*Library of congress cataloguing in publication data*

Italian culture in northern Europe in the eighteenth century / edited
by Shearer West
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in Italian history and culture)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 55223 0 (hardback)
1. Europe – History – 18th century. 2. Europe – Civilization – 18th century.
3. Europe – Civilization – Italian influences. 4. Art, Modern – 17th–18th centuries –
Europe –Italian influences. 5. Italy – Civilization – 18th century. I. West, Shearer. II. Series.
D288.I86 1998
940.2'53 – dc21 98-24920 CIP

ISBN 0 521 55223 0 hardback

# CONTENTS

*List of illustrations* *page* ix
*List of contributors* xii
*Acknowledgements* xiv

1 Introduction: visual culture, performance culture and the Italian diaspora in the long eighteenth century
SHEARER WEST 1

2 Friends serving itinerant muses: Jacopo Amigoni and Farinelli in Europe
LESLIE GRIFFIN HENNESSEY 20

3 Gender and internationalism: the case of Rosalba Carriera
SHEARER WEST 46

4 'Those loose and immodest pieces': Italian art and the British point of view
NIGEL LLEWELLYN 67

5 Venice on the Thames: Venetian *vedutisti* and the London view in the eighteenth century
JOHN EGLIN 101

6 Xenophobia and xenomania: Italians and the English Royal Academy
SHEARER WEST 116

7 Metastasio and the image of majesty in the Austro-Italian baroque
DON NEVILLE 140

8 Italian opera singers on a European market
JOHN ROSSELLI 159

9 The Théâtre Italien in France
ROBERT KENNY 172

10 Gustaf III and Italian culture
NEIL KENT 187

*Bibliography* 207
*Index* 225

# ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover illustration: Sebastiano and Marco Ricci, *Allegorical Tomb of the First Duke of Devonshire*, *c.*1725, Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts

1 Jacopo Amigoni, *Angel with 'Gloria' Banner*, 1728, Ottobeuren Abbey, upper vestibule of the Benedictine Chapel *page* 27

2 Rosalba Carriera, *Faustina Bordoni*, 1724–5, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie 29

3 Jacopo Amigoni, *Portrait of a Musician*, 1728–9, Venice, private collection 30

4 Giuseppe Wagner, *Carlo Broschi detto Farinelli*, 1735, Venice, Museo Correr 35

5 Jacopo Amigoni, *Queen Caroline*, 1735, by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London 36

6 Jacopo Amigoni, *Musical Portrait Group: The Singer Farinelli and Friends*, *c.*1750–2, Felton Bequest, 1949, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia 39

7 N. Tardieu, *Seated beside Thee . . . (Watteau and Monsieur de Jullienne)*, 1731, London, Courtauld Institute of Art 43

8 Jacopo Amigoni, *Horatio Walpole and his Family*, 1730s, Wolterton Hall, Norfolk 44

9 Rosalba Carriera, *Self-Portrait as an Old Woman*, pastel, The Royal Collection, copyright Her Majesty the Queen 54

10 Rosalba Carriera, *Allegory of Painting*, *c.* 1720, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection 55

11 Rosalba Carriera, *Mrs Summers*, London, V&A Picture Library 61

12 Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto, *Piazza San Marco, Venice, looking East along the Central Line*, ?*c.*1723, Thyssen-Bornemisza Foundation, Lugano, Switzerland, with grateful acknowledgement

for the help of Katharine Baetjer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and Dr and Mrs James Thomson 68

13 Antonio Zaghi, *The Collapse of the Campanile di San Marco 14 July 1902*, Dietmar Siegert, Munich, with grateful acknowledgement to Professor Ladislaus Löb 69

14 Johann Zoffany, *The Tribuna in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence*, from 1772, The Royal Collection, copyright Her Majesty the Queen 71

15 Giulio Pignatta, *Sir Andrew Fountaine and his Friends in the Tribune*, 1715, Andrew Fountaine 72

16 Attributed to Pietro Fabris, *Lord Fortrose at Home in Naples*, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, courtesy of Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1984 73

17 Pompeo Girolamo Batoni, *Colonel William Gordon*, 1766, Sir Andrew G. Forbes-Leith, Bt. 74

18 Giovanni Antonio Canal, called Canaletto, *Architectural Caprice with the Rialto Bridge, the Basilica at Vicenza and Other Buildings*, courtesy of Sotheby's London, sale of 13 November 1974, lot 87, with grateful acknowledgement to Katie Savill of Sotheby's 88

19 A bookshelf in the library at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, author's photograph 89

20 Gian Paolo Panini, *The Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine*, courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (no. 727) 92

21 Gian Paolo Panini, *Roman Ruins with Fifteen Figures*, courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin 93

22 Canaletto, *Westminster Bridge from the North on Lord Mayor's Day*, 1747, New Haven, Yale Center for British Art 112

23 After Joshua Reynolds, *Giuseppe Baretti*, 1773, by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London 118

24 Francesco Zuccarelli, *Hercules Slaying the Centaur Nessus*, n.d., copyright Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow 122

25 Jean François Rigaud, *Francesco Bartolozzi, Giovanni Battista Cipriani and Agostino Carlini*, 1777, by courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London 123

26 Giovanni Battista Cipriani, *Academician's Diploma Issued to Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Royal Academy of Arts, London 124

27 Agostino Carlini, One of the keystones of English rivers from the facade of Somerset House, London, courtesy of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art 126

28 Johan Tobias Sergel, *Faun*, 1774, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm 195

29 Louis-Jean Desprez, *Gustaf III Attends Christmas Mass at St Peter's 1783*, 1783, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm 198

30 Louis Masreliez, *Wall in the Grand Salon at the Pavilion at Haga*, *c.*1788, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm 201
31 Louis-Jean Desprez, *View of Haga*, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm 203

# CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN EGLIN is Assistant Professor in History at the University of Montana. He holds a Ph.D. from Yale University, where he completed a thesis entitled 'Venice in the British Political Imagination 1660–1797', which he is currently revising for publication.

LESLIE GRIFFIN HENNESSEY is an art historian who specialises in the art and culture of eighteenth-century Venice and its relationship to European courts and capitals. She has lectured and contributed to various exhibition catalogues in England and the United States and her publications include essays on Jacopo Amigoni (in *Arte Veneta*), Giuseppe Wagner (in *Ateneo Veneto*) and Giambattista Tiepolo (in *Apollo*). She has taught at Vassar and Center Colleges, at the Universities of Kentucky (Lexington) and Michigan (Ann Arbor), and for American study abroad programmes in Venice and Florence. She has recently relocated to Norfolk, Virginia.

ROBERT KENNY is a Lecturer in French at the University of Leicester. He has published extensively on early twentieth-century French poetry and, more recently, on Molière's *comédies-ballets*. He is currently working on the Parisian Théâtre de la Foire and itinerant French theatrical companies in early eighteenth-century northern Europe. His involvement in music and theatre has also borne fruit in numerous productions and concerts for the University and city of Leicester.

NEIL KENT is an Associate of the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, and he has been a guest lecturer at Helsinki University. He specialises in Nordic society and cultural history. He is the author of *The Triumph of Light in Nature: Nordic Art 1740-1940* (1987, paperback 1992), and his latest book, *The Soul of the North: A Social and Visual History of the Nordic Countries in the Modern Period*, will be published in 1998. He is currently working on a social and visual history of Italy 1750–1900.

NIGEL LLEWELLYN is Dean of the School of European Studies at the University of Sussex and former Chair of the Association of Art Historians. Among his extensive publications are books and articles on the English Renaissance, the visual culture of death and Tiepolo. He is completing a major monograph on post-Reformation funeral monuments which will be published by Cambridge University Press shortly.

DON NEVILLE is an opera historian with the Faculty of Music at the University of Western Ontario. A specialist in eighteenth-century *opera seria*, he has published numerous articles on Mozart and Metastasio, and has recently edited the proceedings for two international conferences (one on each of these two leading figures) which have been published as volumes 14 and 16 of *Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario*. He is currently heading an international project on Metastasio and is preparing a series of Metastasio research reference lists for release on the Internet.

JOHN ROSSELLI was Reader in History in the University of Sussex from 1964 to 1989. He is the author, among other books, of *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi. The Role of the Impresario* (1984) and *Singers of Italian Opera. The History of a Profession* (1992).

SHEARER WEST is Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of History of Art at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of *Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble* (1991), *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (1993) and editor of *Visions of the 'neue Frau': Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (1995, with Marsha Meskimmon), *The Victorians and Race* (1996) and *The Bloomsbury Guide to Art* (1996). She is currently completing a book on German art 1890–1937 and researching a book on the history of portraiture.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been long in the planning and longer in the writing and editing. Unlike many multi-authored books, this volume was not based on a conference but grew from the need to fill a major gap in the history of eighteenth-century culture. In the process of commissioning and writing, I consulted many individuals in several different countries, who reinforced my belief that there was a large subject here that still required exploration. Initially, I planned an even wider-ranging project, but was forced in the end to be more modest in my ambitions. In this long, difficult, but always stimulating process, potential authors came and went, and there were times when I felt that this very important subject was too ambitious and would never come to fruition. In my moments of doubt, I was supported tirelessly by Robert Oresko, to whom I owe an immense debt of thanks for believing in the project and sustaining my confidence in it through difficult times. I am also very grateful to William Davies at Cambridge University Press, who was both understanding and flexible when I faced obstacles and without whose support the project would not have been completed. The contributors to the volume were throughout courteous and reliable in their dealings with me and sustained me with their enthusiasm for the subject.

In addition, I would like to thank the many people who gave me advice and assistance, particularly on those aspects of visual and performance culture outside my own sphere of expertise: Bernard Aikema, Ines Aliverti, Francesco Amendolagine, Roger Bartlett, Kerry Bristol, Edward Chaney, Chloe Chard, David Connell, Paul Corneilson, James Cracraft, Brigitte Evers, Peter Funnell, Chiara Galli, Nubar Gianighian, Manuela Kahn-Rossi, George Knox, Alastair Laing, Isabel de Madariaga, Ewoud Mijnlieff, Robin Milner-Gulland, John Platoff, Hillary Ray, Erich Reimer, Kenneth Richards, Michael Robinson, Angela Rosenthal, Stanley Sadie, Hamish Scott, Dorothea Schröder, Reinhard Strohm, Michael Talbot and Robert Williams. As usual, my husband, Nick Davidson, was patient and encouraging throughout and allowed me to air all my ideas, inspirations and anxieties *ad nauseam*, without a word of complaint.

### CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION: VISUAL CULTURE, PERFORMANCE CULTURE AND THE ITALIAN DIASPORA IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SHEARER WEST

Within the complex history of European cultural, political and social relations in the long eighteenth century (*c*.1689–1815), Italy holds a distinctive but problematic position. Italy was both cosmopolitan and narrowly local, a cultural lure and a site of economic and political fragmentation. In many ways, eighteenth-century Italy was a melting-pot, for its very weaknesses enabled foreign travellers, diplomats and royalty to enter it freely, test it, judge it and then return with intact value systems to their own homelands. Thus while Italy was being carved up in a string of pan-European succession wars involving principally the Bourbons and the Habsburgs, Grand Tourists entered its cities to admire and exploit its cultural heritage. Travellers from England, Germany, France, Scandinavia, eastern Europe and Russia poured into a handful of major Italian centres and imposed their own cultural values on local practices through their very presence as well as by constructing a persuasive fiction of modern Italian society through a plethora of travel writing.

Much twentieth-century academic attention has been devoted to this phenomenon: the cultural invasion of *forestieri* into various parts of Italy, the behaviour and reactions of these mostly wealthy or aristocratic Grand Tourists, and their writings and responses to ancient and modern Italy and its diverse cultural artefacts.[1] In studies of this period, Italy and the Italians become a backdrop for the actions and thoughts of visitors from more powerful or 'advanced' parts of Europe. Even the more sophisticated of these analyses persist in adopting an approach that takes the focal point of the foreign visitor: issues of moral geography, transgressing boundaries and negotiating 'contact zones' between cultures are inevitably viewed through the travel literature produced by northern Europeans who were at the very least literate and at best self-consciously eloquent.[2] A focus on travel writing necessarily reinforces this perspective of privilege, and the lack of a similar quantity, consistency and richness of written sources produced by Italian singers, musicians, *commedia dell'arte* performers and artists has seemingly closed the door on understanding their cultural experiences and the relationships between their own patterns of life and work with those of their class superiors in other countries. The views of a dominant class, whether it be aristocracy, gentry or emergent bourgeoisie, continue to form the perspective from which we study European culture, and the presence of so many high-born northern citizens in Italy has skewed our understanding of Italian culture in the eighteenth century. Historical studies that make judgements on the basis of the perspective of the elite tend to marginalize the Italians themselves, who are seen primarily as fodder to help us understand the hegemonic or cultural aspirations of their northern contemporaries. What has received less systematic attention is the extent to which the Italians also moved across cultural and national boundaries, and the consequent infiltration of Italian cultural ideas and influences into northern courts and cities.

---

[1] The catalogue of the Grand Tour exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1996 pointed out a number of key areas that had been omitted from the voluminous literature on the Grand Tour, including the fact that Italians have not been recognised as full participants in this cultural interchange. See Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery, 1996, pp. 32–3.

Some studies of eighteenth-century cultural interaction have devoted space to this 'diaspora'[3] of Italians, but such studies usually adopt an approach that gives only a partial view of the situation. For example, in his exhaustive books on the Italian Enlightenment, Franco Venturi attempted to open up the investigation of Italy's role within what had previously been seen to be a northern European cultural debate.[4] Venturi concentrates primarily on intellectuals of various sorts – politicians, philosophers, reformers – whose contributions to European culture were made largely through the printed word. Venturi's impressive research was designed to counteract the stereotype of Italians as primarily 'artisans' and to show therefore that they had a place in high culture, as well as low.[5] High culture has equally been the focus of art-historical studies of eighteenth-century Italians, from Francis Haskell's still unsurpassed *Patrons and Painters* onwards.[6] Although Haskell investigated an enormous range of visual culture, his work and the many art-historical studies that have drawn inspiration from it, have given precedence to the patronage of the more privileged classes of society, as well as to the creations of a handful of highly talented but by no means typical artists. In contrast to Venturi's and Haskell's broad analyses of high culture, monographs on the northern travels of individual Italian artists reinforce the focus on the particular, which occludes the wider picture of migratory tendencies,

[2] For a discussion of 'contact zones' in the eighteenth-century context, see especially Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, 1992; and, more recently, Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon, eds., *Transports: Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography 1600–1830*, Studies in British Art 3, New Haven and London, 1996, pp. 31–47. Pratt refers to 'contact zones' as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (p. 4).

[3] The word was used by Venturi, 'L'Italia fuori d'Italia', in *Storia d'Italia*, volume III: *Dal primo Settecento all'Unità*, Turin, 1973, p. 1034. See also Bernardina Sani, *Rosalba Carriera: lettere, diari, frammenti*, 2 vols., Florence, 1985, I, p. 21.

[4] Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, 5 volumes in 7 parts, Turin, 1969–90.

[5] See, for example, Venturi, 'L'Italia', p. 1036.

[6] *Patrons and Painters: A Study in the Relations between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque*, 2nd edn, New Haven and London, 1980.

career structures and the workings of Italian migrant subcultures.[7] Only in studies of music and theatre performance has the richness, breadth and diversity of the travels and career patterns of practitioners been given sustained attention.[8] Furthermore, a tendency of cultural historians to rely on the taxonomies of individual creative professions – to see cultural artefacts in terms of their contribution to the baroque, the rococo, the genre of *opera buffa* or Arcadianism in poetry – means that wider contextual issues are sometimes not given enough prominence.[9]

Studies of the period thus offer important contributions to the understanding of transnational cultural interchange in the eighteenth century, but the concentration on consumption of high culture, or the cultural output of only one profession (whether it be painting, stucco making, acting or music), or Italian talent in single centres such as Dresden or Düsseldorf,[10] has excluded the consolidation of a larger view. While Italy was suffering economic hardship and political emasculation, it maintained, to an extent, its cultural hegemony. Although this implicit cultural authority endured in part because of the flood of Grand Tourists into Italy itself, the real cultural influence was cemented through the movement of Italian artisans northwards. I am including among artisans not simply the decorative artists who were responsible for stucco or fresco, but all of the performers and producers who were part of the Italian guild system or other closed systems of family-based professionalism. This infiltration of Italian music, art and theatre into the life of the gentry and aristocracy of pluralist Europe was no less significant than the more 'Enlightened' French high culture, to which many twentieth-century historians have attributed a greater impact. It is important to investigate this cultural interchange on a variety of levels in order to offer a more nuanced view on the last phase of Italian cultural hegemony, before national cultural concerns in individual European nations marginalised or assimilated the *italianità* that had once been accepted intact.

In order to redress the balance, it is necessary to look at the wider implications of Italian immigration, especially given that cultural interchange was a two-way process. As Lucio Sponza has pointed out in his study of nineteenth-century Italian immigrants in England, Italians are too often accepted as a culturally homogeneous group who were passive players in the alien cultures they adopted; their own family background, career development and impact on non-Italian social and cultural life has been too often ignored.[11] To a certain extent, the problems created by such a monolithic approach to cultural interchange have been addressed and countered by postcolonial studies of travel and travel literature. But this more balanced view of 'transculturation' has concentrated primarily on interchanges between Europeans and 'subaltern' elements both within Europe and, much more frequently, outside it.[12] The cultural relationships among European nations – based as these were on centuries of struggles for political and economic dominance amongst countries at least theoretically benefiting from some shared cultural values – has not really been subjected to the same sort of analysis.

---

[7] For examples of studies on Italian artists in foreign courts, see, for example, Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall, *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence*, New Haven and London, 1994; and George Knox, 'Antonio Pellegrini and Marco Ricci at Burlington House and Narford Hall', *Burlington Magazine*, 130 (1988), 846-53. For broader overviews, see Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, eds., *The Glory of Venice: Art in the Eighteenth Century*, exhibition catalogue, London, Royal Academy, 1994; and Emilio Lavagnino, *Gli artisti italiani in Germania*, 3 vols., Rome, 1943.

[8] For *commedia* players, see Kenneth Richards and Laura Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte: A Documentary History*, Oxford, 1990; for singers, see John Rosselli, *Singers of Italian Opera: The History of a Profession*, Cambridge, 1992.

[9] Some recent studies of Italian and French eighteenth-century culture show how stylistic developments and nomenclature need to be seen in the light of political, social and cultural developments. See, for example, Christopher M. S. Johns, *Papal Art and Cultural Politics: Rome in the Age of Clement XI*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 202, writing on Clement XI's cultural policies: 'this is not simply a rejection of Baroque aesthetics, but the development of a new sensibility predicated on a changed intellectual and cultural environment.'

[10] For Dresden, see, for example, Fritz Löffler, *Dresden im 18. Jahrhundert. Bernardo Bellotto, gennant Canaletto*, Würzburg, 1985; *Le vedute di Dresda di Bernardo Bellotto*, exhibition catalogue, Venice, 1986. For Düsseldorf, see Bernardina Sani, 'Pastelli e miniature di Rosalba Carriera nella collezione di Giovanni Guglielmo Pfalz', *Itinerari*, 2 (1981), 133–43.

It is perhaps best to review Italian influence by concentrating on the issue of itinerancy, rather than simply travel. The tendency of Italian performers and artists to move north was not a new phenomenon in the eighteenth century. Indeed, *commedia dell'arte* troupes had travelled for work from the mid-sixteenth century onwards, and they touched base in Paris, Madrid, Vienna and England. The Viceroys of Spain employed Neapolitan artists from the seventeenth century, and castrati travelled to all major European centres from the mid-seventeenth century onwards.[13] The change that came about in the eighteenth century was the extent and volume of these travels, and the fact that itinerancy became a norm for artists and performers, rather than an exception. This greater propensity to travel grew from a number of social and economic factors, including the abolition of nepotism within the Catholic church (which initiated a decline in church patronage),[14] economic change in Italy itself, and the competitive courts and markets outside Italy that sought a continual stream of competent and innovative individuals of talent to fill cultural voids (see below). Italian artists and performers arrived in every major city, but they were especially prevalent in Dresden, Dublin, Düsseldorf, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Mannheim, Munich, Prague, Vienna, St Petersburg, Stuttgart, and Warsaw.[15] Some cities showed more of a predilection for Italian music, while others were more receptive to visual culture, but in most cases, Italian music, performance and art flourished together. In nearly every instance, Italian professionals were employed because they were willing to move to places where they were needed, and they showed great versatility in adopting to local needs, however unusual or self-serving these happened to be.

---

[11] Lucio Sponza, *Italian Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Realities and Images*, Leicester, 1988, especially p. 6. Although focusing on the nineteenth century, Sponza's observations are equally appropriate to the earlier period.

[12] See, for example, the groundbreaking work of Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 1994; Bhabha, ed., *Nations and Narration*, London, 1990.

[13] See Andrew Wilton, 'Dreaming of Italy', in Wilton and Bignamini, *Grand Tour*, pp. 39–42. For the castrati, see Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, 2nd edn, London, 1975; for actors, see Richards and Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte*.

[14] For a discussion of this, see Hanns Gross, *Rome in the Age of Enlightenment: The Post-Tridentine Syndrome and the Ancien Régime*, Cambridge, 1990.

[15] I am using the 'north' here to refer to culture beyond the Alps, whether Protestant or Catholic. This book therefore considers a range of 'northern' perspectives, from Scandinavia to Spain.

It is important to point out that Italians were not the only itinerants in northern Europe at this time. Artists and performers from France, the Low Countries and Germany also travelled for work, and it was quite normal for a court or city to have a multiplicity of foreign nationals from several different parts of Europe fulfilling its cultural desires. Italy's distinctiveness lay in the variety of needs its artists and performers were able to address; in its strong tradition of solid training in the arts; and in its cultural associations with both the ancient world and the Renaissance. Italians were able to exploit their family and community connections, as well as their tradition of excellent craftsmanship, to appeal to the increasingly pluralist marketplace of eighteenth-century Europe.

## COURT AND MARKET

The first framework that needs to be established in order that the practices and implications of Italian itinerancy in the eighteenth century can be understood is where artists and performers found work and why they were drawn to particular places. In investigating this question, we are immediately faced with a vast and fragmented set of possibilities in a Europe that was becoming increasingly diverse in both its political structures and cultural practices. To a great extent, eighteenth-century Europe was still dominated by monarchies and court cultures, but it is misleading to categorise all such monarchies as a single entity, or to contrast the patronage practices of more traditional court cultures (such as some in Germany and eastern Europe) too readily with the 'free market' ethos of a country like England.[16] Instead, it is worth outlining the major centres of patronage of the arts to investigate the ways in which their activities encouraged Italian involvement.

There is little doubt that Italian culture was valued by most European centres that still maintained a court ethos. At their most lavish, courts such as those of Augustus II at Dresden or the Elector Palatine at Düsseldorf devoted themselves to a promotion of music and visual culture that drew a large supply of artists, musicians, poets and even physicians from Italy.[17] Augustus II went so far as to set up a building programme on the Elbe which was designed to make this river resemble the Venetian Grand Canal, although, in an interesting confusion of messages, Dresden became known as the Florence, rather than Venice, of the Elbe. Such cultural programmes could be developed over the long or the short term, but many of them were initiated in the wake of Louis XIV's holistic approach to the court at Versailles. In Spain, for example, Philip V began a building scheme after the War of Spanish Succession, and his activities were enhanced by those of his successors Ferdinand VI (1746–59), Charles III

---

[16] See Matthew Craske, (*Art in Europe 1700–1830*, Oxford, 1997, p. 19), who argues for a pluralism of markets in Paris, London and Dresden in opposition to the entrenched court patronage systems of courts in southern and eastern Europe and Scandinavia.

[17] See, for example, *Le vedute di Dresda*.

(1759–88) and Charles IV (1788–1808).[18] Similarly in Russia, the cultural westernisation introduced by Peter the Great was carried on in the architectural programmes of a number of his successors, most notably Elizabeth (reigned 1741–62; see below), with her particular affection for Italian rococo architecture.

Italians would frequently be called to such courts, where they would remain for short or long periods and fulfil commissions that served the cultural aspirations of the local king and/or court, but they would also be imported for particular occasions. Indeed, various court entertainments and festivals inevitably involved the skills of Italian professionals. For example, when the Elector Palatine married Maria Luisa, daughter of Cosimo III de' Medici, the artist Antonio Bellucci was called to commemorate this event at the Schleissheim palace. Similarly, the castrato Cusanino was brought specially to Prague for the coronation of the Emperor Charles VI in 1723, and another castrato, Caffarelli, was summoned to Spain in 1739 to sing at the wedding of Don Philip, the brother of the King of Naples.[19]

This promotion of Italian culture was not confined merely to the larger and more prosperous courts. In the German states, in particular, a multiplicity of courts – many of them very small and without any appreciable power or influence – resulted in a competitive climate that meant that any available funds were poured into the importation of foreign talent. In Germany alone, there were imperial and free, ecclesiastical and secular, states. This diversity demonstrates another factor that is not negligible in discussions of patronage – that is, the relative balance between the spheres of church and state, and which influences were exerted when artists or performers were employed by a court. However, this fragmentation also meant that a less powerful political entity might have the edge in cultural terms, and Italians were instrumental in helping promote the aspirations of insignificant princes. For example, it has been frequently noted from David Hume onwards that Tiepolo's stunning and overwhelming staircase frescos at the Würzburg Residenz commemorated the apotheosis of the minor and powerless Prince-Bishop Carl Phillip von Greiffenklau.[20]

All this would suggest that the court dominated patronage of Italian artists and performers, and indeed it is clear that Italians and *italianità* touched most of the major and minor courts in eighteenth-century Europe. But the picture is not as simple as this, nor is it possible to make too strong a contrast between the court patronage functioning in Germany, Poland, Spain and Russia, and the patronage of individuals – both of aristocratic heritage and the 'middling sort' – who were more active in England, France and the Low Countries.[21] It is important here to consider Iain Pears' compelling argument that patronage, in the strictest sense of the word, was in decline in the eighteenth century: artists and performers were less frequently under the protection of a single monarch or court, but they floated freely between courts and cities, accepting commissions when and where they could.[22] The professionalisation of artists, musicians and performers was developing, while in some parts of Europe traditional ideas about patronage were still being maintained with varying degrees of success. What resulted was a series of uneven situations which more often than not were positive for the artists concerned, as they were able to take advantage of the variety of opportunities at their disposal. A typical example of this was the state of Italian music, especially opera, in London. The Royal Academy of Music was set up in 1719 with a small court subsidy but partly with private funds. It was intended to be a profit-making venture, despite the court support that lay behind its foundation. After it suffered financial collapse in 1728, the Opera of the Nobility (1733–8) locked Italian opera into a system of private aristocratic patronage. Meanwhile, much of the Italian opera in London continued to be managed by impresarios, and it was a system of private management that eventually took over from noble intervention.[23]

---

[18] Jeremy Mulvey, 'Palace Decoration at the Spanish Bourbon Court during the Eighteenth Century', *Apollo*, 114 (1981), 228–35; and Catherine Whistler, 'G. B. Tiepolo at the Court of Charles III', *Burlington Magazine*, 128 (1986), 199-203.

[19] Heriot, *Castrati*, pp. 111–12, 141–54.

[20] See Michael Levey, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century Venice*, 2nd edn, New Haven and London, 1994, pp. 34 and 228; and Alpers and Baxandall, *Tiepolo*, p. 101.

[21] For examples of middle-class patronage of Italian artists, see Bernard Aikema and Ewoud Mijnlieff, 'Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini: A Venetian Painter in the Low Countries 1716–18', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 44 (1993), 215–42. For a

The tendency of artists to control and manipulate such unstable situations can be seen very clearly in the career patterns of painters such as the Venetian Pellegrini, who moved from one major court commission to another, as well as spending time in England dividing his time between aristocratic patrons. Similarly, while Canaletto tried to capitalise on the open market of London to sell his *vedute*, his nephew Bernardo Bellotto chose to remain in Dresden, Vienna and Warsaw, possibly because he felt that, however unstable they might be, courts would provide more systematic and predictable commissions.[24] Many artists took advantage of the benefits available through court patronage, but they could suffer badly if they failed to be strategic in manipulating their environment. Indeed, Catherine Whistler has suggested that it was Tiepolo's inability to exploit the existing administrative systems of the Spanish court that meant that his experience there was less satisfactory than that of his rival Mengs, who had learned how to capitalise on the loopholes of court practice.[25]

Italian artists and performers showed a sensitivity to the changing needs of their

---

fascinating analysis of cultural consumption and its class dimensions in England, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, London, 1997.

[22] Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680–1768*, New Haven and London, 1988. Frances Haskell, in *Patrons and Painters*, sees the decline of papal patronage as responsible for the shifting nature of patronage in the late seventeenth century, but it is perhaps even more appropriate to suggest, as Pears does, that the very notion of patronage was altogether a thing of the past.

[23] Elizabeth Gibson, 'Italian Opera in London 1750–1775: Management and Finances', *Early Music*, 18 (1990), 47–59; Donald Burrows and Robert D. Hume, 'George I, the Haymarket Opera Company and Handel's *Water Music*', *Early Music*, 19 (1991), 323–41; Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Vice Chamberlain Coke's Theatrical Papers 1706–1715*, Carbondale, 1982; and especially Curtis Price, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *Italian Opera in Late Eighteenth-Century London*, volume I: *The King's Theatre, Haymarket 1778–1791*, Oxford, 1995.

[24] See John Eglin's chapter in this volume, and Craske, *Art in Europe*, pp. 72–3.

[25] See Whistler, 'G. B. Tiepolo at the Court of Charles III', pp. 200–01.

clients and audiences, and the ability of artists to adapt their modes to a mixed audience often had a positive impact on the development of styles and genres. The *commedia dell'arte* is the perfect example of this: it had its roots in popular entertainment, then became part of the staple diet of court culture; and then, in the eighteenth century, was transformed in its details and practices in response to a more mixed audience of court and bourgeoisie.[26] The development of *opera buffa* in different parts of Europe has been partly attributed to the tastes and desires of similarly mixed audiences, who found the classical allusions and moral tone of *opera seria* unpalatable. The same could be said for the growing popularity of *vedute*, which were portable, easily comprehensible and had a greater market and audience than the major decorative schemes for which Italian artists were so renowned.

Traditional court culture, as well as new markets and market situations, were thus equally enabling to Italian artists and performers who were seeking work outside Italy. While instability and diversity of practice could cause uncertainty and unreliability, it could also create situations where artists could operate more effectively and move easily from one system to another as it suited them. The ability of Italians to be flexible and adapt themselves to new situations (a point I will return to below) meant that they were in the best position possible to use their skills to their own advantage. However, a factor which made this advantage even more effective was another eighteenth-century paradox: the greater internationalism of Europe was constantly countered by a continued familialism at all levels of society. If Italians could play off market and court and begin to direct and professionalise their own activities, they could also rely on family structures and networks to give them a greater presence internationally. It is this second paradox which I would now like to investigate.

## FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SUBCULTURES, NETWORKS

The unstable relations between the practices of traditional courts and new markets were not the only changes that enabled the profitable itinerancy of Italian artists and performers in the eighteenth century. A paradox that was equally important to their success was the continued influence of family life at both high and low levels, even while Europe was becoming more obviously international in its diplomatic relations, disputes and cultural life. Economic developments and the greater centralisation of some administrative and political systems did not prevent small kinship groups from continuing to hold an unquestionable power over social and cultural life. These groups did not just consist of immediate families, but could comprise networks of families that managed to maintain a remarkable coherence despite emigration and transculturation.

This worked from both the top down and the bottom up. It would take another book to outline fully the marital and blood kinships that existed between all the ruling families of Europe in the eighteenth century. The fact that there were three major succession wars during this century (Spanish, Polish, Austrian) reinforces the value attributed to dynastic power and relationship in European politics of the time. However, it is worth noting that although Italy itself was not actually a power in all these interchanges, it became a significant bargaining point, and many European rulers had Italian family connections either by marriage or through martial conquest. For example, Philip V of Spain was married to Elizabeth Farnese, who exerted both a political and cultural influence through her own interventions as well as that of her protégé, Abbe Giulio Alberoni. When the Medici dynasty died out in Florence in 1737, the Habsburgs took over as Grand Dukes of Tuscany, and while the Habsburgs dominated Tuscany, the Bourbons, in the person of Philip V's son Don Carlos, took control of Naples and Sicily. Minor rulers also had Italian marital or family connections, most famously the Elector Palatine, Johann Wilhelm von Pfalz, who married the daughter of Cosimo III de' Medici. In each case, these marital and dynastic connections resulted in some importation of Italians and Italian cultural influence into northern courts.

---

[26] For the full story, see Richards and Richards, *The Commedia dell'Arte*; for its implications for art, see Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1988.

But familialism also worked at a level lower down the class scale, and here too its functionings served to enable and maintain the smooth exportation of Italian skills. In most parts of Italy, a guild system was still functioning strongly well into the eighteenth century, and guild membership was based on a closed-shop system, which was primarily, if not exclusively, made up of families of craftspeople.[27] When Italian artists and performers travelled, they frequently took their children with them as apprentices or assistants: this can be seen, for example, in the case of *commedia dell'arte* players, who often intermarried and travelled in family units. Painting and decorating were also family businesses. Tiepolo, for instance, travelled to Würzburg and Madrid with his two sons Domenico and Lorenzo; the Colombo, Carlone and Scotti families of painters and stuccoists worked in many European courts, sometimes together and later in separate locations.[28] Although some courts were all-encompassing in their employment of Italian talent, others could focus more on one art or skill than another: there were, for instance, a surfeit of Italian musicians at Mannheim, and whole families of Italian diplomats and administrators in Vienna.[29] It is interesting to note as well that these patterns of movement and settlement, as well as specialisms, were often rooted in particular regions of Italy: thus many decorative artists came from Lombardy.[30]

The links between these networks of aristocratic and artisan families were made in several ways. Firstly, northern European courts with Italian family connections would often import Italian artists and musicians on the recommendations of family members who remained in Italy. Secondly, this system of importation was eased by a network of scouts, impresarios and middlemen who developed a semi-professional status in both art and music during the eighteenth century. As early as the late seventeenth century, when Peter the Great decided to bring western European cultural influences back to Russia, he sent envoys to Italy to scout for talented singers. It is clear that such scouts played a crucial role in fostering cultural interchange and the movement of Italian musicians and artists. We know little about these middlemen, but there are some very famous and notable ones who have left us with enough information to reconstruct the importance of these sort of networks for eighteenth-century cultural interchange. They include Francesco Algarotti, who worked as art scout for Augustus II; Pierre Crozat, whose knowledge of Italian art helped form the taste of French court society in the first decades of the eighteenth century; and Handel, who even sought Italian singers in Dresden, when he was sent to the Continent from London on behalf of the Royal Academy of Music in 1719. Many of these agents visited or lived in Italy and were expected to target Italian talent.

---

[27] For a discussion of this in the context of Renaissance Venice, see N. S. Davidson, '"As Much for its Culture as for its Arms": The Cultural Relations of Venice and its Dependent Cities, 1400–1700', in Alex Cowan, ed., *Mediterranean Urban Culture, 1400–1800*, Exeter, forthcoming.

[28] For examples, see Lavagnino, *Gli artisti italiani*.

[29] Adam Wandruszka, *Österreich und Italien im 18. Jahrhundert*, Munich, 1963, p. 99.

[30] See Lavagnino, *Gli artisti italiani*; and Sponza, *Italian Immigrants*, pp. 32ff.

Familial court culture, the self-protectionism of family-based guild systems, and the existence of middlemen with their gazes firmly fixed on Italian talent all encouraged the success of Italian artists in northern Europe. But this success was consolidated by further networks established informally among itinerant or expatriate Italians at the various centres where Italians were particularly welcome. There are numerous instances of clear subcultures of Italians at European courts and cities throughout the eighteenth century, and these networks did not confine themselves to a single profession but involved a cross-section of artists, musicians, architects and poets.[31]

In Düsseldorf, for example, the sculptor Antonio Lione, the poet Stefano Pallavicini, the architect Conte Matteo Alberti, the painter Antonio Pellegrini and many others all worked together. Angela Pellegrini's letters to her sister Rosalba Carriera reveal a clear social circle that involved regular social contact as well as predictable petty jealousies.[32] In Dresden, the collection of Italians was even more diverse, with the sculptor Lorenzo Mattielli, the theatre architect Alessandro Mauro, the naval engineer Giulio Papaete, the singer Faustina Bordoni (who was married to Johann Adolf Hasse, the director of music there), the court poet Giovanni Ambrogio Migliavacca, and even the King's personal physician, Filippo di Violante.[33]

But Italians did not simply live in the same cities and contact each other informally;

---

[31] As Price, Milhous and Hume put it (in reference to the Italian subculture surrounding the King's Theatre in London): 'To attend the King's Theatre in the late eighteenth century was to encounter a small part of Italy transported on to the south-west side of the Haymarket' (*Italian Opera*, p. 1).

[32] See, for example, the letter from Angela Pellegrini in Düsseldorf to Rosalba Carriera in Venice during the spring of 1714, in which the competition between Sebastiano Ricci and Bellucci is the point of discussion (*Lettere*, 1, p. 269), and another letter from the Arcadian poet Rapparini to Carriera of 3 June 1714, when he is jokingly offensive about the Italian court architect Conte Alberti (*Lettere*, 1, p. 282).

[33] *Le vedute di Dresda*, p. 33.

they also worked together. The throne room of the King of Spain at La Granja was devised in 1733 by Juvarra, but paintings were commissioned from other Italian artists such as Francesco Solimena, Francesco Trevisani and Giovanni Battista Pittoni, and pairs or groups of Italians frequently worked on English commissions, such as the Panorama Room at Norbury Park, near Dorking, with a landscape by George Barret, figures by Giovanni Battista Cipriani and sky by Benedetto Pastorini.[34] The importance of these subcultures to the Italians themselves should not be underestimated. Italian performers and musicians would frequently reinforce each other through tributes and encouragement, as well as capitalising on the success of their colleagues.[35]

All these factors served to enrich the *italianità* of specific northern centres, as well as provide a motivation for Italians who might have been wary of leaving a comfortable home for an alien and possibly threatening location. Italian marital and family connections within high culture were thus only one enabling factor for Italian artists and performers whose own social networks and family relationships helped cement their influence and success in the north.

## CRAFTSMANSHIP AND VERSATILITY

The family lay behind another important reason for the success and recognised need for Italians in northern courts and cities in the eighteenth century. The strong crafts and musical traditions in Italy were reinforced by family apprenticeships and consolidation of technique and skill through generations. To an extent this was true of other parts of Europe as well, but Italians had two distinct advantages: they could offer techniques and abilities that either had not been maintained elsewhere or had never been developed in the first place; and they were willing and able to adapt their technical skills to the often ephemeral needs and desires of particular courts, patrons and markets.[36] The first of these advantages can be illustrated through a number of examples, but it is worth concentrating on a few key areas – singing; improvised performance; and decorative and other ‘minor’ arts. In each of these areas, Italians made a distinctive contribution that could not be matched to the same extent by their fellow artists and performers from other parts of Europe.

Singing is perhaps the clearest example of Italians cornering a market. It was only Italy that offered a regular supply of castrati for audiences to scorn or swoon over. The success of castrati, and the significant sums they could command, was partly due to their rarity value, based not only on the mutilating but voice-enhancing surgery they endured, but also on the training they received in parts of Italy, especially the south, where castrati were fostered.[37] It is interesting to note that although there were many Italian composers living and working in northern cities such as London and Vienna, it was the performers who were earning the largest incomes.[38] While the importance of Italian composition was acknowledged, the highest market value was seen to rest in individual stars who could draw large audiences to admire their skills and proficiency. The castrati were the most obvious example of this, but well-known sopranos could equally command a high salary and international reputation.[39] Individualism of skill and style also lay behind the success of some Italian *commedia dell'arte* performers. Unlike the castrati, *commedia* performers were recruited in troupes, rather than as individuals, but this did not prevent audiences from recognising and appreciating the skills of particular actors. Based as it was on improvisation, rather than script, the *commedia dell'arte* allowed actors the opportunity to mould stereotypical characters to their own vocal or physical skills. The typology of the characters thus allowed actors to learn the basics of the trade and performance, while the flexibility of the improvised mode enabled the development of individual quirks and talents.[40] The rarity value of *commedia* performers rested partly in an accident of the Italian language: pluralism of local dialect in Italy meant that performers had to rely on physicality and typology to carry their messages. This enhanced their usefulness in foreign countries where language barriers did not prevent audiences from appreciating the physical, gestural style of the Italian actors.

---

[34] See Edward Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England: The Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2 vols., London, 1970, p. 62.

[35] This is particularly true of Amigoni’s portraits of Farinelli, discussed by Griffin Hennessey in her chapter in this volume. In addition, Andrea Casali came to England in 1741 and did a portrait of the castrato Angelo Maria Monticelli; and Marco Ricci’s painting, *Opera Rehearsal,* includes the castrato Nicolini, Nicola Haym on the harpsichord and the impresario Heidegger, with portraits of Marco and Sebastiano Ricci on the back wall. Ricci also created the scenes for two operas by Alessandro Scarlatti and Nicola Haym at the Queen’s Theatre.

[36] See Sponza (*Italian Immigrants*, pp. 6–7), who points out that in the nineteenth century, Italians, unlike Jews, were never seen to be a threat, partly because they could provide exotic or unusual skills.

This combination of traditional skill, individuality and flexibility underlay much of successful Italian performance culture in the eighteenth century. In visual culture, training in trade skills became even more important, while individuality was perhaps valued less than versatility. Italians excelled in various decorative arts, most notably stucco, which was highly desired, particularly during the first half of the eighteenth century. Like many skills, stucco work was cultivated within families, and it was particularly valued in German courts, where large-scale decorative commissions continued to require complex stucco and highly proficient *stuccatori*.[41] Although there were well-trained decorative artists in other parts of Europe, the Italians were acknowledged to have a special facility for both stucco and illusionistic architectural decoration.[42] The association of Italians with decorative projects was not simply confined to such large-scale exercises, but Italians were also the source of small sculptures in ivory and bronze that were particularly valued by the Elector Palatine. These *Kleinkunst* were gifts sent to the Elector Palatine by his father-in-law, Cosimo III, from Florence, and they were displayed as part of decorative schemes, in combination with other small-scale novelties such as pastels.[43]

---

[37] See Heriot, *Castrati*, and Griffin Hennessey's chapter in this volume.

[38] See Frederick C. Petty, *Italian Opera in London 1760–1800*, Ann Arbor, 1980; and Price, Milhous and Hume, *Italian Opera*.

[39] See the chapter by John Rosselli in this volume, and for further detail, see Rosselli's *Singers of Italian Opera*.

[40] See the chapter by Kenny in this volume.

[41] See Lavagnino, *Gli artisti italiani*; Wilfried Hansmann, Dietrich Höroldt, Gisbert Knopp and Karl Heinz Stader, *Internationale Künstler in Bonn 1700–1860*, Bonn, 1984; and Hans Schmidt, *Himmel, Ruhm und Herrlichkeit: Italienische Künstler an rheinischen Höfen des Barock*, Cologne, 1989.

[42] See Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting*; Katie Scott, *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris*, New Haven and London, 1995; and Geoffrey Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration in England, 1660–1820*, Edinburgh, 1981.

The strong decorative sense associated with Italian artists meant that they were in particular demand as scene designers for theatre. Artists who were primarily easel painters and decorators, such as Pellegrini and Marco Ricci, could also turn their hands to design sets for plays or, especially, Italian opera, and *vedutisti* as well as specialists in illusionistic interior design frequently doubled as scene designers.[44] Italians were also proficient in a number of marginal or minor trades. For example, Niccolò Servandoni designed a firework machine for the birth of the Dauphin in Paris (1730);[45] Spiridione Roma worked in London as a picture restorer, and Andrea Soldi acted in the same city as a drapery painter. Throughout the century, Italians turned their hands to an immense variety of decorative activity, but by the end of the eighteenth century, many of these skills, from scene designing to stucco, were devalued or no longer in demand.[46] By the nineteenth century, Italian itinerants were expending their skills on making plaster statuettes and performing in the streets.[47] The heritage of *Kleinkunst* still remained, but the market had shifted their appreciation from objects of value to cheap ephemera; Italians still performed, improvised and developed their individual skills, but they did so more often for passing trade, rather than for the nobility and gentry.[48]

Throughout the eighteenth century, Italians gained attention, patronage and success through a variety of skills and crafts that could not be matched elsewhere in Europe. However, this alone would not have secured their success for such an extended period had they not been able to adapt their techniques to contemporary taste. This versatility is particularly apparent in large-scale decorative painting, where Italians showed great flexibility in directing their energies and talents to the obsessions of their patrons and clients. Shifting social and political circumstances meant that artists trained in a tradition of church decoration no longer had the major church commissions of their Renaissance predecessors. Tiepolo's church decorations already showed a shift from the sacral to the theatrical, and such a mode could easily be accommodated to secular commissions as well.[49] But perhaps more telling than this were commissions which showed artists adapting old allegorical modes and inventing new ones to accommodate a market that was no longer restricted to the upper echelons of society. When Pellegrini accepted a commission to produce a decorative scheme for the Brewers' Guild in Antwerp (1716), he rather tenuously adapted a traditional four elements allegory to the Brewers' trade. The work was refused, perhaps not least because it did not successfully match the old allegory to the new mercantile concerns of beer-making.[50] Pellegrini may have learned from this, as he certainly had more success in his ceiling for the Royal Bank in Paris, commissioned by John Law in 1719 to glorify Law's financial 'System'. The bank ceiling was later destroyed in the wake of Law's failure and subsequent disgrace, but it reveals the difficulty an artist had in reconciling the traditions of Renaissance decorative allegory with the demands of a changing European social climate. Law's System was designed to increase the prosperity of the French monarchy and elite, but it involved exploitation of the American colonies and their plantations. Pellegrini had to negotiate the problem of praising this system and its originator, using methods normally applied to the glorification of a monarch. He did so by combining real and allegorical figures and finding ways of praising both Law's System and, by implication, the monarch who supported it.[51] Such compromises solved immediate difficulties, but they did reveal the impoverishment of allegory in an age in which monolithic views of virtue and monarchical authority could no longer be sustained. The intrusion of economic elements into allegorical decorative schemes served to highlight the ultimate inappropriateness of such commissions for new circumstances. The fact that many of these allegorical schemes were obscure to viewers only a few years later reinforces this problem.[52] Italian versatility and flexibility thus paid off in the short term, but their skills could not survive changes in taste that rendered the whole notion of a major decorative commission surrounding an individual obsolete.

---

[43] See Klaus Lankheit, 'Florentiner Bronze-Arbeiten für Kurfürst Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* (1956), 185–210. For the market for pastels, see my chapter on Rosalba Carriera in this volume.

[44] For example, Giovanni Battista Colomba and Antonio Joli. For other examples, see Sybil Rosenfeld and Edward Croft-Murray, 'A Checklist of Scene Painters Working in Great Britain and Ireland in the Eighteenth Century', *Theatre Notebook*, 19 (1964), 6–20, 49-65, 102–113, 133–45; 20 (1965), 36–44; Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting*; and Lavagnino, *Gli artisti italiani*.

[45] Italians were particularly notable as pyrotechnists. For a discussion of this, see Robert M. Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris*, Oxford, 1986, especially p. 153.

[46] See Pears, *The Discovery of Painting*, p. 117: 'By the mid-eighteenth century only one member of the old painting trade continued to occupy the ambiguous position between art and trade, that is the painter of theatrical scenery.'

[47] Sponza, *Italian Immigrants*.

[48] The visual arts showed this demise of Italian influence most powerfully, as, to a lesser extent, did theatre. Italians continued to excel in singing throughout the nineteenth century.

These are only examples of the ways Italian artists and performers used training sanctioned by generations of craftspeople to direct their energies to shifting demands and the often capricious desires of both monarchs and entrepreneurs. The emphasis on craft and skill here is important, because underlying most of their success was the superior and consistent quality of their training. However, in assessing the role of Italian culture in northern Europe, historians of several disciplines have been prone to devalue the Italian contribution for this very reason: the intellectual innovation of the northern European Enlightenment is seen to be more enduring and more significant, while Italian crafts skills are construed as ornamental, obsolete and too clearly in the service of the *ancien régime*. These contemporary perceptions of Italy and Italians show the tendency to glorify Italy's history while abjuring its present. A similar ambivalence was deeply implicated in the relationships between Italian culture and northern Europe in the eighteenth century and ultimately contributed to the marginalisation, and eventual demise, of Italian cultural influence.

---

[49] See Alpers and Baxandall, *Tiepolo.*

[50] See Aikema and Mijnlieff, 'Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini'.

[51] For a discussion of this decorative scheme, see Claire Garas, 'Le Plafond de la Banque Royale de Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini', *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts*, 21 (1962), 75–93. See also Scott, *The Rococo Interior*, p. 227.

[52] This was the case for Tiepolo's *Glory of the Spanish Monarchy*, produced for Charles III in 1761 to decorate his Throne Room in Madrid (completed 1764). Leslie Jones argues that the allegory alluded to the mercantilist policies of the Bourbon court, but as early as fourteen years later, observers had lost the ability to interpret it. See Leslie Jones, 'Peace, Prosperity and Politics in Tiepolo's *Glory of the Spanish Monarchy*', *Apollo*, 114 (1981), 220–7.

## CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY: ITALY AND ITALIANS IN THE MORAL GEOGRAPHY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

The skills of Italian artists and performers, as well as their itinerancy, maintained the reputation of Italian culture in northern Europe throughout the eighteenth century. But this phenomenon took place alongside a new interest in Italy's classical past and mixed feelings about the predominance of Italian culture in the history of European civilisation. Ironically, while Italy's cultural past was studied, retold and valorised by writers such as Winckelmann, modern Italy was subjected to the disdain and distaste of the many travellers experiencing it for the first time. In historical terms, Italy was stereotyped as the seat of ancient Roman civilisation and the Renaissance, while in travel literature it was condemned for its backwardness, poverty and papal domination.[53] These competing tropes were never really reconciled, but led visitors to find ways of appropriating aspects of Italy's cultural past and internalising or nationalising them. In order to complete such an assimilation successfully, the actual Italian cultural influence in northern European countries had to be marginalised, and there is evidence throughout Europe that this was indeed happening by the last decades of the eighteenth century.

When Italian artists and performers travelled north, their presence in foreign cities obviously contributed to the preoccupations of contemporary taste as well as shaping new tastes. Eighteenth-century Europe was in this way clearly cosmopolitan, and the many examples of the effect on Italian culture in the north attest to this receptivity. The eventual marginalisation of these influences is more subtle and difficult to trace. Some historians see the influence of Italian culture as already in decline from the first decade of the eighteenth century. Others see it lingering strongly until the beginning of the French Revolution.[54] The difficulty in defining the waxing and waning of Italian cultural authority lies in the variant methods different countries used to encourage Italian culture through the work of real Italians, and then to internalise the modes, genres and styles, reshaping them with native practitioners and a 'local' accent. With the hegemony of classical ideas, northern European cultural identities at the end of the eighteenth century were frequently interwoven with the classical past in national cultural and historical narratives, but that classical past had to be decoupled from its associations with Italy and reinvested in the concerns of other nations.

---

[53] See, for example, Llewellyn's chapter in this volume; Craske, *Art in Europe*, p. 115; and Chloe Chard, 'Effeminacy, Pleasure and the Classical Body', in Gill Perry and Michael Rossington, eds., *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Art and Culture*, Manchester, 1994, pp. 142–61.

[54] Garas, ('Le plafond', p. 88) argues that the Italians were already marginalized by the 1720s, and she uses as evidence the fact that they were passed by in England in favour of Thornhill and in Germany in favour of Rottmayr. In contrast, the continuity and strength of the Italian tradition until the later eighteenth century is stressed in many of the chapters in this volume.

Examples of appropriation and assimilation can be seen in all the arts. Neoclassicism in painting and sculpture, for example, was a pan-European phenomenon, but with strong national associations. Despite shared values, there are clear differences between the sternly moral neo-classicism of David and the decorative linearity of Flaxman, for example. *Opera buffa* in music manifested itself differently in Germany, England, Spain and France, and each country even developed a different name for it.[55] The flexibility of the *commedia dell'arte* not only resulted in national variants, such as English pantomime, but aspects of improvisation and typology drawn directly from *commedia* were adopted and made part of more conventional comic theatre.[56]

This sort of assimilation was eased by the presence of Italian artists, musicians and actors in northern centres, who were working alongside native talent and exchanging ideas and influences. In France, the *commedia dell'arte* companies had a long love/hate relationship with French theatre, which by the end of the century resulted in Italian comedy presented in the French language, with its traditional physicality minimised. In painting, court artists frequently worked alongside Italian visitors and national influences were mixed in decorative schemes. Monarchs such as Philip V of Spain would import Italians for particular needs, but then rely on local porcelain, glass, tapestry and carpet factories to supplement their designs.[57]

It is particularly interesting to see how this happened in the outer reaches of Europe – in Scandinavia, Russia and eastern Europe – where the promotion of national and cultural identity was a dominant concern.[58] From the late seventeenth century, Peter the Great worked to westernise Russia by both sending envoys abroad and luring itinerant artists, musicians and architects to Russia, and this penchant was shared by his successors, especially Elizabeth (1741–62) and Catherine II (1762–96). But from the beginning, Italian architects designed buildings with a strong 'Russian accent'.[59] The notable buildings of Count Bartolommeo Rastrelli in St Petersburg thus at once show the proficient application of Italian rococo decorative influences and a real sensitivity for the building designs, materials and climatic conditions of Russia. The result was an eclecticism which was eventually superseded when Italian architects passed on their skills to native talent. The formation or development of art academies throughout Europe reinforced the emphasis on the national and further marginalised the Italian contribution.[60]

---

[55] *Singspiel* in Germany, ballad opera in England, *zarzuela* in Spain and *opéra comique* in France. For a discussion of this, see Heriot, *Castrati*, p. 18.

[56] See Gerardo Guccini, ed., *Il teatro italiano nel Settecento*, Bologna, 1988; Martin Green and John Swan, *The Triumph of Pierrot: The Commedia dell'Arte and the Modern Imagination, New York*, 1986; and Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy*.

[57] This was particularly true in Spain; see, for example, the ceiling fresco on the theme of the triumph of religion and the church to which Corrado Giaquinto, Anton Raffael Mengs and Tiepolo all contributed, and the decoration of the church of S. Pascual Babylon at Aranjuez, designed by Tiepolo, Mengs, Francisco Bayeu y Subias and Maella. See Mulvey, 'Palace Decoration'; and Catherine Whistler, 'G. B. Tiepolo and Charles III: The Church of S. Pascual Babylon at Aranjuez', *Apollo*, 121 (1985), 321–7.

[58] For eastern Europe, see, for example Jan Bialostocki, 'Bernardo Bellotto in Dresden and Warsaw', *Burlington Magazine*, 106 (1964), 289–90; Gerard Vaughan, '"Vincenzo Brenna Romanus: Architectus et Pictor": Drawing from the Antique in Late Eighteenth-Century Rome', *Apollo*, 144 (1996), 37–41; and Giuseppi Fiocco, 'La mostra della pitture italiane nelle collezioni polacci', *Arte Veneta*, 10 (1956), 237–98. For Scandinavia, see the chapter by Kent in this volume.

These were key factors contributing to the decline of Italian cultural influence in Europe, and viewing such cultural changes retrospectively makes it easy to minimise Italy's impact over the longer term. Furthermore, however ubiquitous singers, performers and decorative artists were, their work was more often valued for signs of skill and training than for 'genius', and these skills were inevitably seen to be in the service of the evanescent whims of the nobility and emergent bourgeoisie. The artisan and sumptuary aspects of eighteenth-century Italian culture have given it an unseemly or decadent aspect when balanced against the scientific, philosophical and literary developments of the French, German and Scottish Enlightenment. It was his desire to recover Italy's reputation as a nation with a *serious* contribution to eighteenth-century culture that led Franco Venturi to embark upon his massive *Settecento riformatore*. But by embedding Italy so firmly within the Enlightenment, he has not fully acknowledged the importance of craft, skill, desire and a truly international marketplace as equal in significance to the elevated cultural aspirations and concerns of Enlightenment thinkers.[61] The presence of Italian artists and performers in the north needs to be examined as part of the complex and changing political, social and economic situations in a Europe that was increasingly cosmopolitan even while nations were promoting their distinct cultural identities much more self-consciously.

## ABOUT THIS VOLUME

As this Introduction shows, the Italian diaspora in the long eighteenth century is a seemingly boundless subject that involves everything from the most highly regarded decorative artists, such as Tiepolo, to the most anonymous of *commedia* players. It would be impossible for one individual to do full justice to the scale and complexity of this phenomenon, and the decision to produce a multi-authored volume on the subject is partly a response to this dilemma. However, even such a collection must be selective, but the essays in this volume attempt to probe some of the key issues I have considered in this Introduction, rather than merely scratching the surface. The authors have chosen to take diverse approaches, and some have considered broader chronological sweeps than others. The chapters are therefore grouped according to loose thematic bands, as a fully chronological organisation would have been impossible.

---

[59] This is George Heard Hamilton's apt phrase. See his *The Art and Architecture of Russia*, Pelican History of Art, Harmondsworth, 1954, p 165; see also Sergey Androssov and Robert Enggass, 'Peter the Great on Horseback: A Terracotta by Rusconi', *Burlington Magazine*, 136 (1994), 816-21. For an exhaustively researched analysis of Russia's cultural relationships with the west in the eighteenth century, see James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery*, Chicago and London, 1997.

[60] For example, the Dresden Academy in 1764, and the English Royal Academy in 1768; see my own chapter 'Xenophobia and Xenomania' in this volume.

[61] See John Robertson's excellent review essay, 'Franco Venturi's Enlightenment', *Past and Present*, 137 (1992), p. 196. Robertson pinpoints Venturi's inability to recognise anti-Enlightenment patterns of culture so that he thereby demeans the baroque.

Leslie Griffin Hennessey's chapter on the friendship between the artist Jacopo Amigoni and the castrato Farinelli stresses the itinerancy of both artists and musicians, as well as how Italian subcultures functioned in a northern European context. My chapter on Rosalba Carriera also looks at the question of the career of an Italian artist, in the light of Italian subcultures and networks and examines the further questions of how Carriera's gender enabled, rather than hindered, her international success, and the ways in which an Italian artist could work within and manipulate a changing European marketplace with a novel skill.

The next three chapters all consider the important artistic relationship between England and Italy. Nigel Llewellyn signals the ambivalence of British responses to Italian culture and how these responses were implicated in religious and political concerns – a point that is echoed by John Eglin, who applies his observations to England's fascination with Venetian republicanism. While Llewellyn considers the way taste was developed by English travellers, Eglin concentrates on how one Italian artist, Canaletto, attempted to use his skills to tap English taste at home, and my chapter on 'Xenophobia and Xenomania' shows how Italian artists were both valorised and reviled by the English Royal Academy in an attempt to foster an English school of art.

These considerations of the English dimension are followed by a group of three chapters which concentrate on Italian performance culture in other parts of Europe, including Austria, France, Spain and Germany. Don Neville focuses on Metastasio to show the way in which dynastic relationships and competition between courts inspired the success of Metastasio's Arcadian approach to libretto in Vienna. John Rosselli investigates the career patterns of Italian singers in an increasingly professionalised European marketplace, and Robert Kenny shows how Italian performance style in the *commedia dell'arte* was assimilated and transformed by French theatrical concerns.

The final chapter by Neil Kent echoes and balances the second chapter by Griffin Hennessey, in showing the interrelationship between Italian visual and performance arts in a northern court – in this case Stockholm. Kent shows that a court normally associated with French influence was also strongly affected by Italian cultural traditions as well, and he carries his argument into the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Italian cultural influence was in decline throughout Europe.

Although each of these chapters focuses on a very different sort of case study, they share some of the key themes I have outlined in this Introduction. Court and market, familialism and cosmopolitanism, craft and novelty, desire and revulsion for Italy and Italian culture all underpin the complex cultural climate that characterised eighteenth-century Europe. The diversity and breadth of the Italian contribution needs to be examined not only for what it reveals about the sustained quality of Italian art, music and performance, but perhaps more importantly for what it tells us about cross-cultural relations, the professionalisation of trades and markets, and the use of Italians and their cultural products for the development of national identities in the long eighteenth century.